

Presentation to WRAPSC

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The Role of Trustees

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Trustees are elected officials. They are elected during municipal elections held every 4 years. Trustees do not run as members of political parties.

In the WRDSB we have 11 trustees representing our various communities as follows:

Kitchener - 4 trustees

Cambridge/North Dumfries - 3 trustees

Waterloo/Wilmot - 3 trustees

Woolwich/Wellesley - 1 trustee

The number and distribution of trustees is determined by the Ministry of Education and the Board. In communities with more than one trustee, a voter can choose that number of candidates on the ballot.

As municipal elections are held in the fall, a trustee's term begins in December after the election and continues until the new Board begins 4 years later. Starting in 2022, the term will begin in November. This obviously doesn't follow our school year, so there can be some changes at the Board during the school year in an election year. This timing is also the reason that the Board's "inaugural" meeting is always the first meeting in December. Trustees have to attend a certain number of meetings per year to maintain their seat on the board.

Our Board also has 2 student trustees who are elected by the Student Senate for a one-year term beginning in August. Student trustees must be secondary students and although they have a voice at the Board table, their votes do not officially count and they can't move motions.

Contact information for all trustees can be found on the [WRDSB website](#).

Once elected, individual trustees have no authority on their own. Instead, authority rests with the Board as a whole. Although trustees remain accountable to their community, they must also make decisions based on what is best for all the students of the board. It can be a difficult balancing act to respond to the specific concerns of a constituency while maintaining the focus on the entire board.

As per the [Education Act](#), the Board is responsible for student achievement and well-being, ensuring safe and inclusive schools environments including preventing bullying, ensuring effective stewardship of the board's resources, and delivering effective education programs. The Board must comply with all regulations of the Ministry of Education.

As a corporate board, a school board governs through policy and strategic direction. The key responsibilities of the Board are:

1. Appointing a Director of Education - The Director of Education is the sole employee of the Board, which has the responsibility of hiring, reviewing and, if necessary, firing him/her. As you know, Director Bryant has submitted his notice of retirement to the Board and we will soon be starting the process to replace him. The choice of a director is key as the director will ultimately be responsible for operationalizing the vision of the trustees as expressed in their strategic plan and policies.
2. Developing a multi-year strategic plan - This plan will guide staff for three-five years and provide the vision and guiding principles for their work. Our current [plan](#) includes a purpose statement “innovating tomorrow by education today”; strategic priorities “our students are first - each and every one”, “our staff, families and caregivers are partners in every student’s learning journey”, “our culture of innovation build students’ confidence and success as they face the future”; operational goals; and commitments. We are currently in year 4 of our plan and will likely begin the process of developing a new strategic plan in the next school year.
3. Establishing policies - [Policies](#) are high-level documents that set goals and outline the Board’s vision on particular aspects of education. Some policies are required by law and others have been developed by the Board. Policies are operationalized through procedures, guidelines etc. that are developed by staff. Trustees have no direct control over procedure.
4. Establishing a balanced budget - Every year, usually in June, trustees pass a [budget](#) through Board motion. The budget is developed by staff and must meet the regulations set out by the Ministry of Education and agreements with various unions.
5. Monitoring and evaluating the above - Trustees, often through questions and reports delivered at Board and Committee of the Whole Meetings, must hold the Director of Education and themselves accountable to their plans and policies. This should be informed by data wherever possible.

Other duties of trustees include:

1. Communicating with the public - Trustees must be able to articulate and defend the decisions made at the Board table. Their comments and behaviour to each other, to staff and students, to families, and to the community as a whole should instill confidence in public education in general and in the Board in particular.
2. Sitting on [committees](#) - Trustees sit on various committees of the Board. Some of these committees are legislated, such as [PIC](#) and [SEAC](#), and others are created by the Board and may be ad hoc such as the School Naming Committee and the School Resource Officer Committee or standing committees such as [Student Senate](#), Discipline and Equity and Inclusion.
3. Electing a Board Chair - The Choice of Chairperson of the Board is important as the Chair is the official spokesperson for the Board and has a close relationship with the Director. The Chair is responsible for running effective meetings and ensuring that the Board is focussed on student achievement and well-being.

4. Facilities - Decisions about opening and closing schools, significant renovations and additions, and school boundary changes are made by motion at meetings of the Board.
5. Consulting with stakeholders - The Board must consult with stakeholders such as parents, students, staff, members of at-risk communities, and the community as a whole on the strategic plan and school boundary reviews. Our board also conducts consultation for our annual budget as well as on committees, in policy discussions etc. Some committees within the board, such as PIC and SEAC, are sought out for consultation on policies affecting the groups they represent. Staff may also reach out to other advisory committees for feedback on policies. This feedback is brought back to the Board when a policy is brought up for review and approval.
6. Participating in professional development - Offered through the board, through organizations such as OPSBA and through the community, trustees should regularly participate in professional development to help guide them in their work.
7. Attending school-based events - Trustees normally attend graduations and major events such as school opening. However, you can always invite a trustee to your school whether it's for an assembly, an arts night, or just for a visit. Trustees also undertake to visit schools on a regular basis as a way to connect with their constituents and learn about the schools and communities they are representing. If you would like to invite a trustee to your school, the invitation should go to the Chair. If there is a particular trustee(s) you would like to invite, you should still direct the invitation through the Chair but indicate who you'd like to invite and why.

For their work, elected trustees receive an honorarium. Trustees receive a base amount, an enrolment amount tied to the board's average daily enrolment, an attendance amount for attendance at certain meetings, and, where applicable, a distance amount for geographically large boards. The total amount ranges from approximately \$7500-\$29,000 depending on the board.

When do you call a trustee?

You can contact any WRDSB trustee with an issue or question related to education in our board at any time. You don't have to contact the trustees elected in your city. You can contact all trustees, just one, or any number in between. Trustees are available by email and phone.

There are no educational questions that you can't ask a trustee; however, anything related to the day-to-day running of the board, or any issues specifically related to your child will likely be directed to staff.

The [process](#) you should always follow, and that trustees will recommend to you, regarding concerns about your child is to first contact the classroom teacher, then reach out to the principal if the issue isn't resolved. If there are still concerns, you can reach out to the [superintendent](#). At any point in this process, you can reach out to a trustee or trustees and they will help direct you to the appropriate staff person to help you.

Any issues, concerns, or comments you have related to policies or the strategic plan should be directed to trustees. It is useful to include the Chair in these communications as the Chair will likely be looped in by other trustees as well. You can comment on any policy of the Board. As policies are on a regular review cycle, your comments can be considered by trustees at the next scheduled review of that policy. If a trustee considers your concerns to be particularly timely, a policy can be moved up in the review process. Also note that new policies can be created by trustees. If you believe our board is missing an important policy statement to guide it's work, you can bring this up with trustees as well. The Board of Trustees welcomes and considers input received from all stakeholders. As trustees must consider all feedback and the overarching goals of the Board, not all feedback will be enacted.

An important point to note about emails to multiple trustees is that you may not get a response from everyone copied. This is not because trustees are not paying attention to your email. Likely, if you have copied multiple trustees, one trustee will respond and copy the rest in. Assuming the response is appropriate, other trustees won't respond as well since the information would be the same. On certain issues, the Chair will choose to respond on behalf of the whole Board. If you want a specific response from each trustee copied, you should indicate that in your email.

It is important to note that [Board Policy 2005 - Parent-Guardian or Caregiver Support](#) states that a trustee can't act as a support person or representative for a parent at a meeting with staff. Trustees act as liaisons between families and staff helping families find the most appropriate person to help them resolve their concerns.

You also have the right to appear as a [delegation](#) in front of the Board at meetings. In the current virtual environment, we have created a virtual delegation procedure. Once we return to in person meetings, delegation will be able to present in person as well. It may be the case that we will also retain the ability to participate virtually, but this is yet to be determined.

Some activities undertaken by the current board

Since March 2020, the Board has been operating in a very different reality. The switch to virtual classes, virtual Board Meetings, extreme health and safety protocols and disruptions to student learning have been very challenging. Throughout the pandemic, however, the Board has continued to operate and provide support to staff and students. In addition, the Board and the Director of Education continue to keep student achievement and well-being at the centre of everything we do.

This board of trustees has [advocated for public education](#) with the Minister of Education, presented to the pre-budget consultation and the Minister of Finance about education budgets, formed three ad hoc committees to review Suspensions and Expulsions, the SRO program and School Names (in addition to the ongoing French Immersion Review committee) - these all will be conducted with an equity and human rights lens. In addition, we were the first board to enact

a K-12 mask policy before schools reopened in September during the pandemic - a policy which other boards quickly followed.