

12 Running Effective Meetings

As a School Board Trustee, you have an essential role to play at School Board Meetings. This module explores the procedural framework that governs Board meetings and provides insights into working with parliamentary procedures.

Sometimes, Board meetings may seem a little daunting. But after completing this module, you will understand the intricacies of running effective meetings and be well prepared to contribute effectively.

WHY A BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETS

Role of Board of Trustees

Understanding the broader role of a School Board Trustee can help us better understand the agendas of meetings, the motions necessary to achieve the decisions of the Board, and your role at meetings of the Board.

The Board of Trustees must make strategic direction-setting a priority that takes precedence over involvement in operational matters. Each Trustee must help develop policies that carry out the strategic direction.

The Board of Trustees has an oversight and monitoring role over the implementation of these policies. The policies are then carried out by the Director of Education through his or her staff through the delivery of effective and appropriate education programs that promote student achievement and well being.

By understanding your School Board's particular model of governance, it becomes easier to have effective meetings and accomplish objectives.

What is a Meeting?

A meeting is when a group gets together to make decisions that bind the organization. There are many factors to consider in shaping a meeting. First, you must determine whether your meeting is a true Board Meeting within the meaning of the *Education Act*.

What is a Meeting? continued

A public meeting is required if the Board of Trustees meets with the purpose of making decisions or advancing in a material way the decision-making process. When a group of trustees meets to make a decision that binds the Board, then the public must have the opportunity to observe the decision-making process.

A meeting of the committee of the whole Board, or any other committee of the Board may be closed to the public when certain subject matters are under consideration. This is called an in camera meeting.

Trustee meetings for professional development, training, information sessions or briefings by staff are not meetings of the Board so long as no decisions are made or discussions occur that advance the decision-making process.

How are decisions made by a Board of Trustees at a meeting?

Once a Board of Trustees is at a properly constituted meeting of a Board, it needs to make decisions. It's important to remember that individual trustees have no powers to make decisions that bind the Board.

- Decisions by a Board of Trustees are made by the group.
- Once decided upon, the decision becomes a decision of the entire Board of Trustees regardless of how an individual voted.
- Decisions are made through voting on motions in accordance with the particular parliamentary procedure the board follows.
- Sometimes, regarding simple matters, decisions can be made via consensus.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT

You may know of other organizations that make decisions through consensus. Given the political nature of school boards, this decision-making method isn't usually effective.

However, if a motion is moved, seconded and debated, and there is no objection to the motion, the chair can pass the motion. This is Unanimous Consent and is helpful in speeding up routine matters such as approving the minutes of a meeting.