



MANITOBA
School Boards
ASSOCIATION

School board member *handbook*



School board member *handbook*

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been developed as a reference guide for all Manitoba school trustees. It has been organized into two main sections: [The Work of School Boards](#) and [A Closer Look](#).

The Work of Schools Boards looks at some of the fundamental aspects of school boards in the Manitoba context. It starts with an examination of what it actually means to govern. This section also includes information on how a school board typically operates, and looks at the structures that have been developed to facilitate those operations. *The Work of School Boards* concludes with an examination of how a school board works with other key personnel within the division or district as part of the leadership team, and how that leadership team works towards its primary goal: success for all students.

A Closer Look is just that—a more in-depth discussion of three key responsibilities of school boards in Manitoba. Each year, school boards are accountable for over \$3 billion in education spending. While school boards employ professionals to deal with day to day financial matters and assist them with their deliberations, school board members need a good understanding of how education is funded and the budgeting process if they are to fulfill their fiduciary responsibility. In a similar vein, school boards do not directly hire or evaluate most staff, but school boards are an employer and that position brings with it its own unique set of rights and responsibilities. And finally, school boards are community representatives, but they can only fulfill that role when they are in touch with those communities. Community engagement describes a gamut of processes and actions that school boards can use to make sure they truly represent all components of their communities.

This handbook also contains basic information about Manitoba's education system, the answers to some frequently asked questions, and a number of appendices that will help readers sort through the maze of acronyms, jargon, and education organizations that can be a little overwhelming at times. It also includes a directory of websites, print documents and other resources where readers can find more information on some of the topics discussed in the handbook.

School boards are, by definition, local authorities, which mean they have the ability to establish some of their own rules and procedures. As a result, no provincial publication can address all the possible variations in school board practice and procedure that exist across Manitoba. This handbook should be considered in conjunction with all relevant legislation and divisional policy manuals.

We hope you find this publication useful. Please contact us with your comments, questions, and most importantly, your suggestions about how we can improve future editions of this handbook.

Josh Watt,
Executive Director



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THE STRUCTURE OF MANITOBA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

Under the constitution, K-12 education is a provincial responsibility in Canada. In Manitoba, as in most other provinces, the provincial government has delegated a significant portion of that responsibility to locally-elected school boards.

However, the reality is much more complex than the simple two-level structure suggested by this legal framework. As Figure 1 shows, school boards and the provincial government are only two of the many players in a public education system that, when functioning effectively, is focused on student achievement.

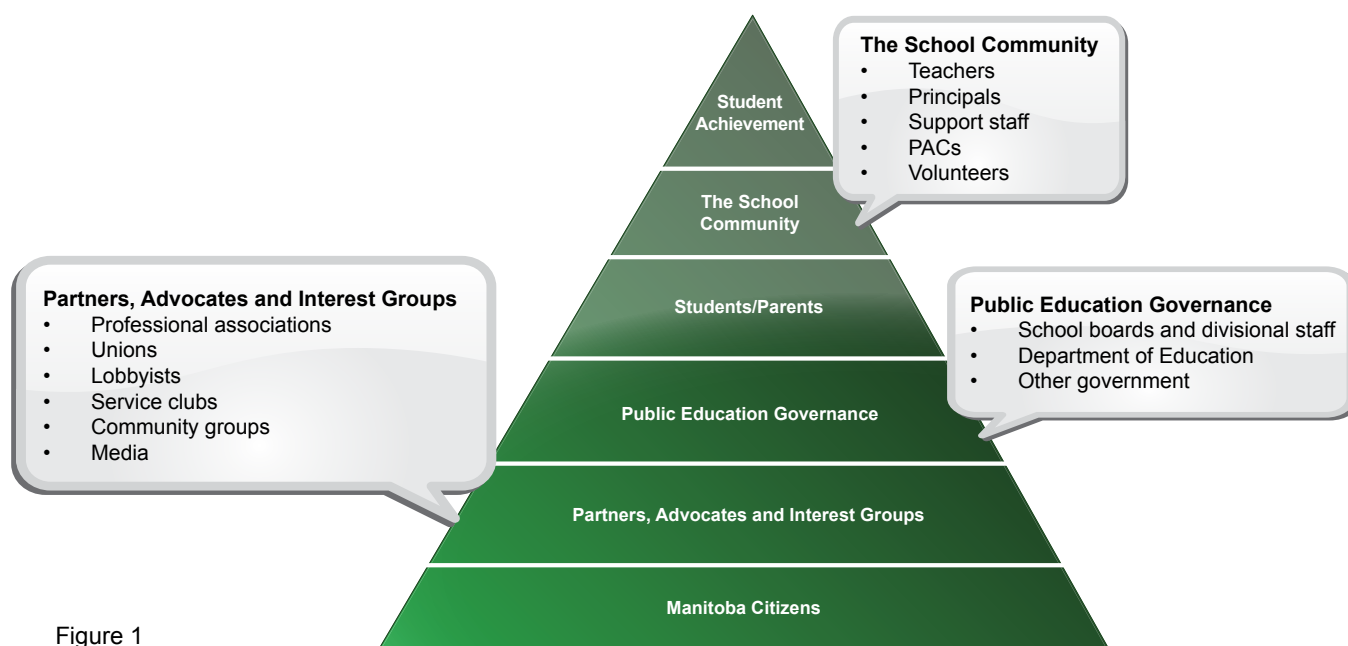


Figure 1

In this model, school boards and the provincial government occupy the level of public education governance. In some ways, boards and the province can be seen as co-governors of the system. Both have a mandate from those who elected them, and both strive to balance the needs and wants of those who have an interest in the system (partners, advocates and interest groups) with their primary responsibility of serving students, parents and school communities by advancing student achievement.

As mentioned, the provincial government has delegated much of its constitutional responsibility for education to school boards. It has done this through legislation such as [The Public Schools Act](#) and [The Education Administration Act](#), which are binding upon all public school boards. This legislation advises school boards of what they must do (their duties) and what they may do (their powers). By fulfilling their duties, school boards ensure that every public school student in Manitoba has access to a standard of educational programming; by exercising particular powers, school boards are able to shape local schools in accordance with community priorities. For a sampling of school board duties and powers, see table on [page 4](#).

Legislation also identifies areas where the Minister of Education may make regulations. These regulations are also binding upon school boards. The primary difference between legislation and regulation can be found in the origins of each. Legislation originates as a bill passed by the Manitoba legislature, and any changes must also be adopted by the legislature. Regulations, on the other hand, are administrative tools developed as required by the government of the day, and their alteration is an administrative, not legislative, function. For this reason, regulations are generally seen as being more flexible than legislation (they can be implemented or changed more quickly), but less transparent (no public hearings or consultations are required for their adoption or change). The table on [page 4](#) provides a sample of some of the areas where regulations exist under *The Public Schools Act* and *The Education Administration Act*.

Figure 2, Authoritative Linkages (below), illustrates the relationship between school boards and the provincial government. Both draw their authority from and are accountable to the community that elects them. School boards are elected with the sole mandate of public education, whereas the provincial government has multiple mandates, including public education. The provincial government names a Minister of Education to oversee the functioning of the education system on its behalf, and creates an education department to carry out the necessary administrative functions, many of which involve working with school boards. So, while school boards are directly responsible for the students and programs in their schools, how they exercise that responsibility is shaped by public input, legislative prerogatives, and administrative directives.

Some Duties and Powers of School Boards

Every school board **shall**:

- Provide adequate school accommodation for every resident having the right to attend school
- Ensure that each student is provided with a safe and caring environment
- Ensure that each school has a written policy respecting food and nutrition
- Employ teachers and other personnel and arrange for the payment of salaries
- Purchase textbooks for free distribution to pupils
- Comply with directives of the minister

A school board **may**:

- Provide nursery or kindergarten instruction for children 3 to 6 years of age
- Establish evening, part-time day or summer schools
- Provide lunch to students, with or without charge
- Decide who may be a school visitor
- Provide transportation for students for after-school activities
- Establish and provide for any course of study approved by the minister

--excerpted from Part III of *The PSA*

Authoritative Linkages

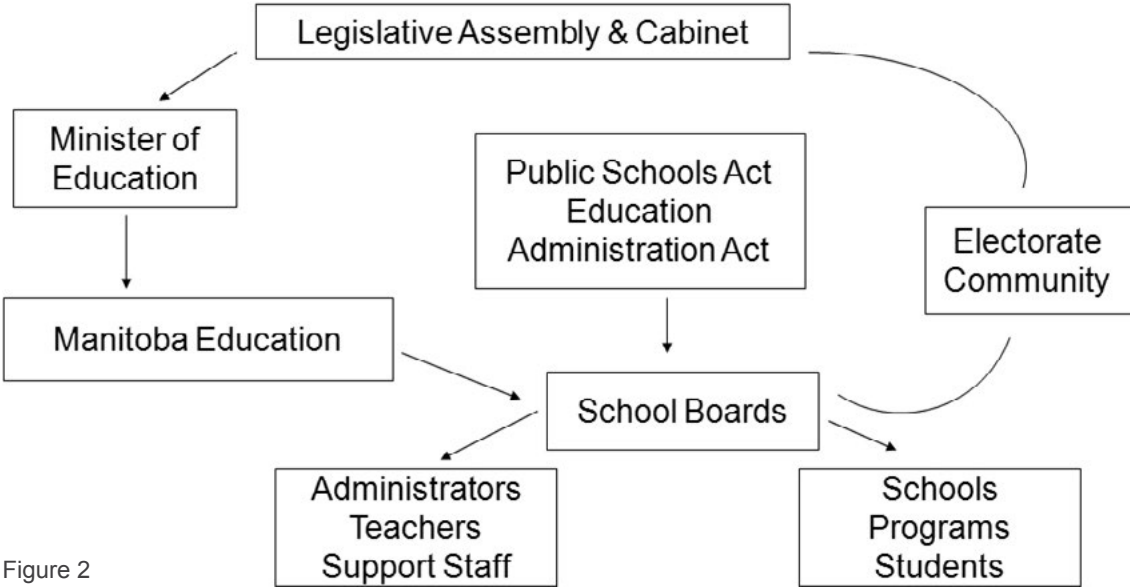


Figure 2

School boards and the provincial government may be seen as co-governors of the public school system, and there are formal structures in place to facilitate the exercise of that joint responsibility. But school boards do more than govern the education system. They ensure that communities have a say in public education, and they help build the economic and social strength of communities by building strong public schools. In order to fulfill those responsibilities, they need to ensure that they are in touch and in tune with students, parents and communities. The structures that exist to facilitate the necessary sharing at these levels tend to be less formal than those at the governance level, but they are no less important.

The school community, as shown in [Figure 1](#), includes teachers, principals, support staff, parent advisory councils (PACs) and volunteers. Students and parents, shown on their own level in this diagram, may be considered a subset of the school community. School boards meet regularly with the various employee groups, whether in the context of contract negotiations, staff-board liaison committees, or the myriad occasions that bring school board members into schools. They connect with school volunteers at special events, and many school boards also hold volunteer appreciation days. Parent advisory councils, while functioning primarily at the school level, also interact with their local school board on a regular basis. Structures exist to facilitate communication between a school board and the various groups that make up a school community, although the extent to which these structures are used can vary considerably.

What is not shown in [Figure 1](#), but something that is critically important to strong schools, is the role played by the broader community—those individuals, groups and organizations that do not have direct ties to the public education system. At the most basic level, all residents of a community become involved if and when they cast their vote for school trustee every four years. They become involved if they attend a meeting of the school board, or a pre-budget consultation. At the same time, voter turnout in school board elections can be improved in most jurisdictions, along with public interest or attendance in school board meetings. One of the major challenges facing school boards today is finding effective ways to ensure all community members not only have a voice in the decisions that affect local schools, but that they also know that their voices are heard and valued.

For a closer look at this challenge, see the Community Engagement [section](#) of this handbook.

Some Areas Covered by Education Regulations

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High school graduation requirements• School days, hours and vacations• School buses and transportation• Languages of instruction and study | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Religious exercises in schools• Patriotic observances• Teaching certificates and qualifications• Persons having care and charge of pupils |
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THE WORK OF SCHOOL BOARDS

WHAT IT MEANS TO GOVERN

Why do we have school boards? What do they do? Do we really need them?

These questions have been the focus of frequent and sometimes intense debate. The daily operations of public schools both within Manitoba and across the nation must be effectively communicated by school boards to promote greater appreciation for the core work of our school communities and the community investment that is made in supporting that work. It has clearly demonstrated that the general public supports democratically elected school boards and equally believes that funding investment is required to improve outcomes for pupils. All trustees must fulfill the high standard of “trust” that defines their responsibility. So, what does it mean then to govern? Why is it important and what should effective school board governance look like in our province?

Public education is a foundational element of free and democratic societies. In Canada, our public school system has been a great equalizer in ensuring opportunity and equity for a diverse student body within a civic culture which values the rule of law, security of the person, protection of basic rights and freedoms, and representative decision-making. Public education has been and continues to be a mechanism for promoting and developing in our youth the habits of responsible citizenship and active participation in the democratic process.

In Manitoba and elsewhere in Canada the public education system is owned by the public and governed by the public through elected representatives in provincial/territorial legislatures and local school boards whose unique mandate is to ensure that community values and priorities are reflected in the education programs and services offered in local public schools. Interestingly, locally elected school boards in Canada existed prior to confederation and as such are one of our earliest models of representative decision-making in public affairs.

In the very simplest of terms, to govern is to choose, to decide, to direct and to control— and to remain transparent and accountable to students, their families and the communities on whose behalf school boards exercise this governance. In their decision-making about the configuration and delivery of K-12 education in Manitoba public schools, school boards must ensure that schools and divisional policies and operations are congruent with provincial laws and regulations and applicable federal statutes. Truly effective school board governance is so much more than mere compliance with higher order statutes. To govern well is fundamentally about two things – what the governing body chooses to focus on and how it chooses to operate in getting its work done.

First and foremost, it is critical that trustees have both a voice and vote at the board table, and the potential to influence perspectives and opinions of other board members, divisional staff and community constituents in shaping school board decisions, divisional policies and operations. Trustees are the eyes and ears of the school board within the community and represent all citizens within the school division boundaries regardless of ward structures or voter support in the electoral process. Once a decision is made, by longstanding practice, all trustees must respect that decision irrespective of whether they individually supported it. This reflects corporate governance models, under which school board governance is situated.

Acting on behalf of all people who own the public education system, school boards have several roles and wear multiple hats. They are above all **governors** whose job it is to provide direction, oversight and control in the management and delivery of education programs and services in public schools within their respective jurisdictions. As the local governing body the school board:

- sets the policy parameters for divisional and school operations;
- establishes divisional priorities and goals;
- allocates resources in support of goal attainment;
- monitors progress toward goal achievement; and
- holds the entire system, including the board itself, accountable for results.

As **advocates** school boards work to create awareness and understanding in the public arena about education issues and the realities and challenges within our public schools. Ultimately they seek to influence both public opinion and provincial education law and policy regarding appropriate education programs and services to meet the developmental and learning needs of all students.

Effective school boards are also **community leaders** who engage the public in meaningful ways about the important and emerging education issues of the day. They build relationships and develop partnerships to invite citizen input and ensure active community support for the education of children and youth in local public schools.

Finally school boards are **stewards** of a public trust, invested with the authority and charged with the responsibility to act in principled and prudent ways on behalf of their communities and to make decisions which serve the best educational interests of students.

[Figure 3 \(on page 8\)](#), the Key Work of School Boards, illustrates one way in which these roles and some of the various functions within them can be configured. Most importantly, student learning and achievement are at the centre of effective school board governance. Today, the value-added by elected school boards is reflected in the achievement levels of their students. This reality is equally reflected in emerging provincial policy and legislation in several jurisdictions. In the educational research on high impact school board governance, it is the board's ability to set high expectations for all learners and to maintain a systems focus on student learning and school improvement that leads ultimately to greater equity in educational outcomes for all students.

As [Figure 3](#) demonstrates, school boards play a significant leadership role in establishing and articulating the vision, the values and the goals which guide and frame program and service delivery for student learning within their respective jurisdictions. As representatives of the public interest in education matters, school boards must seek to understand and to assimilate the diversity of values, interests and expectations of their multiple publics and to translate these into specific policies, plans and budgets to support learning and achievement for all students.

It is often said that leadership is in large part relationship and this is especially so in public education matters. On any given matter before the school board, there are multiple perspectives and voices to be considered. Moreover, any particular decision or course of action can have implications for numerous individuals, groups and organizations both within the school and in the community at large. Finally, in the wake of significant demographic, economic and social change in communities in recent decades, the role of schools has expanded far beyond academic instruction only. Many of the challenges and issues which schools seek to address on behalf of their students require both the input and active involvement of external community agencies and of other levels of government as well.

Effective school boards devote considerable time, effort and resources to cultivating positive relationships with these various entities and they are both deliberate and strategic in their outreach initiatives. Successful relationship building with constituents and partners requires that the school board be inclusive in its approach and that its processes be marked by honest and open communications, receptiveness to new ideas and differing perspectives, and genuine commitment to respectful dialogue and collaboration with school communities and with external agencies which impact schools and students.

The Key Work of School Boards

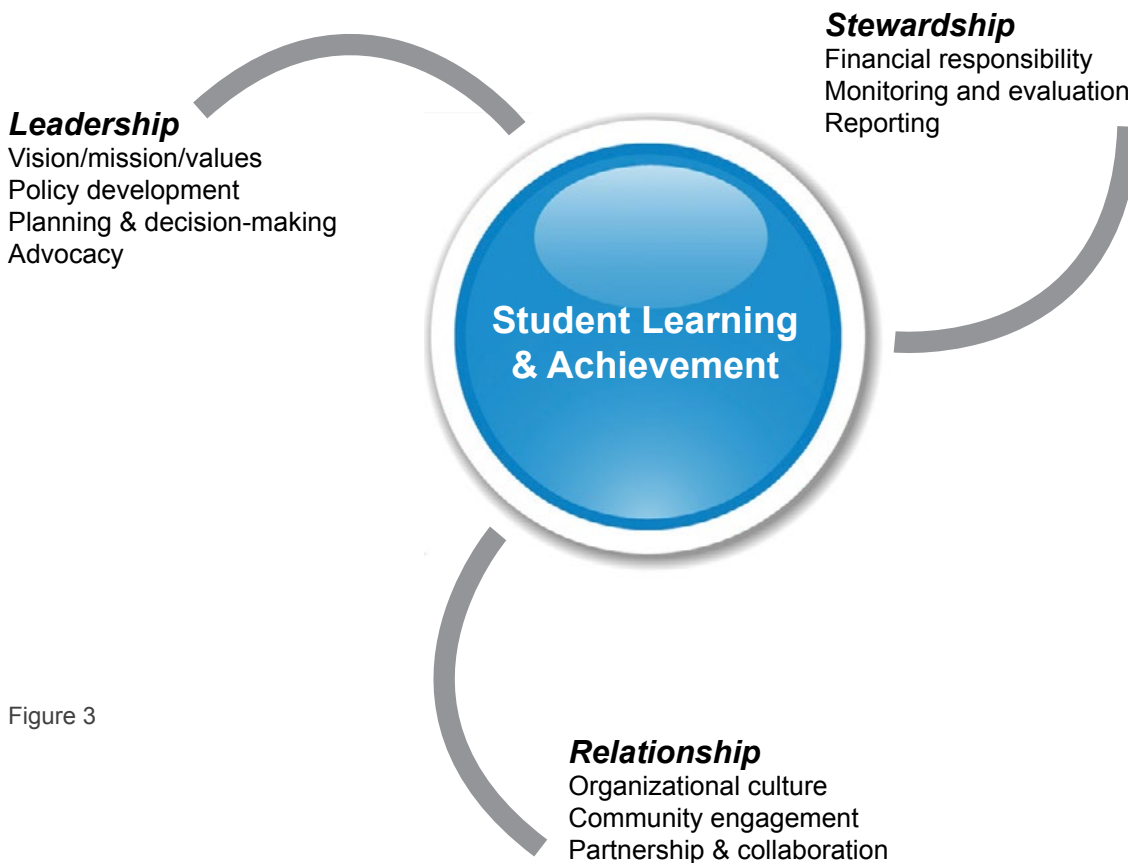


Figure 3

As elected officials in Manitoba, school boards are both legal decision-making bodies and taxing authorities. Charged with the responsibility to ensure the provision of education programs and services for our youngest and most vulnerable citizens—our children—school boards oversee the expenditure of large sums of public monies and are major employers across the province. The sheer scope of this authority and the potential impacts of school board decisions for individual citizens and for communities demand high levels of transparency and accountability in school board operations and decision-making. Strategic reasoning, evidence based decision-making, prudent fiscal management, clearly defined communications processes and protocols, information sharing, public reporting, professional conduct of school board members – these are the key elements which exemplify stewardship and engender public confidence in elected school boards in our province.

Public education by its very nature is a political institution and its governance a political process. Diverse constituents, conflicting values, competing interests and scarce resources are the constant stock of education policy and decision-makers at both provincial and local levels. The challenge for locally elected school boards is to harness these multiple forces in an on-going process of dialogue, debate and creative compromise that honours the public interest in education matters and achieves the desired educational outcomes for students in the public schools within their respective jurisdictions. At the same time, once a decision or policy has been made, it is equally important to understand that focus on student and school well-being and improvement must be reflected through board unity— a majority has achieved the decided outcome and any dissent may be formally recorded. The interests of every division depend on all members working in collaboration to address the next priority before the board without undue fraction and discord.

SCHOOL BOARD ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION

The basic components of school board organization and operation are set out in *The Public Schools Act*. With a few exceptions, Manitoba's school boards have five to nine members. Those exceptions—Division scolaire franco-manitobaine, Frontier School Division, and divisions having a designated First Nation (reserve) ward—are defined in legislation or regulation. Also with a few exceptions, school divisions are divided into wards for electoral purposes, and each trustee represents roughly the same number of electors within a school division.

Operationally, all school boards are required to employ a secretary-treasurer to perform certain financial and administrative functions. While not required under law, legislation enables a school board to employ a superintendent, and to delegate certain responsibilities to that individual. In Manitoba, all school boards have elected to do so. *The Public Schools Act* also defines some basic procedural rules: when and how the board chair and vice-chair will be elected, who may attend board and committee meetings, how a decision of the board can be reversed, notice requirements for meetings, etc.

But beyond these legislative requirements, school boards have the authority to determine for themselves how they will organize and operate. They do this largely through their procedural by-laws and policies.

As a general rule, procedural by-laws provide a detailed outline of how board business is actually conducted, while policies—at least as they relate to school board operations—frequently deal with intra-board and interpersonal dynamics, or happenings outside the board room. Both procedural by-law and policy may reiterate requirements of *The Public Schools Act*, but any such provision retains the force of law and is non-negotiable and immutable, at least from the board's standpoint. Furthermore, a school board may not adopt a by-law or policy that conflicts with a requirement of *The Public Schools Act*, its related regulations, or any other provincial or federal statute.

A school board's procedural by-laws and policies are generally sufficient to guide day-to-day operations and the occasional "special circumstance." When something truly unexpected happens, something that has been anticipated by neither *The Public Schools Act* nor the board's own rules, school boards should have a named parliamentary authority to turn to for guidance. For most Manitoba school boards, that authority is *Robert's Rules of Order*. The Canadian *Bourinot's Rules of Order* is another option.

Some of the major components commonly found in procedural by-laws and policies are outlined below.

Administrative system: Manitoba's school divisions have generally adopted either a unitary or dual system of administration. These terms reflect direct lines of authority and reporting linkages between the school board and senior divisional administrators. Under a unitary system, the superintendent reports directly to the school board, and other employees report through the superintendent. Under this structure, the superintendent is sometimes referred to as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or superintendent and CEO. Under a dual administrative system, the superintendent and secretary-treasurer each report independently to the board in their own areas of responsibility. In order for any administrative system to work well, however, expectations and responsibilities must be clearly articulated. That's where procedural by-laws and policies come in.

Roles and responsibilities: While the basic roles and responsibilities of school boards, trustees, and board chairperson are outlined in *The Public Schools Act*, more detail is required to ensure school board effectiveness. For instance, legislation says little about a school board's responsibility to engage its community beyond the requirement that it hold its meetings openly and conduct annual consultations on its budget. By moving beyond these minimum requirements in its own governing documents, a school board can send a strong signal about the value it places on community input. For example, the board may require that it involve community members on certain committees, that it meet directly with student representatives on an occasional basis, or that it hold its regular meetings in different locations throughout the division.

In *The Public Schools Act*, the role of individual trustees is defined largely by what they must or must not do to remain a school board member. Trustees must attend meetings regularly, as unexcused absences from three or more consecutive meetings will result in their removal from office. Trustees must also physically attend at least one meeting in-person every three months. In order to retain their seats, trustees must equally remain actual residents of the school division, and cannot be convicted of certain criminal code offences, as outlined in *The Public Schools Act*. These legislated provisions are enacted through the legal process and not subject to a board vote.

But boards routinely ask much more of their members—serving as liaison with school councils and representing the board at school and community events, for example—and by clearly stating any such expectations, boards legitimize these roles. Similarly, legislation has little to say about the role of board chairpersons beyond their presiding at meetings. When a board has assigned additional duties to this position, whether those duties are acting as media spokesperson, attending committee meetings as an ex officio member, or any other regular function, their by-laws and policies should say so.

Committees: School boards vary considerably when it comes to the number and nature of committees that they use, and as with other matters of school board operations, there is no single “right way.” There are two main types of committees: standing and ad hoc. Standing committees, which may include finance, personnel, negotiations, facilities, policy and transportation, have an ongoing role within the overall operations of the division. Ad hoc committees, on the other hand, are struck to perform a specific task, and when that task is complete, an ad hoc committee is dissolved.

Whether committees are standing or ad hoc, a school board needs to be clear about their role, and its by-laws and policies are where that clarity should be found. As a starting point, a board has to decide what standing committees it will use, the mandate of each, and how membership will be determined. It will want to address procedural issues such as how the chair of a committee will be determined, and what role, if any, the board chair will have on committees—ex-officio member, non-voting ex-officio member, or something else. Finally, a board should be clear about the reporting procedures committees are expected to follow.

Boards also need to ensure that none of their committee procedures violate provisions of *The Public Schools Act*. For example, school board decisions must be made in open, public meeting. This means that committees are restricted to an advisory role, whether or not they are designated as such; their job is to explore options and make recommendations to the board, which legally must make the final decision. And while not a specific requirement of *The Public Schools Act*, school boards should normally guard against striking committees whose membership constitutes a majority—and thus a quorum—of the board. This prevents any confusion in the minds of either the public or even committee members themselves about whether they are meeting as a board or a committee, and of their concomitant authority.

One committee that is used by virtually all school boards from time to time deserves special mention: committee of the whole. Membership on the committee of the whole is, as the name suggests, the entire school board. When a board is meeting as committee of the whole, two things happen. Firstly, the normal rules of debate are often relaxed and participants may be able to speak to an issue more often or for longer than they could in a regular board meeting. Secondly, in accordance with the committee rules laid out in *The Public Schools Act*, a committee of the whole meeting can take place in-camera—that is, without the public being present. This second reason is the driver behind most committee of the whole meetings, and it is a legitimate one, provided the board has sound reason for wanting to meet in-camera. Normally, those reasons have to do with confidentiality or sensitive financial matters. Staff or student discipline is an example of a confidential matter which would normally be discussed in-camera, while the acquisition of a specific piece of property would be deemed a sensitive financial matter.

From time to time, boards may want to ask themselves the question “why are we meeting in-camera?” If they can’t give a good reason—and “because we’ve always done it this way” doesn’t count—they may want to rethink their decision. And no matter how good their reason, boards are still bound by one fundamental rule: no final decision can be made in committee. A matter considered in committee of the whole must still come before the board in public session if a final decision is required.

Conflict of interest and codes of conduct: *The Public Schools Act* details what constitutes a legal conflict of interest for school board members in Manitoba. Conflict of interest is defined very precisely as relating to a pecuniary interest of a trustee or his or her dependent. *The Act* also outlines how a trustee can avoid being in conflict, procedures to be followed when a conflict is identified, and the consequences for failing to respond appropriately in a conflict of interest situation. However, many school boards found that the narrow definitions of *The Public Schools Act* did not address all the situations that might be perceived as conflicts of interest. To fill this gap, *The Public Schools Act* was amended in 2012 to require all school boards to adopt their own codes of conduct, subject to minimum, province-wide provisions. These codes of conduct not only speak to intra-board and inter-personal interactions in general, but also enable school boards to identify—and prohibit—actions which could be seen as conflicts of interest under a broader definition of the term. By adopting such codes, boards set high expectations for their own actions and behaviour, thereby contributing to a positive divisional culture that is marked by respect, commitment and transparency.

Communications protocol: As compared to other levels of government, the work of school boards often draws limited media or public attention, despite the wide-ranging impact of their decisions. However, from time to time comments are sought on emerging developments from members of the public or from the media. Every school board should therefore include among its policies a communications protocol that clearly outlines who speaks for and on behalf of the board. Most often, a board's spokesperson is its chairperson, its superintendent, or both, depending on the topic. Other individuals—frequently divisional staff with specialized knowledge or understanding—may be authorized to provide factual information, or speak on matters that fall within their area of expertise. The board may also decide to delegate the authority to speak on a particular matter to someone other than its usual spokesperson. For instance, the chair of an ad hoc committee may be in the best position to comment on matters before that committee (assuming those matters are public, that is). Generally, a communications protocol should be flexible enough to enable a timely and thorough response to media inquiries. While the precise details of protocols vary, what is most important is that board members and divisional staff alike know what the communications protocol entails, and that they respect its provisions.

Solid procedural by-laws and strong policies that are known to and supported by all who are subject to them can have a major impact on a school board's efficiency and effectiveness. A board ensures its by-laws and policies remain effective through the commitment of those around the board table.

The meeting of an effective board is marked by clarity of purpose, productive use of time, and quality decisions. It is orderly and decorous, but does not stifle constructive dialogue, openness and collaboration. Flexibility and creative thinking are encouraged, and responsibility for both the conduct of the meeting and the decisions arising during the meeting, is shared by all board members.

The meeting of a struggling board reflects that status and as a result the meeting often lacks focus, with issues revisited frequently and without resolution, or where new issues are introduced without proper notice. Debate in such meetings may be long on opinion but short on facts. The end result can be agreement without commitment, and a subsequent inability to explain the rationale for a decision when pressed.

Structured decision-making (see image below) is one way school boards can make both their meetings and their decisions more effective. The multi-step process can be applied to most matters that come before a board. It starts with a clear statement of both the issue at hand and the desired outcome.

Then, possible solutions are explored, and from those possibilities, achievable options are developed and evaluated. From this "short list," the board selects its preferred alternative, which will then be implemented, most often by the administration. However, the board retains responsibility for the decision. This ongoing responsibility means that the board monitors and assesses the impact of its chosen course of action to determine whether it is achieving the desired outcome, as identified in the beginning of the structured decision-making process. If not, the effective board revisits its decision to determine whether it needs to alter its chosen course of action.

The Steps of Structured Decision-Making

1. Identify the issue
2. Define the desired outcome
3. Explore possible solutions
4. Develop and evaluate achievable options
5. Select the preferred alternative
6. Implement actions
7. Monitor and assess impacts

THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

“Life is not a game that can be played alone.” Motivational speaker Ian Percy contends that success in almost any endeavour – business, industry, sports teams, schools, families, faith communities, etc. – depends largely upon our ability to work together and to collaborate with both purpose and passion. As the operation of public education systems becomes increasingly complex and leadership roles and responsibilities more widely distributed within them, effective shared leadership between the elected school board and its senior administrative personnel is critical to ensuring that school divisions meet their legal and moral obligations to students, to communities and to provincial government authorities.

School trustees, elected as individuals to represent community interests in public schools, bring to their role a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and diverse perspectives about schools, students and learning. Certain first term trustees may have minimal background in governance, and therefore before actions undertaken by the board as a corporate body may be new for them. As they grow professionally as a trustee, they will start to see yourself as a member of the board. The realities about the roles of school boards and divisional administration within the school system will also be accompanied with and the realization that individual trustees act as part of a whole: once their voice has contributed to the agenda, it is the full board that then makes its final decision.

For school board members, shifting their own thinking as well as community perceptions of their role from ‘I’ to ‘we’ can be a daunting task. Learning to work together as a school board and developing the board’s capacity to function as an effective team with senior administrators is paramount.

Thoughtful reflection and dialogue, civility and reciprocal respect around the board table, active listening on the part of all team members, strong individual and collective discipline with regard to focus on the work and compliance with established operational procedures and protocols are necessary ingredients in developing the trust that is so critical to positive working relationships amongst board members and between the board and its senior officials.

Historically, the governance literature has drawn a sharp and clear line between the school board’s policy making role and the administration’s active management of day-to-day operations of schools. Of the governance models in current vogue, the one perhaps most cited is the Carver policy governance approach with its very strict ‘board-ends’ and ‘management-means’ distinction and its insistence on the CEO as the board’s only employee and singular contact with the rest of the organization. While some Manitoba school divisions have implemented aspects of the Carver model into their governance practices, in reality, the board-superintendent and/or senior staff relationship in most divisions does not conform rigidly to Carver’s policy governance model. Furthermore, this relationship tends to be configured somewhat differently from one school division to the next, shaped by the history, the culture and the specific context variables of each.

This said, there is, nonetheless, a real distinction between the work of boards and the work of superintendents and other senior divisional staff. Successful shared leadership at this level in the organization necessitates common understanding about their respective leadership roles and responsibilities and the linkages between them. Storey (1994) captures this notion in his concept of the mutuality of leadership which he suggests “is not so much about who will lead and who will follow, but about who will carry primary responsibility for each aspect of the work, and how tasks will be shared and distributed” (p. 19).

In laying out his concept of the mutuality of leadership, Storey acknowledges the distinction between board and staff roles, but suggests as well a broad zone of interface where this mutual leadership occurs. Effective mutual leadership (illustrated by [Figure 4 on page 13](#)), in his view, is characterized by “close liaison, dialogue and influence, both by boards and their chief executives, around the primary responsibilities of each.”

A Framework For Mutual Leadership

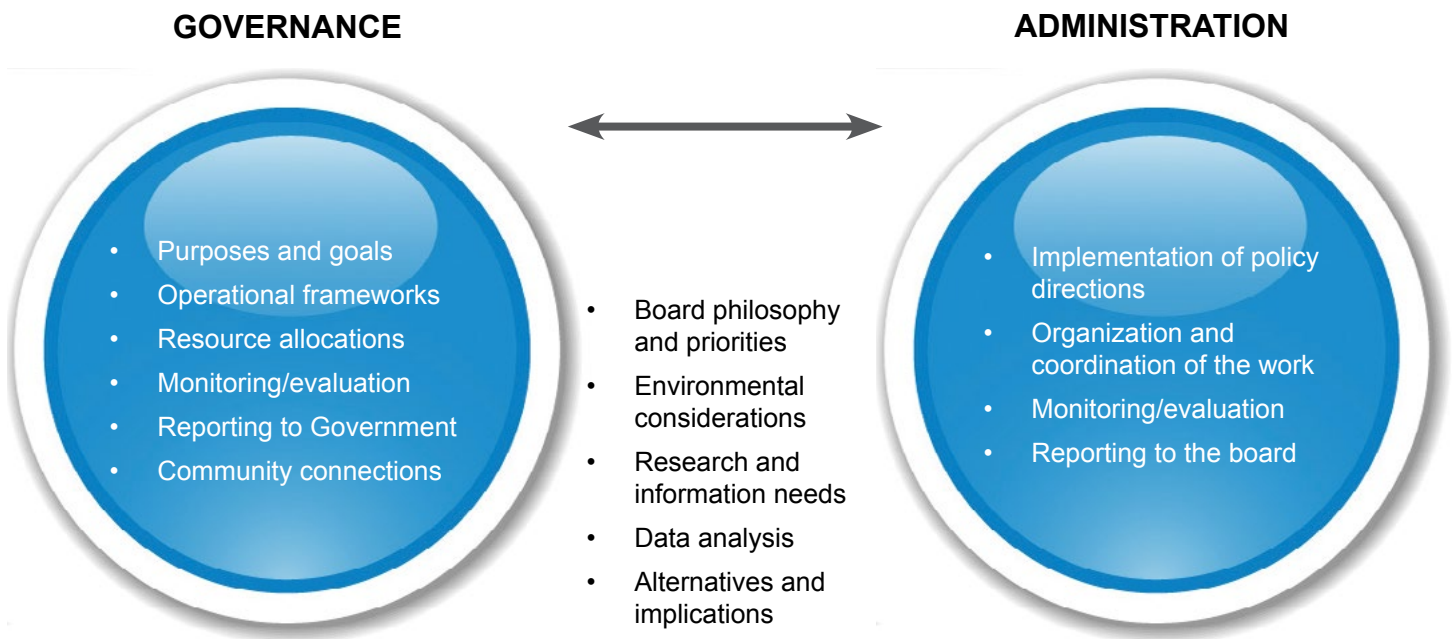


Figure 4

Defining the desired partnerships between the board and the senior administration and sustaining a positive working relationship is the mutual obligation of both. It requires close liaison, on-going dialogue and reciprocal influence around the primary responsibilities of each.

In 2015 the Manitoba School Boards Association, Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) and Manitoba Association of School Board Officials (MASBO) released a revised version of an earlier joint [publication](#) entitled *Leading Together – A Resource Guide for School Boards, Superintendents and Secretary-Treasurers*. This resource manual is intended to assist boards, superintendents and secretary-treasurers in developing positive working relationships within a context of shared leadership. In so doing it combines Storey's concept of the mutuality of leadership with McGettrick's (2004) work on leadership within a culture of responsibility. This document identifies and elaborates on three dimensions of leadership shared by boards and senior administrators – vision and values, policies and governance, and professional practices and board operations. The evaluation framework and the discussion questions contained in the document can be used by boards and senior administrators in clarifying their complementary leadership roles and in strengthening their effectiveness as a senior leadership team for the school division.

LEADERSHIP FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Technological, economic and social changes in recent decades have dramatically altered expectations of our public education systems and the requirements for system accountability with regard to student learning outcomes. No longer is it acceptable that significant numbers of students drop out of school or fail repeatedly, never achieving high school completion. No longer is it acceptable that achievement levels of particular vulnerable student populations lag far behind those of their more advantaged counterparts. In today's knowledge-based economy, it is deemed imperative that all students acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies necessary for full participation in a global society and it is the expectation that our public schools will ensure they do.



The school improvement literature is replete with research studies which have examined the impacts of various factors on student achievement levels – teaching styles and instructional practices, principal leadership, parental involvement, organizational structures, curricular changes, school climate, technological innovations, etc. The literature is generally silent, however, on the role that school boards can play in providing divisional leadership to foster school improvement and enhance learning outcomes for all students. The Iowa School Board Foundation Lighthouse Study was conceived expressly to explore this question.

As governing entities and policy-making bodies, school boards are clearly at some distance from teaching and learning in the classroom. Yet, findings from the initial phase of the Lighthouse Study suggest that the beliefs, decisions and actions of school boards can have direct and dramatic impacts on the conditions within schools and classrooms that cause improvement efforts to succeed or to fail. More specifically, the Lighthouse Study revealed that in high achieving districts, board members believed that all students could achieve at higher levels and they were committed to finding ways to ensure every student's success. These boards expressed confidence in the system's capacity to do so, viewing situation variables like poverty, racism and lack of parental involvement as challenges to be overcome rather than excuses for inaction or lack of progress. Individually and collectively, school board members in high achieving districts demonstrated a solid knowledge of curriculum, instruction, assessment and staff development, and understood how these impact student learning. In contrast, board members in low achieving school districts displayed little to no understanding of these aspects of schooling, nor did they deem it necessary to be knowledgeable about them.

Subsequent phases of the Lighthouse Study worked with board/superintendent teams in multiple school districts and in multiple states to explore more deeply the board's leadership role in student learning and to understand more clearly the nature of the board/superintendent partnership in supporting and enabling school improvement and enhancing student achievement.

Researchers identified five main leadership roles of school boards in improving student achievement and seven areas of performance related to these roles:

1. Boards need to set clear and specific expectations for the outcomes of improvement efforts. The board's focus must be on results rather than the particular strategies staff might use to meet stated goals and expectations.
2. Board members must be vigilant in holding the board itself and district staff accountable for meeting identified expectations. On-going monitoring of progress and insistence on corrective action where progress is not evident are essential elements in moving improvement efforts forward.
3. Board members need to understand fully what it will take to meet the expectations that have been set and to ensure the required supports and processes are in place – alignment of system components, quality professional development opportunities for staff, district wide leadership supports, etc. – to guarantee success.

4. School boards must create an awareness amongst staff and community members about the need for change and build shared commitment to ensure that all students are successful.
5. Board members must recognize and embrace the need to learn together as a board team and to engage in deep and reflective dialogue in order to reach common agreement about priorities and goals, what it will take to achieve them, and their collective commitment to support improvement efforts.

The findings of the Lighthouse Study also suggest that the quality of the board/superintendent working relationship is an important variable in ensuring the conditions that support system wide improvement. In high achieving school districts of the study, school boards were not passive “rubber stamps” of administrative plans and recommendations nor did superintendents see boards as needing to be “managed” to keep them at a safe distance from education matters. Rather, the board and the superintendent worked together as a leadership team to maintain a strong and sustained focus on systemic improvement. They engaged with each other as partners who honoured the diverse perspectives and expertise that each brought to bear on the work and their distinct yet complimentary leadership responsibilities in improving student achievement. Board members engaged in extensive dialogue with the superintendent and other divisional staff about the focus and the direction of the improvement effort, but respected the role of administrators and staff in doing the actual improvement work in schools and classrooms.

As a leadership team, the board and superintendent developed a strong trusting relationship wherein they could examine and challenge each others’ views, problem solve together around identified realities and challenges, jointly study and interpret data, ask critical questions and scrutinize each others’ performance in ways that strengthened and mobilized staff across the entire school division.

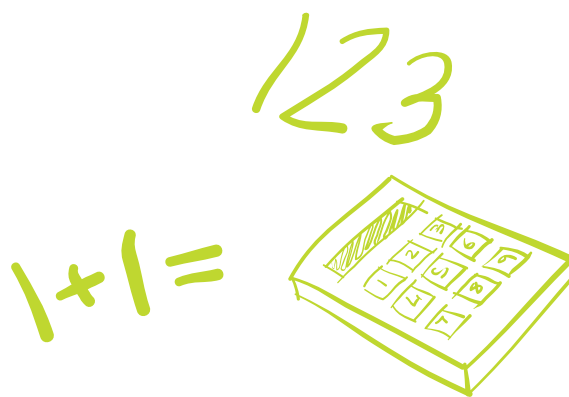
Notwithstanding the multiple hats that school boards wear and the myriad of complex issues which they face on a daily basis, their primary focus must be student learning and achievement. It is the reason boards exist and why they are elected. The Lighthouse research demonstrates that school boards do indeed matter. They matter because without effective community interests, local voices and local choices leading ongoing change and innovation, systemic improvement in public schools remains elusive. While there are certainly many examples of individual, school-based improvement initiatives which have produced dramatic gains in student achievement, large scale system-wide change or division-wide scaling and replication of such improvements often requires effective senior leadership at the board and superintendent levels. By maintaining a clear focus on goals, and by building divisional capacity alongside and together with the superintendent and their team, school boards which can promote wider and deeper student success for their community.



A CLOSER LOOK

EDUCATION FINANCE

Public education represents significant community investment in Manitoba. In 2022, nearly 700 public schools were operating in 38 school divisions. More than 35,000 employees—teachers and clinicians, education assistants, custodians, bus drivers, administrative staff—worked together to meet the needs of 184,000 students. The cost? Annual operating expenditures of \$3 billion.



In order to fulfill their fiduciary responsibility to communities, and their educational responsibility to students, school board members require a good understanding of both the funding (revenue) side and budgeting (expenditure side) of public school finance. This section will provide an introduction and overview of these complex issues.

An overview of the process

Financing public schools is a joint responsibility of the provincial government and school boards. Annually, the provincial government assesses its resources and priorities in areas of responsibility such as health, child and family services and education, and determines how much money it will provide for public schools operations. The provincial department of education then allocates a share of those dollars to each school division (according to a new funding model to be established in 2023). The exact amount varies from division to division. The province may also issue budget instructions and requirements, and establish a framework for school divisions to use when reporting expenditures.

In consultation with its community, a school board establishes divisional priorities and goals, which are reflected in an annual budget. The school board develops and ultimately approves this budget, which is reported to both government and community. Given that funding from the province pays for only a portion of budgeted expenditures, the school board must then determine how much additional revenue it will need to balance its budget. Traditionally, this revenue is generated by the special levy, a property tax levied by school boards in support of local schools. The school board sets the special levy at a rate that will provide the funds needed to fill the gap between what the province provides and what the budget requires. While 50% of all education property tax is now rebated to eligible ratepayers as of 2022, property tax revenues continue to fund school operations today (as they do in 7 out of 10 Canadian jurisdictions), with roughly a third of all operating investments raised in this manner.

All school divisions operate on the same fiscal year: July 1 to June 30. This means that school boards generally adhere to the same budgeting timelines. Throughout the year, they work with their administration to monitor the current year's budget, and make what changes they can to remain on target. From November to January, the divisional leadership team makes expenditure projections and begins developing the next year's budget. Expenditure projections take into account factors like enrolment fluctuations, changes in provincial mandates, or local programming decisions.

The government's funding announcement often comes in late January, and with that announcement, school boards know exactly how much support they will be receiving from the province. They then engage in the legally-required consultations with their communities, and finalize their budgets on the basis of those consultations. With their budgets finalized, school boards determine how much money they will need to generate through the special levy. By March 15, they are obligated to notify municipalities of their special levy requirement and municipalities are obligated, in turn, to collect that tax on behalf of school boards.

Provincial funding

Typically, by late January of each year, the provincial government announces how much money it will be providing in support of public education for the upcoming year. In 2023, a new funding model will be established under which Provincial funds are allocated to individual school divisions on the basis of criteria and definitions set out by the Department of Education. The intention of the new model is to provide school boards with greater flexibility and equity province-wide. While details of the new funding model have yet to be released, it is important for board members to understand how the overall grant structure has functioned in past.

While details of the Funding of Schools Program change from year to year, the overall grant structure has remained relatively constant for a number of years.

Base support came as an enrolment-based grant that is provided to school divisions in an amount that reflects the number of students served. Base support is flexible funding designed to offset costs related to such educational fundamentals as instruction, curricular materials, library and student services, and occupancy costs. Counselling and guidance, staff professional development and information technology are other “base support” areas.

Categorical support was provided for specific purposes, and funds received as categorical grants must be expended in the identified areas. Transportation, special needs, English as an additional language, and senior years technology education are all areas that may receive categorical support from the province. As well, categorical support may be provided to school divisions facing special challenges, such as those arising from enrolment changes.

Equalization support is used by the provincial government to offset some of the disparities that could otherwise exist from division to division across Manitoba. School boards are able to augment provincial funding by levying their own tax on property, the special levy. School divisions that have a high assessment—the overall value of taxable property—in relation to the number of students they serve can raise funds more readily than can those with a low assessment per pupil. Without some targeted intervention, low assessment school divisions might have to limit educational offerings. Alternately, the ratepayers in such divisions might be taxed at a significantly higher rate than those in other areas of the province. Equalization support is intended to minimize either of those scenarios.

Capital support is funding designated for new building construction and major upgrades to existing facilities. While school divisions are responsible for the ongoing, routine maintenance of schools and other buildings, the provincial government has assumed responsibility for more major expenditures. It provides a pool of funding each year and, as of 2020, the Department of Central Services a group composed of education department officials, (which now includes the secretariat of the former the Public Schools Finance Board), distributes those funds in accordance with government directives and declared school division priorities.

School division budgets

When setting their budgets, as when making other major decisions, effective school boards keep students and their learning and developmental needs at the forefront. However, school boards may find it especially challenging to retain this focus when faced with the external pressures and competing concerns and interests that often emerge at budget time.

From time to time, the provincial government introduces new mandates that school divisions must accommodate. When these mandates take the form of additional school credits or student service enhancements, the cost to school divisions can be substantial. The assessed value of property can fluctuate, as can student enrolment numbers. Both of these factors have a significant impact on the funding a school division receives from the province, and on its own ability to generate revenues through the special levy. Provincial and local economic conditions may dictate against any tax increase, but community priorities and perspectives may demand new programs or increased service levels.

So, how do school boards resolve these various tensions come budget time? They start by asking themselves two questions: what must we do, and what can we do without? The answers to these questions help them identify the viable options from which they will have to choose.

On the surface, the answer to the question of what a school board must do is straightforward: it must fulfill its responsibilities under [The Public Schools Act](#). This means maintaining enough schools and employing the necessary staff to offer the provincially-mandated curriculum to every child who is legally entitled to a public school education. Of course, nothing is that simple. Some “optional” programs, such as kindergarten, have become such an integral part of our public school system that most people would be astonished to learn that their school board was under no compunction to continue offering them.

When considering what they can do without, school boards need to focus on two primary considerations. The first of these, as already mentioned, is the learning and developmental needs of students. Sometimes, there are some tough choices to be made here. A school board may be providing early literacy programs that are designed to help children at risk of failure catch up with their more advantaged or academically able peers. At the same time, it may be offering enriched programming to high school students through Advanced Placement or dual credit courses, programming that will help these students realize their full potential. A school board may have to decide: is one of these options more important than the other?

As it ponders the “what can we do without” question, a school board’s second consideration needs to be community priorities and perspectives. School boards exist because public education is so fundamentally important to a community’s well-being that citizens have historically demanded direct representation. Budget consultations are one way school boards can check their communities’ perspective on budget matters. School boards that engage in ongoing and meaningful discussions with their communities well in advance of the annual budget cycle are in a much better position to gauge local priorities and perspectives, and develop a budget that reflects the same.

Once a school board decides what it can do without, everything that remains is moved to the “must do” category. If a funding shortfall still looms, school boards do have some other tools that can help them balance their budgets.

A Glossary of Education Finance Terms

assessment per pupil: the total value of taxable property in a school division, divided by the number of students

base support: provincial, enrolment-based funding that is not dependent on any particular expenditure

budget consultations: legally required public meetings that are held before a school board finalizes its budget

capital costs: costs related to the construction and major renovations of schools and other divisional facilities

categorical support: provincial funding that must be expended for a specific purpose (e.g. transportation, special needs)

equalization support: provincial funding generally provided to school divisions with a smaller per pupil tax base

FRAME (Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education): a standardized system of reporting education expenditures that must be used by all Manitoba school divisions

Funding of Schools Program (FSP): the process by which the provincial government distributes funds to school divisions

mill rate: rate at which property is taxed

operating costs: costs related to the day-to-day functioning of schools and educational programs (e.g. salaries, supplies, utilities)

special levy: a local property tax levied by school boards in support of public schools

Rather than eliminating programs and services, school boards may be able to reconfigure their delivery. For example, declining enrolment may mean reduced provincial funding, but it may also open the door for some cost savings associated with combined-grade classrooms. It may be possible to deliver some low-enrolment high school courses via distance education, or agreements with neighbouring school divisions may lead to cost-sharing. In recent years, there have been some limits placed on school boards' ability to reconfigure schools and programming. As one example, except as approved by the Minister of Education, a school board may not close a school. Even with such limitations, cost savings options do sometimes exist, and school boards have a responsibility to look for them.

In the end, the budgeting process comes down to finding the dollars to do what needs to be done. In years past, some school boards were able to access operating reserves—dollars not expended in previous years—to cover budgetary shortfalls. The danger of that particular course of action lies down the road in future years, if the expense still exists but the reserve has been depleted. School boards reserve levels are also capped, which must be carefully considered. As a result, the ability to use reserve funds to balance operating budgets has been constrained for most school boards. However, the COVID-19 pandemic clearly demonstrated the importance of retaining reserve funds for unforeseen emergencies.

When all other options have been exhausted, school boards have a final recourse: increasing revenue by increasing the special levy. Obviously, tax increases are rarely popular. In Manitoba, education taxes on property have now been rebated by half to eligible ratepayers. The Manitoba government has used tax credits and tax rebate programs to lessen the impact of education property taxes on residential and farmland property, and on senior citizens and pensioners. While tax increases are almost always unpopular, they are sometimes necessary investments from the community into its future. When a school board otherwise lacks the funds needed to fulfill its responsibility to the children of the community it serves, careful and balanced investment is certainly required.

Manitoba is unique in Canada in that it is the only province where school boards province-wide retain the ability to levy property taxes in support of education.* However, it is far from unique in its use of property taxes for that purpose. The difference between Manitoba and other provinces is that in Manitoba, the level of taxation is determined by locally-elected school boards, while elsewhere in the country that decision is made by the provincial government alone.

* In Québec, some school boards still retain taxation authority through regional tax boards and commissions.

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD AS EMPLOYER

School boards delegate most day-to-day employment functions to the superintendent, secretary-treasurer or other administrators, but ultimate authority and responsibility resides at the board level.

Many of the rights and responsibilities of the school board are prescribed in provincial and federal legislation. Beyond these legislative requirements, additional provisions affecting the employer/employee relationship may reside in employment contracts, collective agreements, and the school board's own policy manual.

Not all legislation is created equal, and in Canada, the Constitution takes precedence over any law enacted by a province. While employment issues fall almost exclusively under provincial jurisdiction, all employers (and the province itself, for that matter) are bound by the provisions of *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms* within the Constitution.

Provincially, *The Human Rights Code* protects all individuals and groups, including employees, from discrimination. Four other pieces of provincial legislation deal with different aspects of employment. *The Labour Relations Act* establishes rules around employer/employee interactions, in particular those related to the conduct of labour negotiations in a unionized environment. *The Employment Standards Code* is in many ways a law of minimums and maximums. It prescribes minimum wages, minimum vacation entitlements and maximum hours of work. It also identifies statutory holidays and outlines requirements for overtime pay and notice periods for terminating employment. As the title suggests, *The Workplace Safety and Health Act* outlines the responsibility of employers in ensuring the safety and well-being of those working for them. *The Accessibility for All Manitobans Act* contains an entire standard addressing employment for persons requiring reasonable accommodations even while *The Human Rights Code* remains the ultimate authority in this regard. *The Public Schools Act* also contains employment provisions, but these are unique in that they apply for the most part only to teachers, and in some instances, override provisions of the other employment statutes listed here.

This provincial legislation can impact in different ways on different groups of employees. Some of these differences, as well as other defining features of the employment relationship between a board and various employee groups, are outlined below.

Senior administrators

Senior school division administrators, most notably the superintendent and secretary-treasurer, are often employed under personal contracts. Wording of these personal contracts, which are agreed to by both the employer and employee, normally goes beyond legislated employment provisions. It should be noted, however, that a personal employment contract cannot provide for a salary or benefit level below a provincially-mandated minimum and remain legally enforceable.

The document *Leading Together: A Resource Guide for School Boards, Superintendents and Secretary-Treasurers*, a joint publication of the Manitoba School Boards Association, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents and Manitoba Association of School Business Officials, includes a list of clauses commonly included in a superintendent's contract-of-hire. Among these are:

- term or length of contract;
- duties in the form of assignment or job description;
- remuneration;
- vacation;
- sick leave; and
- termination.

Such a contract may also contain provisions about agreed-to evaluation processes, benefits, leaves and professional activities or memberships. This document may be obtained from each of the authoring association's websites. The associations strongly recommend that the two signatories to the employment contract—the school board and the prospective superintendent—vet the contract with legal counsel before it is finalized.

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Non-teaching unionized staff

Non-teaching employees in Manitoba school divisions perform a wide range of jobs, and may belong to a union. Sometimes, these unions are strictly local; in other cases, they are locals of larger national or international unions such as:

- the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE);
- the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC);
- the United Steelworkers of America (USW); or
- United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW); or
- UNIFOR.

In addition to the general provisions of provincial labour legislation, primarily *The Labour Relations Act*, the relationship between the school board and its unionized employees is governed by the terms of the relevant collective agreement. Those terms are established as a result of the collective bargaining process between the school board and the union. Both sides in the bargaining process are represented by their negotiations committees, and normally the school board and the union or local membership must ratify the collective agreement before it becomes official.

In the event that the school board and union cannot reach an agreement on their own, they may call on the services of a conciliator or mediator. If those efforts also fail, the final dispute mechanism is strike/lockout, unless an alternate method such as binding mediation/arbitration has been agreed to by both parties.

Collective agreement provisions for non-teaching staff will normally cover items such as:

- wage or salary scales;
- vacation entitlements;
- hours of work;
- benefits (such as health or disability insurance);
- leaves (such as sick leave and parental or adoption leave);
- seniority determination;
- dispute resolution provisions (grievances); and
- layoff or termination provisions.

Non-teaching non-unionized staff

In the case of non-teaching employees, the decision as to whether or not to unionize rests with the employees themselves. In some school divisions, certain non-teaching employees have elected to forego union membership.

Legally, a school board's employment relationship with non-teaching non-unionized staff is less structured. In the absence of individual employment contracts or collective agreements, the provisions of provincial legislation generally prevail. Having said that, school boards have a duty of fairness to all employees, including those not represented by a union. That fairness should be reflected in any board decisions that impact this group of employees. The terms and conditions of employment for non-unionized staff are usually defined in and governed by board policies.

Teaching staff

All public school teachers in Manitoba are members of The Manitoba Teachers' Society (their provincial union) and their own divisional teachers' association, which is a local of the provincial body. While teachers are covered by most of the same labour law provisions as are other school division employees, there are a number of significant differences. These differences are largely the result of provisions of *The Public Schools Act*, other education legislation, and the employment contract each teacher signs at hiring.

To start with, there are a number of items contained in non-teaching collective agreements that are not subject to the collective bargaining process in the case of teachers. These include:

- placement on the salary scale, which is determined by the Teacher Certification Branch of Manitoba Education, and which is based upon educational qualifications and years of teaching experience.
- the existence or form of a pension plan, which is, for teachers, the provincial Teachers' Retirement Allowance Fund (TRAF).
- termination provisions, which are clearly outlined in the individual teacher contract prescribed within *The Public Schools Act*.
- final dispute resolution mechanism, which is, by law, binding interest arbitration in the form of a hearing before a three-member arbitration panel; strikes and lockouts are prohibited.

Teacher employment contracts

Section 92 of *The Public Schools Act* sets out various aspects of the agreements an individual teacher must sign with the school division. There are three types of employment agreements currently in use:

- Teacher General Contract (which replaced the previous Form 2 Contract), for teachers employed on an ongoing basis, whether full time or part time;
- Limited Term Teacher General Contract, for teachers to be employed for a defined term of one year or less, whether full time or part time; and
- Substitute Teacher Contract, signed between a school division and teacher where the teacher will provide services on a day-to-day, irregular and unscheduled basis, usually no more than 20 days in the teaching assignment.

Teacher General and Limited Term Teacher General contracts include the way in which a contract may be terminated. The processes are similar, the difference being that a teacher under a Teacher General Contract who has worked for a Manitoba school division for more than one full school year in the previous three years has the legislated right to have the reasons for the termination go before an arbitration board.

Types of arbitration in the education sector

Interest arbitration is the process whereby differences in collective bargaining are settled by a third party. *Rights arbitration* is the process whereby differences related to the content, meaning or application of the collective bargaining agreement (the formal grievance process) are settled by a third party. A rights arbitration board would also hear and decide matters involving employee discipline and termination, including the right of teachers under section 92(4) of *The Public Schools Act* to arbitrate reasons for their termination.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

School boards routinely make decisions that directly affect the students in their schools, but the impact of many of those decisions is felt in the homes, businesses, and gathering places of the broader community. By routinely engaging all members of the community in discussions about what is happening in their schools, school boards can make better decisions, and those decisions will be better understood and supported..

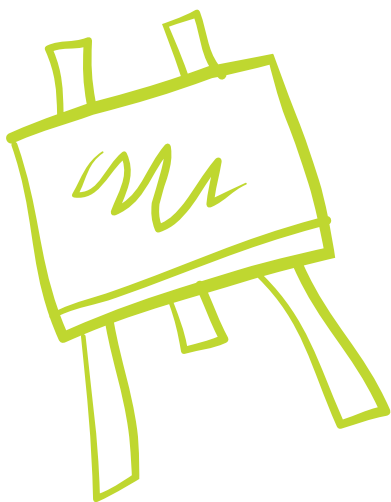
Why now—The 21st century social context

The school board system of education governance was founded on the principle that schools should be managed by members of the community those schools would serve. This principle is still fundamental today, but every community is diverse, the individuals that comprise a division's leadership team—the school board and senior administrators—therefore actively seek out the views of other groups, especially those that have been historically under-represented in educational decision-making.

This increased diversity is coming in to play at the same time as a number of other societal factors. Today's citizenry is increasingly mobile. This mobility underlines the need for the ongoing dialogue that is a hallmark of community engagement—today's school community may be substantially different from that which was consulted only a few years ago. In order to make decisions that are understood and supported by communities, school boards need to ensure that those decisions reflect the thinking of today's population, not yesterday's.

At the same time, education is being viewed more and more as a commodity. Many people see the public school system as only one of a number of potential suppliers of elementary and secondary education. Families have become more aware of alternatives to public schools such as home schooling and private schools, and are more willing to exercise their options when it comes to educating their children. There are many reasons families look beyond their public schools, but disengaged families may simply be looking for a system that they think is more responsive to their interests and concerns.

And finally, many people have come to expect a higher level of accountability from all levels of government. Community members want to know the “why” as well as the “what” of decisions that impact their lives. They are looking for transparency in decision-making processes, and for decisions that reflect their concerns and needs.



Defining Community Engagement

Community engagement uses a variety of common communications tools, but it should not be confused with other communications initiatives. Community engagement is a distinct process, with a distinct set of characteristics.

Community engagement must be:

- an integral and fundamental component of school and school board operations— it's part of “the way we do things around here.”
- an ongoing dialogue among all constituents of a community.
- a special effort to reach groups not directly connected to the school system.
- different tools for different audiences and different purposes.

Community engagement must not be:

- public relations.
- information management or control.
- top down or directive.
- an occasional response to specific circumstances.

Just as the words community and communications come from the same linguistic root, community engagement and communications planning are closely connected in their origins. Communications planning and community engagement share the common goals of informing, educating, and consulting. However, it is during the consultation phase that the paths of the two processes diverge.

The differences are illustrated in Figure 5.

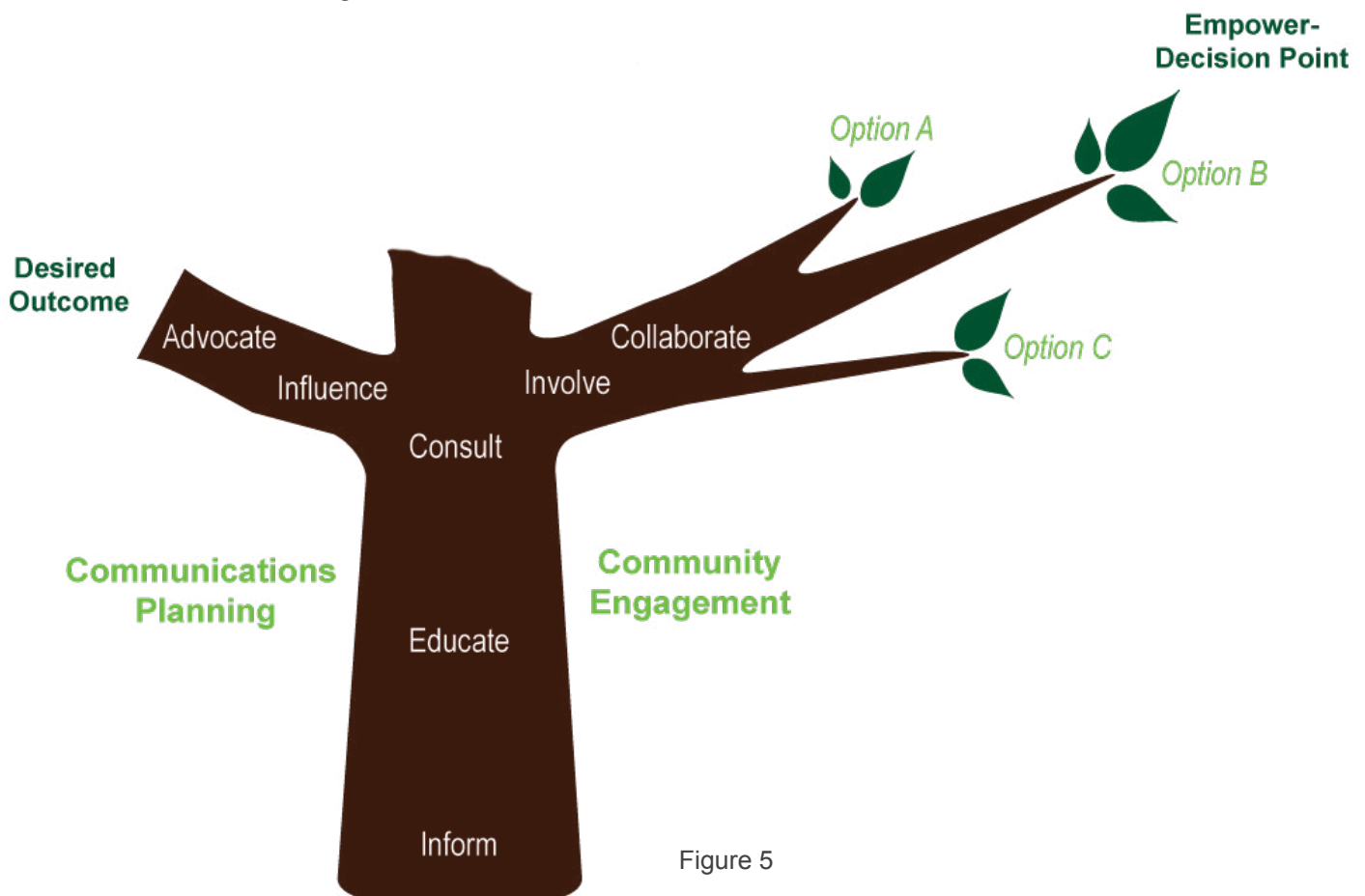


Figure 5

A communications plan has by definition a clearly defined and specific goal, one that is determined at the outset. The tip of the left hand branch of this tree symbolizes this goal. A good communications plan will advocate for that goal by raising awareness and fostering dialogue across key audiences. Consultation processes are used to help reveal and identify audience perspectives and recommendations along the chosen path, more than to set direction.

By contrast, a community engagement initiative—symbolized here by the right-hand branch—is a more open-ended journey. Although the issue will have been defined up front, the ultimate course of action will depend on the outcome of the consultation phase. Once the final path has been determined through the community engagement process, efforts can be undertaken to promote the idea to a wider audience, but at that point, we have moved away from community engagement and into the realm of communications planning.

Benefits and core values of community engagement

Research has identified a long list of positive outcomes that arise from successful community engagement efforts. Community engagement:

- makes education a matter of public concern, and brings it to the forefront of public interest;
- increases awareness of the value of participation, and encourages the development of further opportunities for involvement;
- involves individuals who are historically under-represented in education decision-making processes;
- increases optimism about the future of public education (general public and educators);
- improves student attendance and parental involvement; and
- decreases student disciplinary problems.

These are the some of the major outcomes of successful community engagement efforts. Now what makes community engagement efforts succeed or fail?

The International Association for Public Participation has identified seven Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation which, for the purposes of this handbook, can be considered synonymous with community engagement. Education leaders such as school boards should keep these core values at the forefront when planning for community engagement.

The public should have a say in decisions about actions that affect their lives. Schools are such an integral part of communities that the decisions made by educational leaders affect everyone at some time. From decisions about hours of operation, curriculum and codes of conduct to those that impact on how well schools are preparing a new generation to provide the services we count on to maintain our standard of living, decisions made by educational leaders reverberate across the community. To respect this core value, school boards need to ensure broad-spectrum community input in their day-to-day decision-making.

Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision. Think back to the distinction made previously between community engagement and communications planning. One of the key differences between the two processes is how and when an ultimate decision is made. With communications planning, a desired goal is identified early on, and the process is designed to garner support and move towards that goal. With community engagement, the process is open-ended, with the consultation process itself determining what the ultimate decision will be. Effective community engagement fulfills the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.

The public participation process communicates the interests and meets the process needs of all participants. Individuals and groups enter into the process believing that they can make a difference, and that they have something of value to contribute. If they encounter obstacles that prevent them from participating fully, they are likely to become disappointed, frustrated, or even angry. Frustrated people are not a positive force in the community engagement process. When this happens, the integrity of the community engagement process is compromised. Educational leaders need to ensure all voices from the full spectrum of community interests are represented in any community engagement initiative.

The public participation process seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected. Some groups within a community have strong and obvious ties to the education system—students, parents, and employees, for example. For other groups, the ties are less obvious, and there is a greater challenge of engaging them in discussions about educational matters. However, these voices need to be heard in order to fully realize the potential benefits of community engagement. There may be practical problems that are limiting the participation of some groups—language or cultural barriers, mobility problems, or childcare needs. Alternately, these groups may feel intimidated by the education system, or simply believe that what happens in the schools doesn't concern them. Educational leaders need to work at overcoming both practical and attitudinal barriers if their community engagement efforts are to become truly inclusive.

Using communications tools for community engagement

[Figure 5](#) also serves as a useful filter for determining the most appropriate use of common communications tools—communications planning, community engagement or both.

Activities or mechanisms that serve primarily to educate or inform are the necessary precursors to both successful communications plans and community engagement initiatives. Those that seek to influence or advocate are moving into the realm of communications planning, while those that fall into the consult category make up the core of actual community engagement. With this framework in mind, here's a look at some of the communications tools and mechanisms used in the education system.

Parent Advisory Councils can provide an effective means for ongoing consultation, but they do have some limitations:

- Their membership is limited to those that have already expressed an interest in the affairs of the school, so they may not include segments of the community that are historically disengaged.
- There may be restrictions on the membership—for instance, parents only, and not members of the broader community.
- Some division-wide issues have the potential for pitting the interests of one school or neighbourhood against those of another. Consultation that takes place at the local school level must be augmented by mechanisms that bring together members of the wider community.

Committees can be an excellent consultative mechanism, especially when membership is broad-based. Committee involvement not only gives individuals a voice, but a role in the actual decision-making process. Care must be taken to ensure that members represent key community segments.

Open school board meetings provide an opportunity for both education and limited consultation. Community members who attend school board meetings learn not only about the issues affecting their schools, but also about the roles and responsibilities of school trustees. When a meeting includes a presentation by a delegation, it begins to enter the realm of consultation, although the procedural limitations of a formal school board meeting restrict the interaction that is a hallmark of consultation processes.

Print publications can fill a wide range of communication roles, from informing to advocating. Their function depends in large part upon the mindset of the reader and the intent of the author. The reader may only scan the headlines, but in so doing will at least become aware of an issue. If their interest is piqued, the reader may continue, and learn more about the topic. The author may be providing factual information about a topic (informing and educating), or may be seeking to influence or advocate (as is the case in newspaper editorials).

Electronic communications such as email, Facebook and Twitter span the range between education and consultation. They can be used to distribute information or seek feedback quickly and efficiently from a targeted group of community members, who can in turn seek further information or offer their views on a specific matter. With all types of electronic communications, it is important to guard against disenfranchising those community members that do not have access to or who choose not to utilize these tools. This can happen when electronic communications are used to the exclusion of traditional media such as print.

Websites are similar in some ways to publications in terms of their efficacy as communications tools, but there are some important differences. Because community members have to actively seek out websites (unlike the newsletter that appears in their mailbox), websites are not as effective for increasing awareness or informing; the awareness needs to exist before the website is visited. However, websites can be used to educate, influence, or advocate, and have the advantage of currency—there is no lag time between publication and distribution. As well, they can be an effective gateway for more consultative processes such as electronic communications or surveys.

Public polling is a form of consultation that has both strengths and weaknesses. A well-designed poll will reach a representative sample of the community, which means that the findings will be reliable. However, those contacted by a polling service will not necessarily offer up an informed or educated opinion, as they may not have any background on the matter under discussion. As well, there is no exchange of ideas; polling is a one-way process. Polls can offer educational leaders a “snapshot in time,” but they must be coupled with additional consultative processes if they are to become part of an effective community engagement strategy.

Focus groups are consultative mechanisms that overcome some of the shortcomings of polls. Participants are able to interact not only with the group leader, but with each other. As well, focus group participants have an opportunity to develop a greater understanding of the issue(s) under discussion.

Study circles can be a highly effective means of consultation. Unlike polling services and focus groups, study circles meet over time, so changes in understanding or attitudes can be tracked. However, like Parent Advisory Councils, study circles tend to be composed of individuals who already have an interest in education, and who are willing to commit the time and effort needed to participate on an ongoing basis. Study circles are rarely representative of the broader community.

Properly structured **public meetings** are an effective tool for consulting with communities. Such meetings may contain an education component, but only as necessary to facilitate the core purpose of the exercise: an exchange of ideas between and among all participants. Public meetings are not the place for influence and advocacy.

Advertising is an effective means of increasing the awareness of or informing community members, but the limitations of space (print media) and time (electronic media) make it a less effective means of education. Sophisticated advertising campaigns can be effective tools for influencing opinions, or advocating for specific positions.

How community-friendly is your school board?

- We recognize that the decisions we make have an impact on the broader community.
- We actively seek out the views and advice of community members and groups before making major decisions.
- We support the establishment and use of ongoing consultative mechanisms.
- We understand the appropriate use of different consultative mechanisms.
- We make a special effort to seek out the views of segments of the community not directly connected to the school system.
- We respect the integrity of community engagement processes, and keep open minds as to outcomes.
- We know that meaningful community engagement can only take place when everyone has all the relevant information, and that we have a responsibility to provide that information.
- We monitor the effectiveness of community engagement activities as they unfold, and make changes when necessary.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Conflict of interest

What exactly is a “conflict of interest?”

In general usage, “conflict of interest” refers to any situation where the personal interests and public responsibilities of an elected official may be at odds. For school trustees in Manitoba, the legal definition of conflict of interest as contained in *The Public Schools Act* is very narrow; it is restricted to those situations where a trustee has a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in a board decision or discussion. In other words, where a trustee or their immediate family or friends may financially benefit or gain unfair advantage.

Since mid-2012, school boards have been required legally to adopt codes of conduct, which may contain provisions which move beyond this narrow legal definition. For example, a board code of conduct may identify the hiring of a non-dependent family member of a trustee as an area where a conflict of interest could occur if the trustee participated in the decision-making process.

What do I do if I think I’m in a conflict of interest situation?

If the conflict of interest is pecuniary in nature, the correct procedures are outlined in *The Public Schools Act*. Basically, you have to declare the general nature of the conflict of interest at the earliest possible opportunity, and refrain from either entering into discussions about or voting on the matter in question. Your declaration of conflict of interest, and your subsequent actions, will be recorded in the official meeting minutes. If the conflict is not pecuniary in nature, but a potential violation of the board’s code of ethics, you should follow whatever procedures are outlined in the code, or that are identified in provincial regulations.

As an aside, when trying to determine whether a conflict of interest exists it can be helpful to think of it in this way. A conflict of interest can be real, potential or perceived. A real conflict of interest is often the easiest to recognize, but potential and perceived conflicts of interests—those which might develop if left unchecked, and those which a reasonable observer may think exists—can be just as problematic. Given the negative impact even a whiff of conflict of interest can have on board operations and public confidence, potential and perceived conflicts of interest can be just as dangerous as the real thing.

What do I do if I think one of my board colleagues is in a conflict of interest situation?

Conflicts of interest need to be addressed because failure to do so can nullify board decisions. Assuming that the trustee in question has had an opportunity to declare the conflict and has not done so, you have a few options. If you have a good relationship with the individual, you may want to start by raising the matter in private—a simple conversation may clear up some misunderstanding on your part, or alternately jog your colleague’s memory about the correct procedures to follow. If you do not want to speak to your colleague directly, you can ask the board chair to pursue the matter.

If the conflict of interest is pecuniary in nature and falls under the rules of *The Public Schools Act*, you may also raise the matter with the secretary-treasurer. Each trustee is required to complete a declaration of conflict of interest upon assuming office, and the secretary-treasurer—and only the secretary-treasurer—has the right to examine that declaration when a concern is raised. If the conflict of interest falls under the board’s own code of conduct, rather than *The PSA*, legislation allows for the matter to be discussed in an in-camera board meeting. If, however, the board decides to officially sanction the trustee in question, the vote to sanction must be taken at a public meeting.

Procedural matters

Do all school boards follow the same rules of procedure?



No. *The Public Schools Act (The PSA)* gives school boards the authority to establish their own procedural by-laws in most areas. There are a few exceptions to this freedom, however. For example, *The PSA* does contain special rules about how a board decision can be reversed, and how and when the chairperson is selected. When something is not laid out in *The PSA*, however, school boards can and do adopt procedural rules that work for them.

What does a school board do when it runs into a situation that doesn't seem to be covered by its rules of procedure?

Like other board-governed organizations, school boards usually name a parliamentary authority, and their rules of procedure should state that when those rules are silent, the parliamentary authority will prevail. The naming of a parliamentary authority enable school boards to handle unusual or unforeseen situations in an orderly and defined manner, without making their own rules so unwieldy as to be unusable.

The majority of Manitoba's school boards have named *Robert's Rules of Order* as their parliamentary authority, although there is no requirement that they do so.

Don't rules of procedure just make meetings longer and unnecessarily complicated?

Meetings that are run in accordance with standardized rules of procedure are actually more efficient and more transparent than those that rely on ad-hoc responses to situations as they arise. When members learn their board's rules of procedure, they learn a common language that enables them to communicate clearly and avoid misunderstandings. They are subscribing to buying into a system that has evolved for one primary purpose: to protect the rights of the minority while ensuring that the will of the majority prevails.

Having said that, some people—have been known to use parliamentary procedures to delay and confuse rather than speed up and clarify. Fortunately, the solution to problems that seem to originate from procedural rules is usually contained in those same rules. Whether it's enforcing agreed-to time limits on debate or declaring an already-defeated motion dilatory when someone repeatedly tries to bring it back before the board, a strong, procedurally-knowledgeable chair makes for effective, efficient and equitable meetings.

Media relations

Who speaks to the media on behalf of the school board?

The board's spokesperson is whoever the board has identified as its spokesperson. Ideally, your school board will have adopted a policy indicating who that is—most probably the board chair or the superintendent. Having such a policy (which is sometimes referred to as a communications protocol) is a good idea for several reasons. Reporters will appreciate knowing who to contact when the need arises, without having to track down the “right” person. When media calls come in, front-office staff will know immediately what to do and who to contact. The spokesperson will know to have background information on emergent issues at hand, and therefore will be able to do a better job of presenting the board's position, especially when the issue is contentious.

Despite the arguments for having a single media spokesperson, however, there may be times when having somebody else speak on behalf of the board just makes more sense. When the question relates to some technicality of education finance, for instance, it may be that the secretary-treasurer is the best spokesperson, even if the board chair normally fulfills that role. A communications protocol that allows for this possibility—perhaps by allowing the usual spokesperson to delegate that responsibility on a case-by-case basis—may be helpful.

What do I do if I'm not the board spokesperson, but the media contacts me for comment?

Redirect the caller to the appropriate spokesperson, in accordance with the board's communications protocol.

If I disagree with a board decision, can I say so in public?

If you want to change a board decision, there are procedural ways of doing so, assuming you can garner the support of enough of your fellow trustees. If you want to make sure there is a record of your opposition to a decision, the official board minutes can provide that record. As an individual trustee, you have an opportunity to make your views known on each and every matter that comes before the board. Once the board has made its decision, you should normally restrict yourself to one of three courses of action: acknowledge that the decision reflects the opinion of the majority of the board and actively support it, work through procedural channels to change that decision, or remain silent. Referencing your recorded dissent via the formal meeting minutes is also an effective way of sharing your perspective in a manner that remains civil while remaining sensitive to the final decision of the board.

Intra-board dynamics***What can a board do about a "rogue" trustee?***

That depends on what exactly you mean by "rogue." If you're speaking about someone who just happens to have a different opinion from the rest of the board on most issues, then sometimes the best thing you can do is listen. Maybe that "rogue" is actually a creative thinker who can bring a valuable perspective to the board's deliberations.

Sometimes, though, the actions or words of the trustee in question can compromise the effectiveness or integrity of the board. If those words or actions constitute a violation of some provision of *The Public Schools Act*—failing to disclose a conflict of interest, for example—the trustee can be formally disciplined as specified under the *Act*. If the nature of the compromise "lesser offence." If that offence is addressed by covered under the school board's code of conduct, the board does have the authority to sanction the trustee.

The minimum requirements of a board's code of conduct, as established by *The Public Schools Act*, are that trustees act with integrity and in a manner that maintains the dignity of the office, respect others who may have differing opinions, and keep in confidence any personal or confidential information obtained in his or her capacity as a trustee. If a trustee breaches these or other clauses of the board's code of conduct, the board may sanction that trustee by passing a motion of censure, barring the trustee from all or part of a board or committee meeting, or suspending the trustee for up to three months.

Boards should use their authority to sanction sparingly, however, reserving it for serious, deliberate, or repeat transgressions. If a breach of the code of conduct is inadvertent, a conversation initiated by the board chair may resolve the issue quickly and effectively.



YOUR PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATION

The Manitoba School Boards Association is a voluntary association of public school boards in Manitoba. Its purpose is summed up in the association's mission statement.

The mission of the Manitoba School Boards Association is to enhance the work of locally elected school boards through leadership, advocacy and service, and to champion the cause of public education for all students in Manitoba.

Specific association goals and objectives are contained in provincial legislation which gives life to the organization. These objectives are:

- to promote and advance the cause of education in the province;
- to arouse and increase public interest in educational affairs;
- to engage in research and study of matters of educational policy;
- to promote efficiency and improvement in the fulfillment of the duties of trustees and the exercise of the powers of trustees under the laws of Manitoba;
- to cooperate with Manitoba Education and with other organizations in Canada and elsewhere having aims and objectives the same as, or similar to, those of the association; and
- to take any measures that the association deems necessary or advisable to give effect to any policy adopted by it with respect to any question directly or indirectly affecting the purpose and objectives of the association.

The Manitoba School Boards Association strives to meet these goals and objectives by offering a wide range of direct services to member boards, and by providing a strong voice with which the views and concerns of Manitoba's public school trustees can be expressed.

Structure of the Manitoba School Boards Association

The history of school board associations in Manitoba dates to 1907, when the first informal convention of school trustees was held. This group evolved into the Manitoba School Trustees Association, which was legally recognized in 1943. That association later divided into separate urban and rural school trustee organizations. The Manitoba Association of School Trustees (MAST) was established in 1965, with the merger of these two bodies.

On March 20, 2009, delegates to the 45th Annual Convention of The Manitoba Association of School Trustees voted to change their organization's name to The Manitoba School Boards Association. Participation is voluntary, and fees are based on school division operating budgets.

The school divisions and districts that are members of the association are grouped into six regions. Each year, the boards that make up each region meet to elect or appoint its director, for a total of seven representatives on the provincial executive. Other members of the executive include the president and two vice-presidents, who are elected at the association's annual convention each March, and the immediate past president (who is eligible to serve for one year following their presidency). The eleven-member provincial executive governs the association between conventions.

The Provincial Executive

The Manitoba School Boards Association is legally chartered under a provincial statute, *The [Manitoba School Boards Association Act](#)*. This legislation outlines, in broad terms, the association's governance structure; a greater level of detail is contained within the association's by-laws and policies.

Policy direction is established through the resolutions process at the Manitoba School Boards Association's annual convention, which is held each March. The convention also provides an opportunity for the membership to elect the association's provincial executive, which is responsible for governing the association between conventions. The executive consists of three provincially-elected officers (the president and two vice-presidents), the association's immediate past president, and seven directors from the association's six geographical regions.

The executive meets monthly to consider ongoing and emerging issues impacting educational governance, and to work to further the mission and goals of the organization. The executive has established a number of standing committees to help it fulfill its mandate in this regard, and may appoint ad hoc committees to deal with specific matters as the need arises. As well, the Manitoba School Boards Association appoints representatives to a number of external committees that are established by government, educational or social organizations, or other groups that value the input of school boards.

In addition to the annual convention and executive meetings, the association hosts an annual Professional Development Day each fall, accompanied by a General Meeting and regional meetings. Regional meetings are attended by trustees from school boards in specific areas of the province—one of the Manitoba School Boards Association's six geographical regions. These meetings provide a venue for in-depth discussions and the exchange of ideas among trustees from school boards that, due to geography and circumstance, often share many similar concerns and experiences.

<i>Region 1</i>	<i>Region 2</i>
Beautiful Plains S.D. Mountain View S.D. Fort La Bosse S.D. Turtle River S.D. Swan Valley S.D. Park West S.D. Rolling River S.D. Brandon S.D. Southwest Horizon S.D. Turtle Mountain S.D.	Border Land S.D. Prairie Spirit S.D. Prairie Rose S.D. Western S.D. Pine Creek S.D. Red River Valley S.D. Portage la Prairie S.D. Garden Valley S.D. Division scolaire franco-manitobaine
<i>Region 3</i>	<i>Region 4</i>
Lord Selkirk S.D. Sunrise S.D. Seine River S.D. Hanover S.D. Interlake S.D. Lakeshore S.D. Evergreen S.D. S. D. of Whiteshell Division scolaire franco-manitobaine	Kelsey S.D. Flin Flon S.D. Frontier S.D. S.D. of Mystery Lake Division scolaire franco-manitobaine
<i>Region 5</i>	<i>Region 6</i>
St. James-Assiniboia S.D. Pembina Trails S.D. Louis Riel S.D. River East Transcona S.D. Seven Oaks S.D. Division scolaire franco-manitobaine Manitoba Institute of Trades & Technology	Winnipeg S.D.

The Association Office and Staff

The Manitoba School Boards Association office is located at 191 Provencher Boulevard in Winnipeg. As of 2022, there are 17 staff members. The building also houses a number of rooms where meetings of the executive and association committees are held.

The association staff is divided into five departments.

The **Executive Office** (including, Governance, Education and Communication Services) is responsible for the general administration of the association, and for ensuring the implementation of the policies and instructions of the provincial executive. This department provides support services to the executive and many of the association's committees. The unit is responsible for advocacy responsibilities, produces print and electronic learning resources, develops association advertising and media campaigns, and maintains the association's website and membership data bases. The unit is also responsible for coordinating logistics for the association's annual meetings.

Professional Development Services is responsible for the association's trustee education program, including recommending and delivering content for the fall general meeting and annual convention, provincial and regional workshops, and on-line learning opportunities. The unit supports individual boards in the areas of board and policy development and procedural matters.

Corporate Services carries out the accounting functions of the association and related entities including: MSI Insurance Property and Liability loss pools, the Pension Plan for Non-Teaching Employees of Public School Boards in Manitoba, as well as for the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba. MSBA's general office management, and systems/technology support, and capital infrastructure management are also housed in this department.

The Operational Risk, Health, Safety, and Liability Management unit works closely with the MSI committee to oversee the MSI insurance program, as well as both Safe Grad and TADD Manitoba programs. The Director works closely with schools to ensure student and staff well-being through safety education, guidance and awareness programming and issues advisement on loss mitigation related to fire, flood, theft, or other hazards.

Labour Relations is responsible for providing labour relations and personnel services to member school boards in the capacity of advisor, coordinator, and agent relating to non-instructional staff. This department assists member boards in the maintenance of good employer-employee relationships through the establishment of fair and reasonable salaries, benefits, and working conditions. The unit is also responsible for supporting the work of the MSBA Non-Teaching Pension Plan Trust and Health and Dental Benefits Trust.

Provincial Teacher Bargaining and Human Resource Services is responsible for providing labour relations and personnel services to member school boards in the capacity of advisor, coordinator, and agent. This department assists member boards in the maintenance of good employer-employee relationships through the establishment of fair and reasonable salaries, benefits, and working conditions.

For a list of current executive and staff members, see [Appendix 5](#).

APPENDIX 1: ACRONYMS AND SHORTHAND

20K3 Limit of 20 pupils per class in Kindergarten to Grade 3	BCSTA British Columbia School Trustees Association	CTF Canadian Teachers' Federation	FNCSF Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones
AAA Aboriginal Academic Achievement Grant	BEF Bureau de l'Éducation Française	CUPE Canadian Union of Public Employees	FNMI First Nations, Métis and Inuit
AAC Accessibility Advisory Council of Manitoba	Bill 28 Public Sector Compensation \Sustainability Act (2017-2020 wage freeze)	DM Deputy Minister	FPM Fédération des parents du Manitoba
ACC Assiniboine Community College	Bill 45 Provincial Bargaining Legislation	EAA <i>The Education Administration Act</i>	FRAME Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education
ACEPO Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario	Bill 64 Education Modernization Act	EAL English as an Additional Language	FSP Funding of Schools Programs
ACER-CART Association canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants retraités/Canadian Association of Retired Teachers	Bill 71 Education Property Tax Repealment Legislation	EAP Employee Assistance Program	GSA Gay Straight Alliance
ACPI Association Canadienne des professeurs d'immersion	BU Brandon University	ECD Early Childhood Development	HCM Healthy Child Manitoba
ACSL Advisory Council for School Leadership	C2K Commit to Kids program	ECE Early Childhood Education	HSAP High School Apprenticeship Program
ADM Assistant Deputy Minister	CAPSLE Canadian Association for the Practical Study of Law in Education	ECS MSBA Education and Communications Services	IA Industrial Arts program
AIEAPC MSBA Aboriginal and Indigenous Education Action Planning Committee	CASSA Canadian Association of School System Administrators	EDI Early Development Instrument	IB International Baccalaureate
AM Apprenticeship Manitoba	CCECD Council for Early Child Development	ELCC Early Learning and Child Care	IEP Individualized Education Program
AMA The Accessibility for All Manitobans Act	CLAC Christian Labour Association of Canada	ENRIP Early notice of retirement incentive plan	JHA Job Hazard Analysis
AMC Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs	CMEC* Council of Ministers of Education Canada	ERIP Early retirement incentive plan	K-12/K12 Kindergarten to Grade 12
AMM* Association of Manitoba Municipalities	CMU Canadian Mennonite University	ESD Education for Sustainable Development	KAP Keystone Agricultural Producers
AP Advanced Placement	CNCM* Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba	ESL English as a Second Language	KB Court of King's Bench
ASBA Alberta School Boards Association	CoC Code of Conduct	Fab5 MSBA, MASS, MASBO, MTS, MAPC ("the education partners")	Leg Manitoba Legislative Assembly
AVED Manitoba Advanced Education (Department of)	CODDEM Council of Deans and Directors of Education of Manitoba	FacEd Faculty/Faculties of Education	Level 2 or 3 Categorical funding for students identified as having special needs
	COSL* Council of School Leaders	FI French Immersion program	LGBTQ (sometimes LGBT2SQ*) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (2S = two-spirited; *= other)
	CPF Canadian Parents for French	FIPPA <i>Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act</i>	LGIC Lieutenant Governor in Council (Provincial Cabinet)
	CSBA* Canadian School Boards Association	FL1 Francophone (French, First Language) Education program	LR MSBA Labour Relations
		FL2 French, Second Language (French Immersion and Basic French) Education program	LTD Long term disability

MANSO

Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations

MANTRA

Manitoba Nicotine and Tobacco Reduction Alliance

MAPC*

Manitoba Association of Parent Councils

MASBO*

Manitoba Association of School Business Officials

MASS*

Manitoba Association of School Superintendents

MAST

Manitoba Association of School Trustees (former name of the Manitoba School Boards Association)

MCBIE

Manitoba Collaborative Blueprint for Indigenous Education

MCC

Manitoba Chambers of Commerce

MCCA

Manitoba Child Care Association

MCIE

Manitoba Council for International Education

ME

Manitoba Education (Department of Education)

MFIS

Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools

MFNERC

Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre

MFNSS

Manitoba First Nations School System

MHSAA

Manitoba High School Athletic Association

MIA

Manitoba Inuit Association

Min

Minister

MITT

Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology

MKO

Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak (Assembly of Northern Chiefs)

MLB

Manitoba Labour Board

MMF

Manitoba Métis Federation

MPASS

Manitoba Physical Activity Safety in Schools

mRLC

Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium

MSD

Manitoba School for the Deaf

MSI

Manitoba Schools Insurance

MSIP

Manitoba Schools Insurance Program. Also used for Manitoba School Improvement Project

MTS*

The Manitoba Teachers' Society

MTSPDDay

Professional Development Day of the Manitoba Teachers' Society

N-12/N12

Nursery to Grade 12

NLSBA

Newfoundland and Labrador School Boards Association

NSBA*

National School Boards Association

OECD

Organization for Economic and Cooperation Development

OPSBA

Ontario Public School Boards' Association

PAC

Parent Advisory Council

PBAG

Provincial Bargaining Advisory Group

PCAP

Pan-Canadian Assessment Program

PHIA

The Personal Health Information Act

PISA

Program for International Student Assessment

Pre-K

Pre-Kindergarten program

PSA

The Public Schools Act

PSFB

Public Schools Finance Board

QESBA

Quebec English School Boards Association

RIS

Respect in Schools / Respect in Sport program

RRC

Red River College Polytechnic

RTAM

Retired Teachers' Association of Manitoba

SAGE

Special Area Groups of Educators (affiliated with The Manitoba Teachers' Society)

SCO

Southern Chiefs Organization

SI

Special and Inclusive Education program

SPCW

Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

SSAAM

Student Services Administrators' Association of Manitoba

SSBA

Saskatchewan School Boards Association

TADD

Teens Against Drunk Driving

TRAF

Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund

TIF

Tax Increment Funding

TRCM

Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba

TVE

Technical or Technology and Vocation Education program

TVI

Technical Vocational Initiative Advisory Committee

UCN

University College of the North

UFCW

United Food and Commercial Workers

UM

University of Manitoba

UNIFOR

Union for All

USB

Université de Saint-Boniface

USW

United Steel Workers

UW

University of Winnipeg

WCB

Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

WEVAS

Working Effectively with Violent and Aggressive States

WHMIS

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System

WHS

Workplace Health and Safety

*see [Appendix 2](#): Organizational Directory, for description and contact information

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APPENDIX 2: ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTORY

Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM)

The Association of Manitoba Municipalities identifies and addresses the needs and concerns of its members in order to achieve strong and effective municipal government.

1910 Saskatchewan Avenue, W. Portage la Prairie, MB R1N 0P1
Tel: (204) 857-8666 Website: www.amm.mb.ca

EdCan Network

EdCan is a cross-Canada network with a strong membership base of leaders in the education, research and policy, not for profit and business sectors. It is committed to education that leads to greater student engagement; teaching that inspires students and teachers and that causes all students to learn; and schools that ensure both equity and excellence in pursuit of the optimal development of all students.

60 St. Clair Ave. E, Suite 703 Toronto, ON M4T 1N5
Tel: (416) 591-6300 Website: www.edcan.ca

Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA)

CSBA is a national education organization representing school boards. Most provincial school board organizations and some individual school boards are members. CSBA's annual convention is hosted by a different provincial association each year.

91 Sherwood Drive Wolfville, NS B4P 2R5
Tel: (902) 456-5574 Website: www.cdnsba.org

Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba (CNCM)

The Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba works in partnership with various government departments and community agencies and coalitions to provide access to food and nutrition information and programs for Manitoba children and youth, primarily in the 6 to 14 age group.

191 Provencher Boulevard Winnipeg, MB R2H 0G4
Tel: (204) 202-1233
Website: www.childnutritioncouncil.com

Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC)

CMEC provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the fulfillment of the constitutional responsibility for education conferred on provinces and territories.

95 St. Clair Avenue West, Suite 1106 Toronto, ON M4V 1N6
Tel: (416) 962-8100 Website: www.cmec.ca

Council of School Leaders (COSL)

The Council of School Leaders is a sub-group of The Manitoba Teachers' Society that includes in its membership principals and vice-principals.

204-2639 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3J 0P7
Tel: (204)837-3044 Website: www.cosl.mb.ca

Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC)

MAPC is the provincial association of parent councils.

1005 – 401 York Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3C 0P8
Tel: (204)956-1770 Website: www.mapc.mb.ca

Manitoba Association of School Business Officials (MASBO)

MASBO is the provincial professional association of secretary-treasurers, maintenance supervisors, transportation supervisors, etc.

P.O. Box 547 Morris, MB R0G 1K0
Tel: (204)254-7570 Website: www.masbo.ca

Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS)

MASS is the provincial professional association of superintendents.

900 St. Mary's Road Winnipeg, MB R2M 3R3
Tel: (204)219-7059 Website: www.mass.mb.ca

Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS)

MTS is the provincial teachers' professional organization and union.

191 Harcourt Street Winnipeg, MB R3J 3H2
Tel: (204)888-7961 Website: www.mbteach.org

National School Boards Association (NSBA)

The National School Boards Association is the nationwide advocacy and outreach organization for public school governance in the United States. NSBA's mission is to foster excellence and equity in public elementary and secondary education through school board leadership.

1680 Duke Street Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Tel: (703) 838-6722 Website: www.nsba.org

APPENDIX 3: KEY LEGISLATION

School board operations are governed by a wide range of legislation enacted by other levels of government. This list identifies the major statutes of which school boards should be aware. Most are provincial, in keeping with the province's jurisdiction over education matters. Those which are federal have been identified as such. There are also local, municipal by-laws which may impact on board operations.

Education and schools-related statutes

The two primary pieces of legislation governing the operations of schools and school boards are [*The Public Schools Act*](#) and [*The Education Administration Act*](#), and related regulations.

- *The Public Schools Act* and *The Education Administration Act* are statutes or laws. They are passed by the Legislative Assembly, as are any amendments that are made to them. This legislation is legally binding upon school boards and upon the government itself. These Acts set out the broad parameters of public school operations, and in certain areas, give the Minister of Education the authority to make regulations.
- Regulations provide details of certain aspects of school or divisional operations (e.g. school funding, religious exercises in schools, school days, hours and vacations, high school graduation requirements). Regulations may be developed or modified by the government of the day. Changing regulations is an administrative, rather than legislative, function.

Other legislation specific to aspects of public school operations include:

- *The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Act*
- *The Adult Learning Centres Act*
- *The International Education Act*
- *The Public Schools Finance Board Act*
- *The Student Aid Act*
- *The Teachers' Pensions Act*
- [*The Manitoba School Boards Association Act*](#)
- *The Manitoba Teachers' Society Act*
- *The Municipal Assessment Act*
- *An Act Respecting Debts Owed by Municipalities to School Districts*
- *The Municipal Taxation and Funding Act*
- *The Community Revitalization Tax Increment Financing Act*

Employment-related statutes

- *The Labour Relations Act*
- *The Employment Standards Code*
- *The Public Sector Executive Compensation Act*
- *The Public Sector Compensation Disclosure Act*
- *The Teachers' Pensions Act*
- *The Workplace Safety and Health Act*
- *The Vulnerable Persons Living With a Mental Disability Act*

Miscellaneous statutes

- *The Human Rights Code*
- *The Accessibility for All Manitobans Act*
- *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*
- *The Child and Family Services Act*
- *The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act*
- *The Community Child Care Standards Act*
- *The Community Schools Act*
- *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*
- *The Personal Health Information Act*
- *The Parental Responsibility Act*
- *The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act*
- *The Public Health Act*
- *The Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act*
- *The Noxious Weed Act*
- *The Smoking and Vapour Products Control Act*
- *The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act [federal]*
- *The Criminal Code of Canada [federal]*
- *The Human Rights Act [federal]*
- *The Indian Act [federal]*
- *Private Members Motion 296 (Jordan's Principle) [federal]*
- *The Youth Criminal Justice Act [federal]*
- *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms [federal]*
- *The Workers Compensation Act*

Provincial statutes and regulations can also be viewed at <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/index.php>. Federal statutes are available at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/>.

APPENDIX 4: RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Government of Manitoba

[*The Public Schools Act*](#) and [*The Education Administration Act*](#) – the legislation which governs the delivery of public education in Manitoba, by which all school boards are bound.

Conflict of Interest Guidelines – outlines those situations which constitute a conflict of interest, and the manner in which a trustee must respond. This document is available in most school board offices, or upon request from the Manitoba School Boards Association.

Schools in Manitoba – an annual publication that lists all public schools in the province by division, their size and their address. It also provides useful information on federal, private and special schools, and a directory of Department of Education personnel. The Manitoba School Boards Association website provides a link to this government publication.

FRAME (Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education) – FRAME provides schools with a standardized method of accounting and financial reporting. This, in turn, provides a provincial database which can be used by school division management, Manitoba Education, or interested third parties. A FRAME Report, outlining education revenues and expenditures on a division-by-division basis, is produced annually. FRAME reports may be viewed online.

Manitoba School Boards Association

Policies and Requests for Action

Record of Proceedings of annual conventions.

Leading Together: A Resource Guide for School Boards, Superintendents and Secretary-Treasurers

E-bulletins – a bi-weekly electronic newsletter.

Education Modules – governance-related training modules for school boards (summaries on-line, delivered in person).

Webinars – 25 minute, on-line seminars for trustees and senior administration, with support documents posted on-line.

Division Dispatches – short training videos accompanied by downloadable resources. Available on the Manitoba School Boards Association YouTube channel.

Miscellaneous Publications and Resources

Robert's Rules of Order – the parliamentary authority adhered to by most (but not all) public school boards in Manitoba. Where *The Public Schools Act* and a board's procedural by-laws are silent about some aspect of the conduct of meetings, the board's parliamentary authority offers guidance. Two Canadian alternatives to *Robert's Rules of Order* are *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* and *Bourinot's Rules of Order*, both of which were developed by clerks of the Canadian House of Commons. Some school boards may have named one of these as their parliamentary authority.

Becoming a Better Board Member: A Guide to Effective School Board Service – this handbook, published by the National School Boards Association, provides relevant information on the responsibilities of a board member and provides a good foundation of boardmanship. Goal-setting, policy-making, and board self-evaluation are all explored. It stresses the importance of the school board-superintendent relationship.

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APPENDIX 5: MANITOBA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE AND STAFF

Provincial Executive, 2025-2026

President:	Alan Campbell, Interlake S.D.
Vice-President:	Sandra Lethbridge, St. James-Assiniboia S.D.
Vice-President:	Leah Klassen, Garden Valley S.D.
Past President:	Sandy Nemeth, Louis Riel S.D.
Region 1 Director:	Nicole Chaske, Fort La Bosse S.D.
Region 2 Director:	Ashley Lachance, Prairie Rose S.D.
Region 3 Director:	Paul Magnan, Sunrise S.D.
Region 4 Director:	Henk Warnar, School District of Mystery Lake
Region 5 Director:	Cheryl Smukowich, St. James-Assiniboia S.D.
Region 5 Director:	Irene Nordheim, Louis Riel S.D.
Region 6 Director:	Ann Evangelista, Winnipeg S.D.

Staff

Executive Office

Josh Watt	Executive Director
Leonard Zdrill	Director, Enterprise Risk Management
Jodie Taylor	Director, Governance & Professional Development Services
Karen Harrington	Communications Officer
Andrea Kehler	Executive Assistant
Jenna Lees	Learning and Development Administrator

Corporate Services

Robyn Winters	Chief Financial Officer
Maureen Fabro	Finance and Office Administrator

Labour Relations and Human Resources Services

Morgan Whiteway	Director, Labour Relations
Elizabeth Mitchell	Senior Labour Relations Consultant
Alison Bourrier	Labour Relations Consultant
Tripat Pachu	Labour Relations Consultant
Chris Huppe	Labour Relations Consultant
Shannon Kobylak	Labour Relations Consultant
Kate Brown	Labour Relations & Human Resources Consultant

Shared Labour Relations and Human Resource Services Staff

Cindy Hluszok	Research Analyst
Heather Hallatt	Administrative Assistant