

TRUSTEE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS GUIDELINES

The guidelines are provided with the intent to assist trustees and senior administration in their work together. They are a framework of actions which enable all parties to know and understand each other's role in working together. An understanding which is important in helping to ensure good working relationships as everyone shares the same goals: student success through strong community schools, with meaningful parent and community involvement. The residential school legacy and oppression of the Métis people has left behind a mistrust and fear of schools that still exists for many people. Some community members feel they can't approach the school because of the history, therefore effectively handling concerns becomes ever more important to help move forward and ultimately student success.

Definitions:

Senior Administration: Superintendent, associate superintendents, Secretary-Treasurer, principals, vice-principals.

Executive Team: Superintendent, associate superintendents, Secretary-Treasurer.

1. Trustee/Superintendent Working Relationship

1.1. The goal of a good trustee/Superintendent working relationship is to enable the superintendent to ensure the effective management of the Division and ultimately student success.

1.2. The Superintendent will ensure the coordination of associate superintendents, principals Secretary-Treasurer and any other senior staff in the resolution of a concern, as needed. (See Administrative Procedure 152 Dispute Resolution).

1.3. The Superintendent or Area Associate Superintendent is the administrative contact for trustees.

1.3.1. Superintendent and Area Associate Superintendent are responsible for keeping each other informed as required when contacted by a trustee

1.4. Questions of clarification with regard to administrative procedures may be directed to an executive team member with a cc to the Superintendent or directly to the Superintendent.

1.5. If a matter is time-sensitive and the Superintendent or Area Associate Superintendent is not available, the trustee may contact an executive team member. The executive team member shall be responsible to inform the Superintendent.

1.6. If in doubt about anything, contact the Superintendent or Area Associate Superintendent.

2. Trustee/Principal Working Relationship

2.1. The goal of a strong trustee/principal working relationship is to support student success by working cooperatively within their roles to build strong community schools.

2.2. A strong working relationship will assist the trustee:

2.2.1. In hearing the voice of the community;

2.2.2. In being knowledgeable in a general sense about what is happening in the schools within their ward;

In helping to engage the community with the school.

2.3. A strong working relationship will assist the principal:

2.3.1. In hearing the voice of the community;

2.3.2. To strengthen communication and engagement with the community;

2.3.3. In dealing with concerns effectively.

2.4. The trustee and principal shall always demonstrate mutual respect and support.

2.5. In general, the trustee should be involved with the school through invitation only.

2.6. Trustees must not get involved in the day to day operations of the school and understands the principal reports to the Area Associate Superintendent/Superintendent.

2.7. The working relationship is not for the purposes of directing or monitoring each other's work.

3. Trustee – Principal Initial Meeting

3.1 Following an election:

3.1.1 Trustees are responsible to contact the principal to arrange a time for an initial meeting.

3.1.2 Principals shall facilitate an initial meeting as soon as possible.

3.1.3 The meeting should include:

3.1.3.1 Tour of facilities; introductions to staff; students.

3.1.4 General discussion on processes for:

3.1.4.1 Sharing of school related information; communications; invitations.

3.1.4.2 How can the principal and trustee assist each other in engaging community; sharing information with community; etc.

3.1.5 The principal is responsible for introducing the trustee to the school council chair (or principal advisory committee) and facilitating discussions with regard to trustee participation in school council meetings (or principal advisory committee meetings).

3.1.6 Principal and trustee should review the process the trustee will use for handling concerns brought to them with regard to anything at the school and establish best way(s) for the trustee to contact the principal.

3.1.7 Review Administrative Procedure 152 Appendix – Communication Protocol.

4 Trustee/School Council Working Relationship

- 4.1 At the initial meeting with the principal, the trustee should ensure arrangements are made for them to meet the school council chair.
- 4.2 It is important for trustees to develop and nurture a good relationship with the school council chair and school council so the community feels connected to the board while keeping in mind it is the community's school council that is advisory to the principal.
- 4.3 Also important is for a trustee to be a champion of promoting parent and community involvement in education as a number one factor in student success; to be a champion of working together for the success for every student and to promote the vision, *"Our students love to come to school in Northland"* and how can everyone help that to be achieved.
- 4.4 Generally a trustee will provide a report at each school council meeting about the work of the board, but that should be confirmed with the school council chair.
 - 4.4.1 The report would be about items from the previous Board meeting, and could include; policies to review with them; projects that are underway in the Division and other items the trustees feels would be of interest for the school council to hear about.
- 4.5 If a concern is raised to the trustee, refer to the "process for Handling Concerns" below. Do not allow concerns about individual to be discussed as these must be handled with only the individuals involved.

5 PROCESSES FOR HANDLING CONCERNS BROUGHT TO THE TRUSTEE

- 5.1 Goals applicable to all concerns are to ensure:
 - 5.1.1 The concern is resolved or a decision made.
 - 5.1.2 Details are shared on an "as needed" basis only, with as few people involved as possible for protection of privacy.
 - 5.1.3 Everyone is treated professionally and with respect.
 - 5.1.4 The Superintendent is enabled to ensure the effective management of the Division.
 - 5.1.5 See also Administrative Procedure 408, Staff Code of Conduct.
- 5.2 Procedures applicable to all concerns:
 - 5.2.1 Trustees will inform the Superintendent or Area Associate Superintendent, via email of all concerns/issues raised to them with a cc to the Board Chair for their awareness. The email needs to indicate if the trustees is:
 - 5.2.1.1 Requesting the Superintendent or Area Associate to deal with the matter; or

- 5.2.1.2 Referring the matter to the school.
- 5.2.2 To help avoid being deemed as having a personal bias should a concern come through to an appeal, trustees must be careful to only facilitate a person through the process of resolving a concern and not offer any opinion, at any time, with regard to the concern or how it should perhaps be resolved and should not become involved in the resolution.
- 5.2.3 If the trustee is directing the person to the school they shall contact the principal to provide them with a “heads up” to help enable the principal to facilitate a good resolution process – a “no surprises” mantra.
- 5.2.4 Trustees are responsible to guide a person through the process of resolving a concern and monitor the process to ensure they know their rights in addressing their concern and that the concern is resolved or a decision made.
 - 5.2.4.1 Details about a situation must not be shared if it is about an individual due to privacy and legal implications.
 - 5.2.4.2 The Superintendent, Area Associate Superintendent or principal will provide feedback to the trustee as/when the situation is resolved.
 - 5.2.4.3 It is also good practice for the trustee to ensure the concern is resolved or a decision made by asking the person bringing the concern forward to communicate back to the trustee once it is resolved or a decision made. You could also agree it will be assumed the concern was resolved unless they tell you otherwise.
- 5.3 Process for Handling Concerns that are with Regard to Discrimination, Harassment or Sexual Harassment
 - 5.3.1 If a trustee receives a concern of this nature they are to immediately refer it to the Superintendent or Area Associate Superintendent.
 - 5.3.2 See also Administrative Procedure 170, Discrimination and Harassment.
- 5.4 Process for Handling Concerns Involving Teachers
 - 5.4.1 Concerns involving teachers need to be resolved according to legal processes and agreements such as the code of conduct, collective agreement, Teaching Profession Act and/or appeal processes that are specific to teachers.
 - 5.4.2 When the concern is about a teacher, the teacher must be given the opportunity to resolve the situation first.
 - 5.4.3 Trustees will guide the person to:
 - 5.4.3.1 Meet with the teacher directly to resolve concern; if not resolved then;
 - 5.4.3.2 Meet with the principal about the concern; if not resolved then;
 - 5.4.3.3 Meet with the Area Associate Superintendent; if not resolve then;
 - 5.4.3.4 Inform them they have the right to go to the Superintendent, and if still not resolved;

- 5.4.3.5 Inform them they have the right to appeal to the Board of Trustees on matters that significantly affect the education of the student. Trustees should seek clarification if a matter is appealable to the Board before informing the person it is.
- 5.4.4 If a person has a concern about a teacher and does not feel comfortable to go and talk to the teacher the trustee shall refer the matter directly to the Superintendent or Area Associate Superintendent.
- 5.5 Process for Handling Concerns with Regard to Staff other than Teachers
 - 5.5.1 Concerns with regard to staff other than teachers (education assistants, bus drivers, caretakers, maintenance staff, etc.) need to go directly to the principal, Area Associate Superintendent or Superintendent.
 - 5.5.2 Steps followed would be the same as for teachers omitting the first step of going to the teacher first.
 - 5.5.3 See Administrative Procedure 418, Staff Suspension, Termination and Appeal (non-teaching staff).
- 5.6 See also Policy 2 Appendix D Board and Superintendent Communication Guidelines

Legal Reference: Section 18, 20, 48, 60, 61, 113, 123, 124
School Act AP 152 Dispute Resolution
AP 152 Appendix – Communication
Protocol AP 170, Discrimination and
Harassment
AP 408, Staff Code of Conduct
AP 418, Staff Suspension, Termination and Appeal (non-
teaching staff) [AP Table of Contents](#)