WRPS Trustee Handbook



Executive Summary

The WRPS Trustee Handbook serves as a point of reference for all Trustees and sets the foundation for common understanding for the Trustees, the Superintendent of Schools and the Administration about its own operations, its own procedures, its own practices, and its own conduct as a school board.

The WRPS Trustee Handbook includes expectations and procedures for individual Trustees, both as members of the Board and as representatives of the communities that elected them. Trustees are expected to govern themselves accordingly.

Annually, the Board evaluates itself against the principles and expectations contained in this Handbook to continually improve its governance practices.



The WRPS Trustee Handbook is published on the Division website to foster greater transparency and accountability in relation to the Board's operations and conduct. Transparency around the role and responsibilities of an elected Board of Trustees and how it is meeting its own standards and expectations leads to public confidence.

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Preface

Public education and the students of Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools are best served by a Board of Trustees that leads by example in all its decisions and activities. The WRPS Trustee Handbook contains clear statements and explanations of the policies, principles, protocols, and practices related to Board Governance and Operations at Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools.

The WRPS Trustee Handbook details how the Board accomplishes its main governance tasks:

- representing the interests of the community and reflecting the values of the community in its decision making,
- serving as an advocate and steward of public education,



- setting priorities and policies to provide leadership and overall direction for the Division,
- allocating resources to the Division to fulfill its responsibilities,
- monitoring the implementation of policies,
- evaluating the results achieved in the Division,
- reporting the results achieved to its public,
- serving as a communication bridge between the community and the Division, and
- hiring and evaluating the Superintendent of Schools to ensure accountability to students and the public.

About Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools

(Adapted from WRPS public school trustee candidate's handbook)

Wetaskiwin Regional Public School's boundary area is coterminous with that of the County of Wetaskiwin, the City of Wetaskiwin and the Town of Millet.

Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools serves approximately 3,900 students in 19 schools located in the City of Wetaskiwin, the County of Wetaskiwin, and the Town of Millet.

The schools range in size from approximately 15 students in one of the two Hutterite Colony schools to 915 students in a high school in the City of Wetaskiwin. By geographic area, eight schools are located in the City of Wetaskiwin, ten in the rural County of Wetaskiwin, and one in the Town of Millet.

WRPS provides a high quality of education to its students within a safe and caring environment with various program supports. In addition to instruction in English, WRPS offers French Immersion (K-8), Early Education, Home Education, and Year-Round Education opportunities.

Supports are enhanced in the areas of counselling services, special education, career counselling, and student mental health.

WRPS offers a broad range of programming options for students. These include, but are not limited to: Indigenous Education, Cree Language, Mental Health Capacity Building, and Outreach Programs. WRPS offers a range of fitness, health and wellness, art, drama, music and sport options for students throughout the Division.

WRPS' strong extracurricular programming allows students opportunities to become involved in music and drama productions, special interest clubs, and athletic teams, contributing to a student's well-rounded education.

The Division currently employs approximately 225 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 250 full-time equivalent non-teaching staff.

In May 2017, WRPS' Board of Trustees approved an operating budget of approximately \$55 million for September 1, 2017 to August 31, 2018, which includes an operating surplus of approximately \$200,000. Over the course of the budget process, WRPS worked to maintain funding within our schools and a focus on instruction.

Maps of Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools

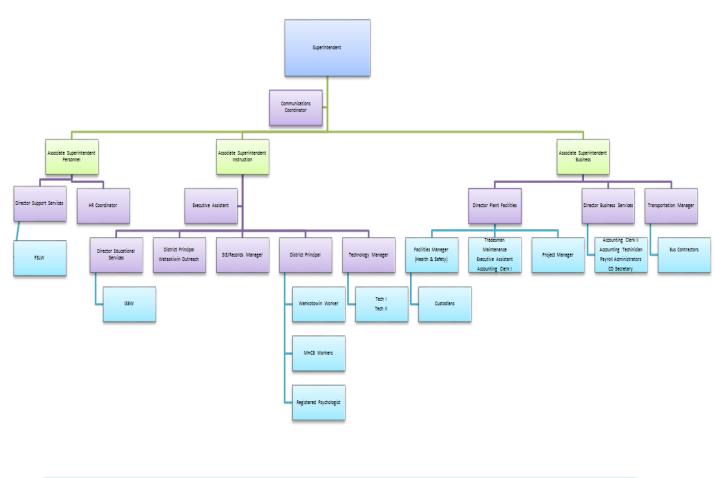
Electoral Subdivision Map



Map of Schools

 Google Maps for each site on available on each Schools Website: https://www.wrps.ab.ca/schools/our-schools

WRPS Organizational Chart



Principals

School Boards and Trusteeship in Alberta

The following is based on an excerpt from the Alberta School Boards Association: "What Do School Boards Do?"

The Alberta legislature through the School Act and regulations passed thereunder has delegated some authority for the governance of education to locally elected school boards. School boards are statutory corporations and, as such, have certain obligations to perform and certain powers to carry out their tasks.

The philosophy of school board governance is that government is most effective when it is close to the people being governed. Historically, community residents have elected trustees to boards to act for the legislature in their local schools.

The board practices leadership through governance in three main areas: **fiduciary leadership**; **strategic leadership** and **generative leadership**. In its **fiduciary leadership** role the board focuses on its legal responsibilities as defined in the School Act, regulations and other legislation pertinent to children and youth.

The board provides oversight and stewardship to ensure:

- Each student has the opportunity to achieve his/her potential;
- Children are safe at school;
- The jurisdiction's financial and capital resources are well managed;
- That business is conducted in a legal and ethical manner.

The school board's <u>strategic leadership</u> role sees school boards looking into the future – conducting environmental scans of internal and external issues and trends. In this role, the school board reviews, revises or drafts the school jurisdiction's mission, values, vision and goals. This role involves planning and making decisions about resources, programs and services that reflect long term priorities.

The school board's **generative leadership** role is grounded in the notion that "it takes a whole village to raise a child". It recognizes that governance should not exist in isolation but that it should engage the community. In its generative leadership role, the school board reaches out to involve the community in a dialogue about the needs of the community, its youth and the future. Moving beyond consultation, generative leadership suggests that school boards share direction-setting and sometimes decision-making with others. This role increases education's profile as a fundamental community resource and it gives all citizens an opportunity to shape the direction that education takes locally.

Role of School Boards

The following is based on an excerpt from the Alberta School Boards Association: "What Do School Boards Do?"

The school board, as a representative of the people, is a decision-maker and direction-setter. The board integrates information from many sources; processes that information; evaluates it and makes a decision compatible with the system's beliefs, values and goals.

As it makes these decisions, the school board considers the interests of all the students in the jurisdiction – not just the interests of students from a particular school or area.

- The school board is responsible for setting the overall direction for the school system. This is
 usually done through an annual strategic planning process. The board revisits its vision,
 mission, values and beliefs and identifies strategic priorities and goals for the system.
- The school board sets the annual budget which determines how resources are allocated to schools and programs. The school board also provides direction through its policy processes.
 These include planning, developing, implementing and evaluating policy.
- The school board also holds the system and the board itself accountable for achieving its goals. The board creates this accountability by assigning roles and responsibilities for the desired results and creating a system to monitor and evaluate those results.
- The school board reports system and school performance to the public and to the provincial government.
- The school board is an advocate for public education and for the local school system. As an advocate, the school board consults with its constituents; it provides advice with respect to education to MLAs and government as an individual board and collectively through the Alberta School Boards Association. School boards also advocate for students. The board assesses proposed policies based on what is best for the development of the whole individual. Serving on a school board means partnering with parents to ensure children are provided with the best possible educational opportunities to become productive citizens who contribute to their communities.
- The school board selects a Superintendent of Schools, delegates administrative duties to
 the superintendent and evaluates the superintendent's performance. The school board
 clearly outlines its expectations of the superintendent. In this context, job descriptions
 must be based on outcomes or accomplishments rather than activities.
- While legislation gives the school board the power to engage in a wide range of activities, it is
 most common for the school board to delegate operational tasks to the superintendent.
 School boards tend to focus on governing the system by setting performance targets and
 holding the system accountable for the desired results. It is critical that the school board
 creates the appropriate policies and procedures to ensure the appropriate conduct of the
 school system and the limitations of delegated responsibilities or powers. Ultimately the board
 is accountable.

What is a Trustee Personally Liable For?

The following is based on an excerpt from the Alberta School Boards Association: "What Do School Boards Do?" and adapted from the EPSB Trustees' Handbook.

Relationship between the school board and the superintendent

The relationship between the school board and the superintendent is the most important relationship in the school system. The school board and superintendent have different but complementary roles in many areas. Each party's success is greatly influenced by the other's success. Both parties must nurture this relationship. The school board must clearly establish the roles and responsibilities of the school board, the school board chair, and the Superintendent.

No trustee can act alone – the school board is a corporate entity

The school board is a corporation. If the school board chooses, it may delegate a trustee to perform specific duties as an individual; but only as an agent of the board and only as prescribed by the board, by board motion. In other words, the school board is ultimately responsible for the individual's action. With this exception, a trustee acting on his or her own has only the authority and privileges of an ordinary citizen.

What is a trustee personally liable for?

All authority delegated by the province is to the corporate school board; not to individual trustees. With the four following exceptions any action taken against the school board are against the corporate board – not individual trustees.

• Improper Use of Funds

If a school board uses money acquired for capital expenditures for unauthorized purposes, the trustees who were on the board when the board approved the improper application of the capital money, whether or not they are still trustees, are jointly and severally liable for the payment to the board of the amount of money applied to the unauthorized use (s.187 School Act).

Non-Performance of Statutory Duties

Trustees who fail or refuse to perform statutory duties imposed by various statutes may be held personally responsible (e.g., s.112 of the Employment Standards Code could hold trustees jointly and severally liable for unpaid wages).

Personal Gain

If a court declares a trustee disqualified from remaining on the board due to his/her personal gain from contracts with the board, the trustee may be ordered to pay the board any profits.

Breaches of Common Law

Trustees may be held personally liable for breaches of common law such as acting in bad faith, in a discriminatory manner or in abuse of their powers. It must be noted that actions against such breaches are likely to be successful only where the evidence presented is clearly indisputable.

General Duties of Individual Trustees

1. Politician

Trustees, as policy makers and legislators, are politicians, not by the common definition associated with partisan politics, but as members of a governmental unit charged with the responsibility of conducting the affairs of the school jurisdiction. They are responsible to their electorate through the democratic process. They must be highly visible and skilled at reading the mood and understanding the feelings of the community. They must also be skilled at diplomacy and public relations as they deal with general community and interest groups.

The political process is the process by which a community makes decisions about its goals, priorities, processes, and allocation of resources and the means by which it will resolve its conflicts. A politician is an important part of this process; elected and accountable to the community, which is the very essence of democratic government. Webster's Dictionary defines politician as "one versed in the art and science of government, especially one actively engaged in conducting the business of a government". The business of the Board is to provide access to educational services for students.

2. Goal Setter

The trustee, through the Board, provides leadership to the system by setting goals, statements of purpose, and directions, which serve to identify the results the Board wishes the system to achieve. If a Board is not continually studying its community and society needs, the school system will continue to educate its students in a manner which prepares them better for the past than the future. It is the trustee's responsibility to ensure that education stays in step with today's world and is ready for the world of tomorrow.

3. Planner

To guide the system toward the achievement of its goals, the Board must plan the allocation of its resources. The trustee, as a planner will be faced with setting priorities in light of community wishes, changing needs, resources available and sound educational practice. This planning will necessitate the delegation of duties to Division administration and staff. The quality of planning will determine the success of goal achievement.

4. Evaluator

The trustee, as evaluator, must ensure that policies are within the parameters of the Board's authority, consistent with goals, compatible with other policies, implemented in a fair and just manner, and effective in achieving intended outcomes. In addition, the trustee is constantly evaluating the information received before decisions are made. Trustees must constantly appraise the system to determine its present development relative to expressed goals. The appraisal function is an important on-going activity that allows the trustee to assess the total system and make adjustments when necessary.

5. Financial Planner

The Board operates within specific financial parameters. The trustee recognizes that the wishes of all cannot be realized and that astute financial planning is an essential part of trusteeship. The role of the trustee is to assess the needs of the system and to decide what can be achieved with the resources available. The annual budget is a statement to administration, the schools and the public that the Board is accountable for the dollars spent. In the eyes of the public, the adoption of the budget is one of the most important decisions a Board makes; it is an opportunity for the trustee to demonstrate to the electorate willingness and ability to shoulder the responsibility that comes with being a member of the Board.

6. Policy Maker

A responsibility of the trustee, through the Board, is to develop policy which will guide the administration and other employees toward achieving Division goals. Policy-making requires recognition of the needs for specific policies and often the anticipation of those needs. Policies create the framework within which the staff performs their duties. The trustee, as policy maker recognizes that the task of implementing policy is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer/Superintendent of Schools. Policy development is also a process which allows for systematic review by trustees of the Division's objectives and plans.

7. Legislator

Many acts of a Board have the status of law in a jurisdiction. When a Board sets the school year or develops a policy on student transportation or wellness, these actions are laws which govern the conduct of students and staff. Other Board actions directly impact members of the public. The trustee, as legislator, must carefully consider the effects the Board's laws will have on all the members of the community it serves.

8. Communicator

To effectively meet the responsibility of trusteeship, the trustee must be a communicator; one who will interact effectively with the many publics who have an interest and role in education. The electorate must be made aware that their concerns and wishes will be heard and in turn must be informed as to the actions taken to deal with them. Effective communication is essential between board members as in reality the corporate decision determines the actions of the Division. Expectations need to be clearly communicated to staff. Different points of view must be presented, considered and evaluated. In short, communication is an integral part of trusteeship, a necessary skill and a critical obligation.

9. Leader

Each trustee, representing all the citizens of the community and responsible to the electorate through the democratic process, recognizes:

- That fellow citizens have entrusted them, through the electoral process, with the educational development of the children and youth of the community.
- That trustees are the children's advocates and their first and greatest concern is the best interest of each and every one of these children without distinction as to who they are or what their background may be.
- That trustees are educational leaders who realize that the future welfare of the community, of the Province, and of Canada depends in the largest measure upon the quality of education they provide in the public schools to fit the needs of every learner.
- That legally the authority of the Board is derived from the Province which ultimately
 controls the organization and operation of the Division and which determines the degree of
 discretionary power left with the Board and the people of this community for the exercise of
 local autonomy.
- That trustees must never neglect their personal obligation to the community and their legal obligation to the Province, nor surrender these responsibilities to any other person, group, or organization but that, beyond these, trustees have a moral and civic obligation to the Nation which can remain strong and free only so long as public schools in Canada are kept free and strong.



Governance

Board Policies have been developed to highlight and support the very important governance function of the Board. In addition to clearly defining the role of the Board, the role of the Superintendent and the delegation of authority from the Board to the Superintendent, they include the following policies.

- 1. Foundational Statements which provide guidance and direction of all activities within the Division.
- 2. Directions for how the Board itself is to function and how individual trustees are to conduct themselves; how Board committees and representatives are to function;
- 3. Statements as to how appeals and hearing will be conducted;
- 4. Non-delegable matters such as school closures and policy-making; and
- 5. Specific matters which the Board has chosen not to delegate to the Superintendent.

Board Policies are intended to be supplemented by Administrative Procedures; the primary written documents by which the Superintendent directs staff.

BOARD POLICIES

Policy 1: Division Foundations and Philosophical Commitments

Policy 2: Role of the Board

Policy 3: Role of the Trustee

Policy 4: Trustee Code of Conduct

Policy 4: Appendix A Communications Protocol

Policy 4: Appendix B Trustee Code of Conduct Sanctions

Policy 5: Role of the Board Chair

Policy 6: Role of the Vice-Chair

Policy 7: Board Operations

Policy 7: Appendix A

Policy 8: Committees of the Board

Policy 9: Board Representatives

Policy 10: Policy Making

Policy 11: Board Delegation of Authority

Policy 12: Role of the Superintendent

Policy 13: Appeals and Hearings Regarding Student Matters

Policy 14: Hearings on Teacher Transfer Matters

Policy 15: School Closures

Policy 16: Student Transportation

Policy 17: Sustainability and the Environment

Policy 18: Community Use of Facilities

Policy 19: Wellness

Policy 20: Disposition of Surplus Real Property

Policy 21: Financial Investments

To view all the policies go to: https://www.wrps.ab.ca/documents#category/6092

Board Self Evaluation

The Board conducts an annual Board Self Evaluation in June of each year The Board Self Evaluation is designed to provide for both accountability and growth. The growth portion serves the following purposes:

- provides the basis for an action plan to build Board capacity
- leads to tangible improvements in the functioning of the Board
- > influences plans for future Board actions
- allows the Board to express the kind of Board it wants to be

The Board Self Evaluation is meant to be a "living document", to provide a positive path forward for the Board. The Board Self Evaluation is intended to be reflective of the entire evaluation period.

Sample Board Self Evaluation Pre-Assignment Template.



Superintendent Evaluation

The Board will conduct and evaluation for Superintendent of Schools annually. This process is normally facilitated with the assistance of the Alberta School Board Association. This evaluation normally happens in June of each calendar year and is conducted in accordance with the "Superintendent/CEO Evaluation Process, Criteria & Timelines" document approved by the Board and agreed to by the Superintendent upon his appointment as Superintendent/Chief Executive Officer. The Evaluation is conducted by using the Performance Assessment Guide as the criteria. (See below)

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT GUIDE

SUPERINTENDENT/CEO ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. CEO:

Is the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Education Officer of the Wetaskiwin Regional Division No. 11 and therefore reports directly to the corporate Board.

2. EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:

Provides leadership in all matters relating to education in the Division. Ensures students in the Division have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister. Implements education policies established by the Minister and the Board.

3. FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY:

Ensures the fiscal management of the Division by the Treasurer is in accordance with the terms or conditions of any funding received by the Board under the School Act or any other applicable Act or regulation. Ensures the Division operates in a fiscally responsible manner, including adherence to recognized accounting procedures.

4. PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT:

Has overall authority and responsibility for all personnel-related issues, save and except: the development of mandates for collective bargaining and those personnel matters precluded by Board policy, legislation or collective agreements. Monitors and improves the performance of all staff.

5. POLICY:

Provides leadership in the planning, implementation and evaluation of Board policies.

6. SUPERINTENDENT/BOARD RELATIONS:

Establishes and maintains positive professional working relations with the Board. Honours and facilitates the implementation of the Board's roles and responsibilities as defined in Board policy.

7. THREE-YEAR EDUCATION PLANNING AND REPORTING:

Leads the Three-Year Education Planning process including the development of Division goals, budget, facilities and transportation plans and implements plans as approved. Involves the Board appropriately (Board approval of process and timelines, Board identification of priorities and key results, opportunity for Board input early in the process, final Board approval). Reports regularly on results achieved.

8. ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT:

Demonstrates effective organizational skills resulting in Division compliance with all legal, Ministerial and Board mandates and timelines. Reports to the Minister with respect to matters identified in and required by the School Act.

9. COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

Takes appropriate actions to ensure positive external and internal communications are developed and maintained. Develops and maintains positive and effective relations with provincial and regional government departments and agencies.

10. LEADERSHIP PRACTICES:

Practices leadership in a manner that is viewed positively and has the support of those with whom he works most directly in carrying out the directives of the Board and the Minister.

11. STUDENT WELFARE:

Ensures that students are provided with a safe and caring learning environment.



Supplemental Materials

• Provincial Legislation and Guides

- School Act The School Act sets out the goals, roles and responsibilities of Alberta's Early Childhood Services to Grade 12 (ECS-12) education system.
- <u>Local Authorities Elections Act</u> The Local Authorities Election Act governs municipal elections by establishing procedures around campaigning, voting and counting of votes.
- FOIP Act Freedom of Information and Protection This Act protects an
 individual's privacy by setting out rules for collection, use or disclosure of
 personal information by public bodies. It also provides a method of requesting
 access to information which is not available by other means.
 - FOIP Guide This Guide provides an overview of Alberta's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the regulation made under the Act (also referred to as the FOIP Act and FOIP Regulation).
- Notaries and Commissioners Act This act sets out the procedure for the appointment of a notary public and a commissioner for oaths along with the roles and responsibilities.
 - <u>Information and Instructions for Commissioners for Oaths</u> This guide was prepared to assist Commissioners for Oaths.
- Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12 2017-2018 The Guide to Education provides key information and requirements for the operation and delivery of ECS-12 education programs and services in Alberta.

Federal Legislation and Guidelines

What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation - The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has developed a definition of reconciliation and a guiding set of principles for truth and reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada believes that in order for Canada to flourish in the twenty-first century, reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canada must be based on these principles of reconciliation. By establishing a new and respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, we will restore what must be restored, repair what must be repaired, and return what must be returned.

• Education Funding in Alberta

- Funding Manual for School Authorities 2017/2018 School Year The Funding
 Manual provides details on the funding available for the school year, including
 applicable formulas, funding rates, criteria and reporting requirements.
- Education Funding in Alberta Kindergarten to Grade 12 2017/2018 School <u>Year</u> - This booklet is an overview of funding provided by the Government of Alberta for Kindergarten to Grade 12 education.

WRPS Reports

- Three Year Strategic Education Plan 2016-2019 & Annual Results Report 2015-2016
- o Three Year Capital Plan
- o 2016-2019 Facilities Plan
- WRPS Board Strategic Direction May 24,2016
- "Wahkohtowin Wetaskiwin Regional Public School First Nations Parent Consultation" Report 2013 - This report is titled Wahkohtowin (Cree meaning Kinship/Family) to highlight a major thread reverberated throughout the conversations as a foundational way to support and nurture First Nations students.
- "Nitohtamowin and Nisitohtamowin Listening and Understanding" Report

 (2014) We desire to have meaningful relationships with the Maskwacis 4 Nations communities to improve the services and quality of education for all
 students and families. This report outlines some initiatives in 2013-2014 guided
 by the Maskwacis Education Council (MEC) that continue to provide focus and
 direction for Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools (WRPS) in order to address the
 Board's Priority to "enhance the success the First Nations students and
 encourage the active involvement of their families."
- "Wahkohtowin Nikahnote Relationships Moving Forward "Report In honoring the intent and purpose of the Wahkohtowin Report First Nations Parent Consult 2013 this work was initiated to give parent/caregiver opportunity to have voice that acts as follow up to original parents consults of 2013. The purpose of parent/caregiver consultation was to find out if WRPS was indeed fulfilling original intent, purpose and identified recommendations as highlighted in the Wahkohtowin Report
- From ASBA handout "Your Key to Trusteeship & School Boards in Alberta":
 - What do school boards do?
 - o 8 steps to successful trusteeship
 - o Your legal responsibilities
 - o Acronyms and jargon
- From McLennan Ross LLP handout "School Board Governance, Leadership & the Law":
 - Essential Elements of an Effective CEO-Board Relationship This discussion is meant to help boards led by non-executive chairmen understand the defining activities and attributes of the best CEO-board relationships — relationships that consistently contribute to organizational performance and superior results.
 - Excerpt from Governance Best Practices Highly Effective Board Chairs p. 9-11 –
 "Competence of the Chairperson is vital to the contribution Boards make to the school division." McLennan Ross

- The Law and How to Avoid Power Struggles Between Boards, Trustees and CEOs
 - The board of director's oversight role brings a fundamental tension to the board/executive director relationship. Who is ultimately in charge here? There are no firm guidelines about where board oversight leaves off and executive management begins. In this grey area, struggles for power and authority often emerge.
- Managing Board Conflict Wherever people with strong convictions work together to make a difference, there will be conflict. Individual voices have to give way to the voice of the group. Conflict, managed well, can promote awareness of self and others. It can even strengthen relationships and heighten morale.
- The Role of School Board Trustees Each individual school board member has a duty to contribute to the board's mandate of leadership and oversight of public education. (School Boards Matter, 2013) A clear understanding of a school board trustee's role and responsibilities is fundamental to good governance.
- Legal Obligations and Potential Liability of Board Members The overriding obligation on all Board Members to act in the best interests of the School as a whole arises by virtue of what is known as the 'fiduciary relationship' between each Board Member and the School. A fiduciary relationship is a general law notion, dictating that Board Members must always act in the best interests of the School and must act honestly, fairly, loyally, in good faith and with integrity.

• Robert's Rules/Parliamentary Procedure

- Parliamentary Procedure for Meetings Remember, these processes are
 designed to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate and to share ideas
 in an orderly manner. Parliamentary procedure should not be used to prevent
 discussion of important issues.
- o Robert's Rules Cheat Sheet
- Maps and Contact Information for Alberta School Boards/School Authorities
 - Alberta School Authorities
 - o Map Public, Francophone and Charter School Jurisdictions
 - Map Separate School Jurisdictions
 - Map Francophone Authorities and Schools
- What's On The Horizon? Issues Scan, possible topics include:
 - o Ministry Initiatives
 - Curriculum Development
 - o Education Act