

Staff and Trustee Interaction Protocol

Trustees work collaboratively with many partners and stakeholders in order to perform their duties and to execute their powers. They are an important link between the school system and the community. They represent an important voice for the community. They are key political figures within the educational system.

District staff are responsible for the implementation of Administrative Procedures and for the day-to-day management of the school system. They provide leadership, clarify the District's mission and communicate clear goals to schools. They ensure schools are operated according to provincial acts and regulations and that schools best serve the needs of students and that the achievement and well-being of students and staff are a priority.

An effective working relationship among Trustees, community members, school and District staff and administration is a necessity. The partnerships which are forged must be based on a common understanding of their interdependent roles and responsibilities.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this protocol is to provide guidelines regarding the working relationship between Trustees and staff in relation to:

- Communication
- Attendance at functions
- Opening of new Board facilities
- Resolving parent/community concerns

COMMUNICATION

Communication is a shared responsibility where all parties endeavor to ensure an open and transparent line of ongoing communication.

Principals

To facilitate communication between schools and Trustees, principals shall:

- Send the local Trustee a copy of the school newsletter and school calendars which include special events (preferably electronically);

- Include the name and contact information for the local Trustee in the school newsletter and on the main page of the school website;
- Communicate immediately to the Family of School (FOS) Superintendent information related to any school incident or crisis which may create concern within the community.
- The FOS Superintendent or designate will contact the local Trustee and share all pertinent information so that the Trustee can respond appropriately to questions from parents and the media.

Trustees

Trustees are encouraged to share positive or congratulatory messages, either their own or those heard from parents or community members, directly with principals.

Media

The official media spokespersons are the Board Chair, on behalf of the Trustees, and the Director of Education (or designate), on behalf of the staff. Trustees should refer media requests for information to the Board Chair or the Director's Office; and should inform the Manager of Communications of the request.

In times of crisis, there should be immediate communication with the FOS Superintendent who will contact the Director's Office. The Director's Office will ensure that Trustees are informed of all relevant information in a timely manner.

Trustees should use their discretion when receiving calls from the media to determine whether they will respond to questions about local matters or to defer questions to the Board Chair or to the Director's Office.

ATTENDANCE AT FUNCTIONS

Principals should ensure that their local Trustee is invited to school functions at which parents and community members are in attendance. Examples are:

- Graduation;
- New District facilities (schools, buildings or major additions) for groundbreaking and ribbon cutting ceremonies;
- Open house / information evenings;
- Performances and/or special events;
- School Council meeting (at least once per year).

The Communications Manager is encouraged to:

- Invite Trustees to special events involving staff and community members;
- Make Trustees aware of innovations, new directions and programs related to specific departments.

Trustees are responsible for:

- Acknowledging all invitations and confirming attendance in a timely manner;
- Ensuring that the Superintendent, Principal or Communications Manager is aware of their presence upon arrival at an event.

The role of the Trustee should be outlined in advance:

- Trustees should play the prominent political role at all functions and should be included as part of the delegation, invited to bring greetings from the Board, and/or be a presenter of awards;
- “Greetings from the Board” should be 2-3 minutes in length or less;
- An “Opening Address” should be 5 minutes or less.

Generally, the sequence of speeches and presentations by guests who are in attendance at functions (the list below is not intended to be prescriptive), following opening remarks from the principal, if applicable, should be:

- Board Chair and/or local trustee;
- Director of Education or designate;
- Principal;
- Any visiting dignitaries (e.g. municipal, provincial, federal politicians) from outside of the Board should speak after Board dignitaries.

RESOLVING PARENT/COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Trustees should advise parents and community members to contact the school principal with their complaint or concern. If the Trustee would like follow-up or feedback regarding the issue, or if the matter is not resolved at the school level, he/she should contact the FOS superintendent.

Trustees should direct their own school-related questions, concerns or general requests for information concerning operation matters to the Director's Office and/or appropriate FOS superintendent.

Staff should refer concerns or complaints expressed by parents or community members that are not resolved at the teacher or staff level to the principal or immediate supervisor.

Staff are encouraged to refer questions, concerns, and/or requests for information from Trustees to the principal or immediate supervisor.

The Director's Office or FOS Superintendent will endeavour to ensure that issues raised by Trustees are dealt with and that timely feedback to the Trustee is provided. The Director's Office will endeavour to direct any parent/community complaints to the source of the concern (i.e., school personnel or departmental personnel if/as appropriate) in a constructive, respectful manner.

Legal References:

Education Act, Section VI

Related References:

OPSBA's Guide to Good Governance 2018-2022