## Foothills School Division TRUSTEE GUIDE TO GOOD GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK 2021-2025

Public Education is vital to the health of communities. School board members are responsible for ensuring that a school district's public education system is serving the needs of all students by providing equitable access to high-quality education.

MVSD Governance Handbook (personal communication, 2018 (Campbell & Fullan, 2019)

#### **Purpose of this Handbook**

This handbook was developed as a tool for FSD trustees to deepen their collective understanding of the role and responsibilities of the governing Board and how individual trustee leadership can enhance the positive, value-added impact for all learners across the Division in a way that honours the spirit, life, and lessons this land and its ancestors teach us.

#### **About Foothills School Division**

The Foothills School Division (FSD) is in Southern Alberta on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains where the rolling foothills meet the prairie lands. Foothills School Division was created in 1938 - when district schools were amalgamated - and is one of 61 public school divisions within the Province of Alberta serving the towns, villages, and hamlets within Foothills County.

The current population is approximately 71,000 residents (2016 Government of Canada Census) and we proudly provide high quality learning experiences for 8,084 students in 25 public schools including an open campus location providing academic and behavioural support programs, a digital school, and three Hutterite Colony schools.

The Division is divided into five Wards with six trustees serving on the Board of Trustees. As an elected governing body for the Foothills School Division, roles, and responsibilities for school jurisdictions and for Boards of Trustees are defined in the **Education Act**. Sections pertaining to the responsibilities of a Board of Trustees are found in Part 4 - Board Powers and Elections (Pages 51– 96).

Governing policies for the Division are set by and authorized by the Board. Policy is directional in nature and provides the Superintendent with a framework within which management can make decisions. They are reviewed on a regular schedule and as needed to be responsive to changing circumstances. The Board policies are detailed on the **FSD website**.

#### Our Mission

Each student entrusted to our care has unique gifts and abilities. It is our mission to find out what these are ... Explore them ... Develop them ... Celebrate them.



#### LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We honour the spirit, life, and lessons this land and its ancestors teach us. We acknowledge the traditional land and territories of the Siksika, Piikani, Kainai, Tsuut'ina, and îyârhe Nakoda as well as the Foothills District and the Rocky View District within the Battle River Territory of the Otipemisiwak Métis government of Alberta.

Foothills School Division's Truth and Reconciliation for Learner Success Toolkit

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## Overview of Alberta's Publicly Funded Education System

# Why do school boards matter?

#### Why is it important to have democratically elected governing boards in public education?

School boards are an important part of Canada's political landscape and represent democratic participation in public education. They care about students and the future of education. While provincial governments fund public education through taxes, and oversee the public-school program, democratically elected governing school boards play a critical role in the delivery of public education. Partnering with communities and provincial governments, Canadian school boards have helped build an equitable, accessible, publicly funded education system.

In addition to the value of democratic representation in public education, governing school boards are a link between the community and the provincial government. Acting as navigators for families and the public when they have questions or concerns about their schools and as advocates for education funding, school boards highlight the importance of equitable access to education regardless of where students live in their province.

Most importantly, governing school boards enable local decision making in response to local needs. As regional representatives of their communities, trustees have their 'finger on the pulse' of their communities, and know what their students, schools, and communities need because they are members of the communities themselves.

Adapted from https://www.cdnsba.org/why-doschool-boards-matter

#### **An Effective School Board**

- Understands why it exists, what difference it aims to make in the community and develops a plan for this purpose.
- Maintains a focus on student achievement and well-being.
- Works together as a team.
- Serves as a role model for the education system and the community.
- Makes informed decisions through the lens of the Assurance Model.
- Strives for excellent communications with its partners and constituents.
- Has a clear sense of the difference between its role and that of senior management.
- Understands the distinction between policy development and implementation.
- Is accountable for its performance.
- Holds the superintendent accountable for effectively implementing the policies of the board.
- Monitors the effectiveness of policies and implementation plans.
- Ensures that local provincial and federal politicians understand local issues and needs and encourages them to make education a high priority.

## School Boards in Alberta

In Alberta, citizens elect trustees to school boards to act for the legislature in their local schools and communities. Funded and supported by the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Education, school boards exist because of the belief that government, and decisions, made closest to the people being governed are the most effective. In Alberta, children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 must be enrolled in a formal education program. The province's **Education Act** and its regulations establish the framework for the delivery of education programs.

There are many key partners that work together for public education in Alberta including the provincial government, school boards, educators (e.g., teachers, early childhood educators, educational assistants, etc.), students, parents, Indigenous partners, and the public.

Collaboration and inclusion are vital to ensuring that all partners, at all levels of the education system, are working together to share knowledge, skills, and experience to improve student achievement and student and staff well-being.

School Boards play a key role in ensuring that their school division operates in compliance with the law and other standards established by the province, and that programs and services remain responsive to the diverse communities they serve.

## The Role of a School Board Trustee

The role of the trustee is to maintain a focus on improving the growth, achievement, and wellbeing of all learners; to support the creation, maintenance, and promotion of welcoming, safe, caring, inclusive and respectful learning environments; and, to participate in decision making that benefits the entire school division all while building public trust. As the representatives in their local jurisdiction, trustees listen to the concerns and needs of their communities, bring them to the attention of the board, and ensure that programs and strategies of the board help all students.

Trustees establish the division's strategic direction, are financial stewards, comprise the corporate board, and are community leaders. As the Board of Trustees is a corporation, individual trustees do not hold individual authority. It is through the process of collaborating and engaging in joint decision-making that trustees fulfil their corporate role. A clear understanding of an individual trustee's role and responsibilities is fundamental to good governance.

Adapted from

https://modules.ontarioschooltrustees.org /Modules/03-Roles-andresponsibilities.aspx

### Leadership through Governance

"Local school boards play the central role in driving and guiding the process to establish a vision of education for their school systems. Indeed, as representatives of the community and governors of the school system, school boards are the best catalyst for stimulating the dialogue, consensus and actions that can shape a truly dynamic and responsive student achievement plan." (Patrick Rice, 2014, p. 45)

#### School boards exercise leadership through governance in three areas:

### Fiduciary

School Boards are responsible for the financial health of the school division. When fulfilling its **fiduciary leadership** role, the school board focuses on its legal responsibilities, ensuring that:

- each student has the opportunity to
- achieve their potential
- children are safe at school
- the jurisdiction's financial and capital
- resources are professionally managed - its business is done legally and ethically

## Assurance Leadership Model of Governance

In this role, the school board engages in public consultation and talks to the community about the community's needs, the community's youth, and the future so that all citizens have an opportunity to shape the direction that education

### Strategic

When acting in its **strategic** leadership role, the school board is planning for the future. Informed by environmental scans, the school board works

- the school system's mission, values, vision, and goals; while

- making decisions about resources, programs and services that reflect its longterm priorities.

Content adapted from the Alberta School Boards Association - Trustee Handbook (2017 - 2021)

## **Board Governance**

## Who We Are

Seven years ago, the Board of Trustees was at a nexus, from "the way it's always been" to daring to embrace innovative forward thinking governance practices - "rebel governance". We considered how to cast our vision forward, by looking past current perceived boundaries and questioning entrenched beliefs in order to frame cohesive structures.

Since that time the Board of Trustees has taken purposeful and thoughtful action to refine our governance structures. We recognized our responsibility in furthering our learning as part of an educational organization and after examining the trustee governance mindset, we began to challenge our assumptions of what a governance structure might look like for us. Guiding this work was a deep dive into understanding 'good governance' as mapped out by Davis Campbell and Michael Fullan in their book, *The Governance Core: School Boards, Superintendents, and School Boards Working Together.* 

## **Our Moral Imperative**

The Board of Trustees comes together with the Division's Executive Team to form a 'Lead Team' whose shared moral imperative drives Foothills School Division's mission and vision of placing *education at the centre of a flourishing community* – this statement articulates the overarching concept where the purpose, structures, the interconnected systems of governing, organizational leadership, teaching, and learning all come together in a cohesive framework.

## **A VISION THAT TRANSFERS**

#### SUCCESS

Innovation & Design Learning for Transfer Literacy & Numeracy First Nations, Metis & Inuit Student Success Continuous Improvement & Assurance

ENGAGEMENT

Community Partner Engagement & Communications

#### EDUCATION AT THE CENTRE OF A FLOURISHING COMMUNITY

#### SUPPORT

ontinuum of Supports Wellness & Well-Being



## **Our Unity of Purpose**

As a newly constituted Board of Trustees, we created space for developing a **unifying purpose** to set a vision for the school division that would lead us forward. Today our Board remains "committed to govern by assuring that our students and all who support them can flourish."

### **Our Commitments**

We are committed to visionary leadership that inspires opportunities and initiatives to impact the engagement, support, and success of our learners and our communities across the Division.

We are committed to engaging, communicating, and collaborating meaningfully with our learners and communities.

We are committed to providing a welcoming, caring, respectful, safe, flexible, and inclusive learning environments that embrace diversity within a culture of belonging. Governance is the process where the direction of the organization is established, and accountability both fiscal and programmatic is assured. Governance is the connection between communities and professionals, between policy and application, between strategy and tactics.

(Campbell & Fullan, 2019, p.15)

We are committed to building positive professional relationships and providing rich, meaningful, and appropriate learning experiences that are responsive to the needs of our learners and our communities.

### **Meeting Norms**

As outlined above, the Board of Trustees is committed to creating and maintaining a positive culture, beginning each meeting, including those with our elected municipal partners, reviewing the following norms:

- We trust that the motivation and inherent beliefs of our colleagues are honourable, ethical, and honest.
- We honour our roles and responsibilities of the elected office.
- We will listen to, strive to understand, and respect each other.
- We will model a culture of integrity, assurance, collaboration, transparency, and systemness.
- We are unified behind Board decisions.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

## **FSD Board of Trustees**

As the elected body, the Board of Trustees shall provide overall direction and leadership to The Foothills School Division. The Board provides fiduciary *oversight*, community *insight*, and visionary *foresight* that is reflective of the values of the community it serves. It is accountable for and will assure, the electorate that the provision of appropriate educational services and programs to students within the Division are in alignment with the **Education Act** and other associated **provincial regulations and requirements**.

## **Board Responsibilities**

# **Community Relationships and Shareholder Engagement**

The Foothills School Division Board of Trustees contributes to, enhances, and promotes **A Place for All** by building positive and productive relationships with members of the school community and the local community.

#### **Balancing Accountabilities**

In carrying out their role, trustees have the challenge of balancing their responsibilities and allegiances as representatives of their communities with their role as education leaders within the board's decision-making body. This dual responsibility can mean that the ultimate decisions made are at variance with the specific interests of a particular geographical constituency, demographic population, or interest group.

Effective board governance is dependent on a clear understanding of, and respect for, roles and responsibilities.

#### Advocacy

The Board of Trustees engages with the school community, elected officials of the Towns and County, MLA's, the Minister of Education and various trustee associations to advocate in the best interest of Foothills School Division, implementing a vision of *placing education at the centre of a flourishing community*. The **Education Act** Section 34 includes the role of a trustee to engage parents, students and the community in matters related to education. The Board is committed to advocating for public education in general and for Foothills School Division to support student learning.

#### **Student Learning**

The Board of Trustees ensures broader access to consistent and high-quality learning for each learner, consistent with **Policy 1 – Division Foundational Statements**, through the establishment and sustaining of a learning culture within the Board that promotes ongoing critical reflection on practice, shared responsibility for student success, and continuous improvement.

#### Evidence-Informed Decision Making

Board decisions must be evidence-based and informed by research that supports educational goals. Boards should base their decisions on a wide variety of evidence and current research to assure the best strategic and policy approaches are followed.

Consultation and engagement are vital so that a diversity of voices and perspectives are heard. Consultation and collaboration with families, staff, students, community members and diverse stakeholders provide information that will support the best decisions to be made.

#### The Fixed Five-Year Education Plan

The Board of Trustees has a duty to be knowledgeable of, to contribute to, and inform the Foothills School Division's Fixed Five-Year Education Plan.

FSD's Five-Year Education Plan required by Alberta Education, must align with the Alberta Education Three-Year Business Plan. The Education Plan is a formal document that demonstrates **accountability**, provides assurance for continuous improvement, and is developed for a fixed period. It demonstrates how the Division and its schools are performing in meeting their responsibilities while at the same time providing public **assurance** to all stakeholders of continuous improvement.

FSD has established a system of accountability and assurance that enables continuous improvement and evidence-informed decision making. When developing and/or updating the Division Education Plan annually, the following are taken into consideration:

- results,
- contextual information,
- provincially mandated areas of priority,
- provincial funding framework
- local goals and system priorities,
- local context, and
- perspective holder input.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for approving the process and timelines for the refinement of the Five-Year Education Plan. This includes identifying Board priorities at the outset of the planning process, monitoring the achievement of outcomes, evaluating annually the effectiveness of the Division in achieving the priorities and desired results, and annually approving each year of the Five-Year Education Plan/Report for submission to Alberta Education and for distribution to the public.

Policy 2 - Role of the Board guides the work and is implemented by Administrative Procedure 100 - Education Plan and Annual Education Results Report (AERR)

#### **Fiscal Accountability**

The Board of Trustees fulfills its oversight responsibilities for the financial reporting process - including the system of internal control over financial reporting, the audit process, and monitoring the Division's compliance with laws and regulations pertaining to the financial operations - by strategically allocating resources in the interests of all students and in alignment with the Foothills School Division's goals and priorities.

#### Budget

The Board of Trustees must approve a budget annually for submission to Alberta Education. The annual budget must address the mission, vision, values, and guiding principles of the Division in the best possible manner, meeting the needs of all students in the system at the most reasonable cost.

Preparing the annual budget is integral to the Division's planning process. The budget is based on the priorities set out in the Three-Year Education Plan and the budget assumptions and guidelines established annually by the Board. **Administrative Procedure 500 -Annual Division Budget** outlines the process.

#### **Capital Planning**

Considering the school division's longrange plan, the Board must review and approve the Three-Year Capital Plan as presented and discussed with the Executive Team annually for submission to Alberta Education.

#### Board of Trustees and Superintendent Relationship

The Board of Trustees supports a collaborative, professional relationship between the Board and the Superintendent to develop a vision of a preferred future for student success while furthering positive and productive relationships across the organization and education community.

Working closely with the Superintendent and the rest of the Executive Team in a respectful collaborative manner, the Board of Trustees is part of the Lead Team of FSD. The Lead Team works to carry out executive action and support the Superintendent's actions - which are exercised within the delegated discretionary powers of the position.

Critical to this work is fostering and maintaining an environment of mutual respect and support, one that is conveyed to processes that can contribute to meaningful change.

## Hiring and Appraisal of a Superintendent of Schools

Under the **Education Act**, the Board of Trustees as a partner in education, has the responsibility to hire a Superintendent of schools who will be entrusted with the day-to-day management of the school division.

As the Superintendent's sole employer, the Board of Trustees is responsible for conducting annual evaluations of the staff teams and trustees alike.

Effective Boards of Trustees are not above accountability and thus must have a governance review policy which includes the Superintendent; a process that is outlined and defined in **Policy 10** - **Role of the Superintendent** - Appendix A.

#### Trustee Development/ Professional Learning

The Board of Trustees engages in professional learning, both collectively and independently, to maintain and enhance knowledge and skills of effective governance principles, applying this learning to support the implementation of the Foothills School Division's vision and mission.

The Board supports and participates in ongoing Professional Learning to stay abreast of current educational governance and pedagogy enabling each trustee to view the operation of the School Division through an informed lens. Divisional learning is guided by **Policy 1** - Division-Foundation Statement,

outlining the guiding principles that allow the Board of Trustees to promote a collective understanding of policy directions and serve as the basis for equitable, learner centered, sound and consistent decision making with a focus on continuous improvement for each learner - students, and modeled for all FSD staff and entire school community. responsibilities.

Professional Learning events may be at a local, provincial, national, and international level. Professional Learning opportunities become part of the Board's annual work plan as outlined in **Policy 2 - Role of the Board** Appendix A.

#### **Board Self-Assessment**

Campbell & Fullan, (2019) suggest that one of the greatest indicators of effective governance "is the extent to which governing boards conduct regular selfassessments of their own effectiveness."

In our commitment to good governance, the Board has developed self-evaluation tools (that aligns with the updated Alberta Education Quality Standards) and has set aside time to document the actions taken for each of our areas of responsibility. Effectively utilizing the Board's Annual Work Plan (**Policy 2** – **Role of the Board: Appendix A**)

actions are scheduled to ensure the responsibilities are addressed promptly.

Ultimately, the purpose of the Board of Trustees Self-Evaluation is to support Trustees in reflecting upon, evaluating, and guiding their work as the Board strives to govern with excellence.

#### Legal Responsibilities and Liabilities

The **Education Act** sets out the duties and powers that govern all School Boards and Trustees, FSD policies, and are supported by the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA). As "statutory delegates" whose authority is derived from the **Education Act**, trustees must be aware of the legal parameters within which a trustee carries out their role as a member of the board.

Five key areas make up a trustee's legal responsibilities:

#### **Fiduciary Duty**

*Fiduciary duty* requires all trustees to act in the best interests of the corporate board, as opposed to in one's own personal interest or the interest of another entity.

To fulfill their fiduciary duty, directors, and officers MUST:

- act honestly and in good faith vis-à-vis (regarding) the corporation;
- respect the trust and confidence that have been reposed in them to manage the assets of the corporation in pursuit of the realization of the objects of the corporation;
- avoid conflicts of interest with the corporation;
- maintain the confidentiality of information they acquire by virtue of their position, and;
- serve the corporation selflessly, honestly, and loyally.

(Adapted from the Alberta School Boards Association – Trustee Handbook (2017 – 2021)

#### Confidentiality

At the beginning of each term, trustees take an oath of office requiring them to act in the best interests of the corporation (school board). Information trustees receive in confidence must be respected and not disclosed to members of the public or taken advantage of for personal gain.

Campbell & Fullan (p.80) highlight confidentiality as one of the most important 'realities of governance' that trustees need to keep in mind. Trustees can "never take off their board hat as long as they are on the board" ... and that when a trustee "participates in any activity in [the] school or community, [he/she] is always a board member, and everyone knows it."

#### **Pecuniary Interest**

*Pecuniary interest* is one form of conflict of interest. Section 85 (1)(b) of the **Education Act** defines the pecuniary interests of a trustee as "an interest in a matter that could monetarily affect" the trustee and those individuals for whom the trustee has a deemed pecuniary interest.

The pecuniary interest of the trustee's spouse or adult interdependent partner that is known to the trustee, or of which the trustee should reasonably know, is also deemed to be the pecuniary interest of the trustee.

It is also important to note that the test of pecuniary interest is that it <u>could</u> affect the trustee's interest, not that it *would*. In other words, the intentions or motives of the trustee do not matter - it is what could happen, that counts.

#### Liability

All authority delegated by the province under legislation is to the corporate school board; not to individual trustees. Therefore, any action brought against the school board is against the corporate board – not individual trustees.

The exceptions to this are in the case of:

- Improper use of funds
- Non-performance of statutory duties
- Personal gain
- Breach of common law

While the *Education Act* also contains a "good faith" protection from liability for trustees, this provision does not provide a defense to an allegation of defamation, nor does it affect the legal liability of the corporate board itself.

#### Disqualification

Section 87 of the **Education Act** outlines the circumstances that would disqualify a trustee from remaining as a trustee of the board.

#### **Trustee Code of Conduct**

The Foothills School Division Board of Trustee Code of Conduct is outlined in **Policy 4 - Trustee Code of Conduct** linking the Division's mission, values, and principles with standards of Trustee professional conduct. The code reflects the values The Foothills School Division (FSD) wishes to foster throughout the Division and, in doing so, defines and models expected Trustee behavior. It serves as both an internal guideline and an external statement of our corporate values and commitments.

Boards recognize that the public trust placed in them as a collective body is honoured through determining and enforcing norms of acceptable behaviour, as set out in local codes of conduct for trustees... A code of conduct is not intended to prevent individual trustees from expressing their opinions on issues under consideration by the board, nor is it intended to prevent the public from evaluating a board's decision-making procedures. If used effectively, the code of conduct can serve to encourage respect for divergent views and help boards focus their efforts on student achievement and well-being. It is intended to provide a common understanding about how to conduct the work of the school board with appropriate authority and integrity and, thereby, promote public confidence.

(Ontario Public School Board's Good Governance Guide)

#### Additional Responsibilities – as required by the Education Act

**Policy 11 - Appeals and Hearings Regarding Student Matters**: The **Education Act** Section 41 speaks to the Board's responsibility to hear appeals on student matters. Trustees must not participate in any discussions related to specific students that may result in an appeal to the Board to ensure the appeal process and decision of the Board remains transparently objective.

**Policy 15 - Hearings on Teacher Transfers**: The **Education Act** Section 212 (3) speaks to the Board's responsibility to hear appeals from a teacher who has received a notice of transfer. Trustees must not participate in any discussions related to a specific teacher transfer that may result in an appeal to the Board to ensure the appeal process and decision of the Board remains transparently objective.

#### **Specific Responsibilities of Individual Trustees**

A clear understanding of a school board trustee's role and responsibilities is fundamental to good governance. As the representatives in their local school division jurisdiction, trustees are required to listen to the concerns and needs of their communities, bring those to the attention of the board and the school division, and translate these into policy and strategic directions to ensure that they promote the success of all learners.

- Be familiar with Division policies and procedures, meeting agendas and reports to participate in Board business.
- Provide for the engagement of parents, students, staff, and various communities.
- Respectfully bring forward and advocate for local issues and concerns.
- Refer matters not covered by Board policy but requiring a corporate decision to the Board for discussion.
- Refer administrative matters to the Superintendent.
- The trustee's role upon receiving a concern or complaint from a parent, staff member or community member about operations is outlined in Administrative Procedure 151, Parental/Guardian Complaints or Concerns or Dispute Resolution.
- Keep the Superintendent and the Board informed in a timely manner of all matters coming to his/her attention that might affect the Division. Personnel matters are to be brought to the attention of the Superintendent only.
- Attend Board meetings, and committee meetings as assigned, preparing to participate in, and contribute to, the decisions of the Board to provide the best solutions possible for education within the Division.
- Recognize their fiduciary responsibility to the Division and act in the best interests of the Division understanding that Division needs are paramount.
- When delegated responsibility, they will exercise such authority within the defined terms of reference in a responsible and effective way.
- Participate in Board/trustee development sessions so the quality of leadership and service in the Division can be enhanced.
- Be cognizant of provincial, national, and international educational issues and trends.

- Share the materials and ideas gained with fellow trustees at a Board meeting following a trustee development activity.
- Strive to develop a positive and respectful learning and working culture both within the Board and the Division.
- Liaise with School Council(s) as assigned and attend COSC meetings.
- Become familiar with, and adhere to, the Trustee Code of Conduct. Report any violation of the Trustee Code of Conduct to the Board Chair, or where applicable, to the Vice-Chair.
- Represent the Board at official meetings, including Alberta Education and provincial association meetings, and at public functions requiring a Board representative.

## **Superintendent of Schools**

#### **Responsibilities**

The Superintendent of Schools provides advice and support to the **Board of Trustees** and ensures **board policy** is implemented effectively. They are supported in this work by Assistant Superintendents and the **Division Support Team**.

The Superintendent is also responsible for planning, organizing, directing, controlling, coordinating and evaluating administrative regulations, and sound educational and business practices to achieve the **Division's Vision, Mission, Values, and Priorities**. The value of the board is in the strategic oversight and support that the board provides. The board brings the passion, the drive, the commitment to achieve the moral imperative, not distracted by day-to-day administrative challenges. This is a purposeful action. (Campbell & Fullan. 2019)

#### **Policies vs. Administrative Procedures**

Of the nine characteristics of 'strong districts' highlighted by Kenneth Leithwood in his 2013 paper **Strong Districts And Their Leadership**, it is the eighth characteristic that applies directly to Boards of Trustees and governance. Leithwood suggests that:

# Growth in student achievement and well-being is encouraged when elected boards of trustees focus most of their attention on board policy and concern themselves with ensuring the district mission and vision drive the district's improvement efforts.

Two separate sets of documents reinforce the distinction in Foothills School Division between the Board's responsibility and the Superintendent's executive or administrative duties. Further guidance comes from the **Education Act** where a distinction is made between a school board's "duties" which are mandatory and its "powers" which are discretionary.

- **Board Policies** are developed to highlight and support the governance function of the Board and are reviewed regularly.
- Administrative Procedures are the primary written source of administrative direction for the Division. They are designed to be entirely consistent with Board Policies and are an extension of policy in the form of procedures.

## **Parent and Community Engagement**

## Working with School Councils, Parent Involvement Committees, and Communities

The Foothills School Board of Trustees is committed to collaborating meaningfully with our learners and communities to support student learning and well-being. This is highlighted in the **Division Education Plan**.

- We communicate Division progress and resource use transparently and to guide future decision-making.
- We consult widely and in a variety of ways with our learners, parents, and communities to include their voice in our decision-making and build partnerships moving forward.
- We seek to understand the worldviews in our learners and communities and use this knowledge to inform our decision-making.
- We do this to assure our learners and communities that our decision-making is based on the best interests of all our learners.

#### **School Councils**

The Government of Alberta recognizes the value of parents and the community in the education of children, and by law (Section 55 – the Education Act) requires school councils in every school operated by a school board in Alberta.

Established school councils:

- focus on what is best for all students in the school.
- consider the interests of all school stakeholders.
- develop, maintain and reflect the culture of the school.
- represent the parent voice in the school community.

#### Administrative Procedure 110 – School Councils

Administrative Procedure 111 – Council of School Councils

Every Foothills School Division school has a school council comprised of parents, principals, teachers, and attended by a ward trustee, who work together to effectively support and enhance student learning. The school council plays an important role as an advisory body to the school principal and the school board. The school council helps to create a sense of community in the school and helps to build the relationship between parents, educators, and the community. School trustees attend each school council meeting to provide updates on key issues discussed at the Board meetings and to ensure parent perspective is heard and informs Board decision making.

Information about individual School Councils can be found on each school website.

## **Advice for Trustees**

Be patient... You were elected for a term in office; take advantage of the time to learn. You are only new once.

Choose to govern professionally; it will determine your legacy. Most important, develop a governance mindset.

Be a systems thinker. Connect the dots.

Have a strategic focus. Understand and be proud of the awesome responsibility of setting the direction for the [division].

Commit to deep learning. Always do your homework. You cannot be part of something you don't understand.

Be trustworthy; build trust with your board, your [division], and your community.

Contribute to creating a positive, powerful board culture; understand how your board works.

Represent the needs of all your community, not a part.

Be a leader on your board, in the [division], in the community.

Always remember you and your board are modeling the ethical and moral standards you expect the children [and staff] of your [division] to emulate.

(Campbell & Fullan 2019, p. 82)

# References

### **Articles and Books**

Alberta's Assurance Framework. Retrieved from: https://www.alberta.ca/accountability-education-system.aspx#jumplinks-1

Campbell, D. & Fullan, M. (2019). *The Governance Core: School Boards, Superintendents, and School Working Together*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

This book provided us with an opportunity to deepen our knowledge about good governance principles and guided our committee work in preparing this Trustee Handbook, our Board Self-evaluation documents and the organization of our Agendas for bi-weekly meetings.

Epstein, J. L. (2001). School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Hargreaves, Andy & Shirley, Dennis & Wangia, Shanee & Chang-Bacon, Chris & D'Angelo, Mark. (2018). Leading From the Middle: Spreading Learning, Well-Being, and Identity Across Ontario. Retrieved from: (PDF) Leading from the Middle: Spreading Learning, Well-being, and Identity Across Ontario | Chris K. Chang-Bacon - Academia.edu

Leithwood, K. (2013). Strong Districts and their Leadership. Retrieved from: **www.education-leadership-ontario.ca** 

This article provided us with a deeper understanding of the principles that guide strong districts and provided us with an opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness indicators and use them to guide our governance conversations and decisions.

*School Boards Matter*, The Report of the Pan Canadian Study of School District Governance (2013). Retrieved from: https://www.cdnsba.org/why-do-school-boards-matter

This report reviews the role of board-governed school districts in contributing to successful public education systems.

Rice, Patrick. (2014). Vanishing school boards: where school boards have gone, why we need them, and how we can bring them back. Rowman & Littlefield.

Senge, P. (2006). The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization. Random House Books.

This was a reference that expanded and informed our understanding about systems thinking and the core disciplines in building a learning organization.

Sinek, S., Mead, D., and Docker, P. (2017). *Find Your Why: A practical guide for discovering purpose for you and your team.* New York, NY: Penguin Random House.

This book supported the FSD Board of Trustee elected in October 2017 in defining their purpose statement that has guided common purpose through their term.

## Websites

Alberta Education - alberta.ca/education.aspx

Government of Alberta Education Act (2019) - qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/e00p3.pdf

Canadian School Boards Association -cdnsba.org/

Alberta School Boards Association - asba.ab.ca

Foothills School Division -foothillsschooldivision.ca

This site provides access to all the documents that guide the division including highlights that are part of our communications with all stakeholders.

Rocky View School Division - rockyview.ab.ca

Ontario School Trustees -ontarioschooltrustees.org

FSD trustees access this site as part of their professional learning. It is from The Ontario Education Services Corporation (OESC). This program offers trustees a substantive overview of the areas essential to their governance role.

British Columbia School Trustees Association - **bcsta.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/THE-ROLE-OF-BOARDS-AND-TRUSTEES-IN-BC-Digital.pdf** 

# Appendices

#### Appendix A

#### FSD Trustees Onboarding Resource (November 2024)

The Foothills School Division Trustee Onboarding Resource was designed to welcome and support new trustees with information about how to begin to navigate their new role and responsibilities.

These are the questions most asked by new Trustees. Note that section 9 provides a list of educational acronyms and jargon commonly found in Alberta School Trustee documents.

- 1. What are the key documents that will guide my work?
- 2. What does a month in the life of a FSD School Trustee look like?
- 3. What do I need to know about confidentiality and codes of conduct?
- 4. What are the Board committees? What purpose does each committee serve? How are members determined?
- 5. What technology programs are used by the Board and how do I access them? How do I get help?
- 6. How are trustees reimbursed for time spent in carrying out Board business?
- 7. What are some affiliated organizations that Trustees work with throughout the year?
- 8. How do Trustees work with and support School Councils?
- 9. What acronyms and jargon are commonly found in Alberta School Trustee documents?

#### Appendix B

#### New Trustees Orientation Resource (October 2022)

This resource was developed for the October 20, 2021, Board Orientation Meeting as an initial introduction to the role of Trustee with excerpts from the Foothills School Division Trustee Guide to Good Governance

The compilation of this Guide to Good Governance Handbook has captured the Board of Trustees' deep, collaborative, and reflective learning around governance culture and governance practice; providing all those who engage with this living document, transparent and authentic insight into the voice of our Board.

