



# Putting Students First

A guide for  
school trustee candidates

B.C. local elections October 15, 2022

**BCSTA**

British Columbia  
School Trustees  
Association



# Who are school trustees?

School trustees are elected members of a board of education. School trustees represent the public and advocate for public education in their community

Boards of education co-govern school districts with the provincial government. B.C.'s Ministry of Education sets the curriculum, funding and legal framework for K-12 education. Trustees on a board of education work together to govern the school district and set direction on behalf of the community.

The *School Act* outlines the role of trustees and boards of education, including:

- Attending board meetings
- Setting school district policy
- Employing school district staff
- Managing school district budgets
- Hearing appeals where a staff decision affects the education, health or safety of a student

## **Trustees are a part of a team**

A board of education has the authority to make decisions or to take action; individual trustees do not. Under the *School Act*, a trustee's power lies in membership on a corporate school board. Trustees on a board will debate ideas and vote on a final decision. Once the board has voted, a trustee must uphold the decision.

## **Trustees are community leaders**

Trustees work with their board and community partners to ensure that all the students within the board's jurisdiction have equal opportunities to reach their maximum potential.

While members of the board act as representatives of their constituency, their primary job is to participate in policy-making and strategic planning in the interests of the district's students. Trustees are grounded in promoting student achievement and well-being. Successful trustees manage to balance their governance role with the representative role, participating in decision-making that benefits the whole board while representing the interests of their constituents.

## **Trustees are accountable**

Boards have an important responsibility for overseeing a school district's financial decisions. The board oversees the development of a strategic plan and the allocation of resources to support that plan, ensuring budget and staff allocations are in alignment with the district's goals.

# What is governance?



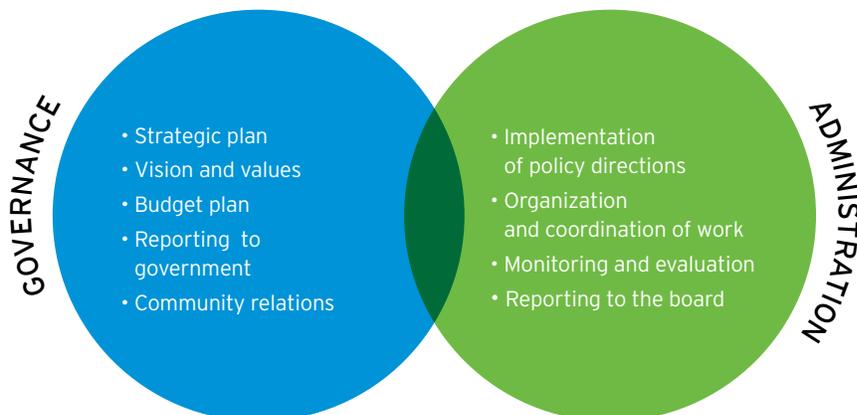
Trustees are responsible for governing a school district as part of a corporate board

## Boards set direction

It is important for trustees to understand the difference between governance and administration. The *School Act* assigns specific responsibilities to the board of education, the superintendent and the secretary-treasurer. In the vast majority of districts the superintendent is the only employee who reports directly to the board. It is the board's role to govern, not to run the district's day-to-day operations.

## Trustees are part of a board

Individual trustees have no legal authority. Only the board as a whole holds power. All significant decisions and direction to the superintendent or staff must come from the board, not from individual trustees.





# What skills do I need?

## You don't need a background in public education to run as school trustee

Everyone brings unique skills and experiences to the role of school trustee. You don't need a background in education or to have a child in the school system. Reviewing your district's policies and building an understanding of provincial legislation is helpful, however.

### **Review school district policies**

Candidates should review a copy of their local board's bylaws, governance policies and codes of conduct and attend their local school board meetings or speak to existing board members to get an understanding of the work trustees do.

### **Understand the laws boards operate under**

Board operations are bound by legislation or provincial policy. In executing their duties, trustees will develop an understanding of the legislative process, legislation structure (especially the *School Act*), government policy and board policy.

### **Get financial literacy support**

Overseeing a school district's budget means trustees need to interpret financial data, asking the right questions to responsibly govern their school district's business and capital decisions. The BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) and your local board staff can offer support in helping trustees fulfill their financial oversight responsibilities.

### **Be willing to learn**

A board of education must protect the interests of the school district, ensure its financial viability and act in accordance with laws and policies governing K-12 education in B.C. These responsibilities require trustees to be willing to learn new skills to help them effectively protect the interests of students, families and their community.

BCSTA can help boards to carry out their governance and accountability responsibilities through offering supports and resources such as legal services, communications, professional development events, training manuals and learning opportunities.



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# Eligibility

## Eligibility

To run for school trustee, you must be a Canadian citizen age 18 or older on voting day. You must have been a B.C. resident for at least six months prior to registration. You must not be disqualified under the *School Act* or any other enactment from being nominated for, elected to or holding office as a trustee.

For the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (CSF), you must also have been a member of the CSF for 80 days before general voting day. To become a CSF member and for a list of deadlines, click [here](#).

See the **Francophone Education Authorities Regulation** for qualifications to be a trustee in School District 93 (CSF).

## Board employees

If you are a board of education employee and want to run for a seat on your employer's board, you must give notice in writing to your employer of your intention to consent to the nomination. You must take a leave of absence from employment with the board beginning on the first day of the nomination period or the date notice is given, whichever is later. You will have to resign from your employment with the school district if you are elected to the board of education.

If you are a district employee seeking election to a board that is not your employer, you don't have to take the leave of absence or resign. There may be circumstances when you are ineligible to participate in certain matters due to potential conflicts of interest which may arise from your being a board employee (e.g. provincial collective bargaining if you are a unionized employee in one school district and a trustee in another district).



# Conflict of interest

Sometimes trustees have to abstain from voting on an issue they have a personal interest in

Conflict of interest rules in the *School Act* apply to school trustees. If a matter being considered by a board of education could affect a trustee (or other persons associated with the trustee) monetarily, the trustee is said to have a pecuniary interest in the matter.

A trustee with a pecuniary interest has a conflict of interest, unless the trustee falls within exceptions set out in the *School Act*.

The pecuniary interests of a trustee's family (e.g. spouse, parent, child) is treated as though they were the trustee's personal pecuniary interests.

For example, a school trustee whose spouse, parent or child is a member of a union that represents staff in a school district cannot:

- Be elected to the BC Public School Employers' Association (BCPSEA) board
- Be a member of a BCPSEA bargaining team
- Represent a board of education at a BCPSEA meeting

If a trustee has a financial interest in a matter being considered at a board or committee meeting, the trustee must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion of the matter, abstain from voting on the matter and not attempt to influence voting on the matter.

Situations sometimes arise where a trustee does not have a financial interest in a matter before the board but their involvement may give rise to a reasonable perception of bias. For example, the board may need to deal with an issue involving a trustee's close personal friend or relative.



# What else should I know?

## Some frequently asked questions

### **Remuneration**

Each board determines how trustees on the board will be remunerated. Contact your local school district to find out about trustee remuneration.

### **Time commitment**

Commitments will vary but typically a trustee may spend an average of 15 hours per week on activities associated with the role, including:

- Preparing for and attending board and committee meetings
- Attending community meetings as a representative of the board
- Responding to concerns

### **Diversity**

Boards of education should reflect the communities they serve. It's important that trustees from underrepresented communities run for office to ensure that our school districts are led by diverse boards that include a wide variety of perspectives and experiences.



# Where do I run?

## Electoral areas

In some school districts, all trustees are elected at large (in one electoral area). In other districts, there are multiple trustee electoral areas.

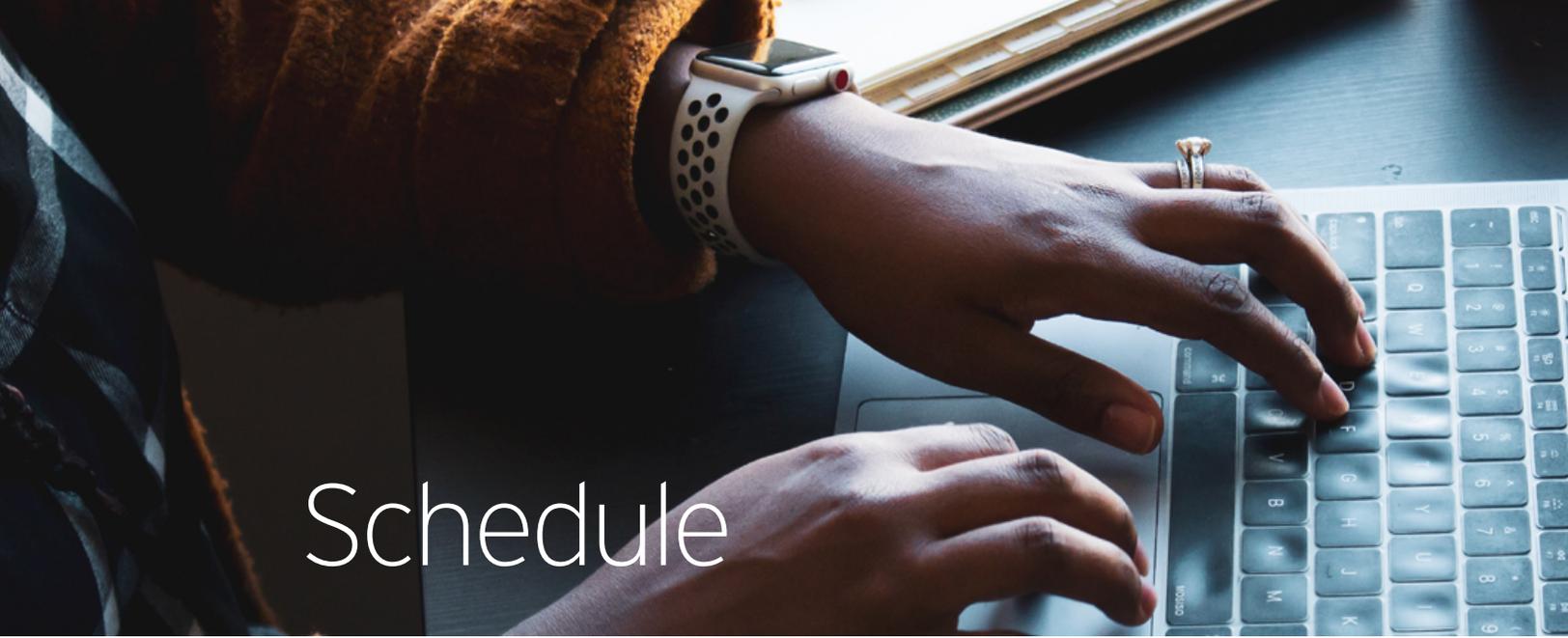
There may be more than one trustee elected from a trustee electoral area. The composition of boards in B.C. varies to reflect the communities of each district.

Some trustee electoral areas may be composed of one or more municipalities, a combination of municipalities and rural areas or rural areas only.

In some communities, interested electors have formed organizations that endorse candidates. These are known as elector organizations. Local governments and boards of education may cooperate on running elections. Some trustee elections may be run by a municipality or regional district.

You are not restricted to running for trustee only in the community where you reside.

For the CSF, there are seven electoral areas, with one trustee per area. You must reside in the area to be the trustee for that area. The electoral areas are defined [here](#).



# Schedule

Trustees attend meetings and engage with their communities. Here's a sample schedule of events a Richmond School District trustee attended in 2017

## January

- Two board meetings
- English Language Learners (ELL) Consortium meeting
- BCSTA branch meeting
- Policy committee meeting
- Council/board meeting
- Canada 150 celebration event

## February

- Sister city committee meeting
- Board stakeholder meeting
- Board workshop
- Two board meetings
- Finance committee meeting
- BCSTA branch meeting
- Policy committee meeting
- Education Week festivities

## March

- ELL consortium meeting
- Board meeting
- Two school visits
- MLA/board meeting
- Personnel and finance committee meeting

## April

- Policy committee meeting
- School visit
- Public budget meeting
- Two board meetings
- Sister city committee meeting
- Board workshop
- Learning cafe /vision, mission, values building session
- Advocacy committee meeting
- All candidates meeting
- BCSTA Annual General Meeting

## May

- Policy committee meeting
- Advocacy committee meeting
- Sister city committee meeting
- ELL consortium meeting
- Indigenous graduation ceremony
- BCSTA branch meeting
- Volunteer appreciation event
- Council/board meeting
- School visit

## June

- Sister city committee meeting
- Policy committee meeting
- Graduation ceremony
- Awards ceremonies

## **July/August**

- Canada Day parade

## **September**

- Two board meetings
- Policy committee meeting
- BCSTA branch meeting
- Council/board committee meeting

## **October**

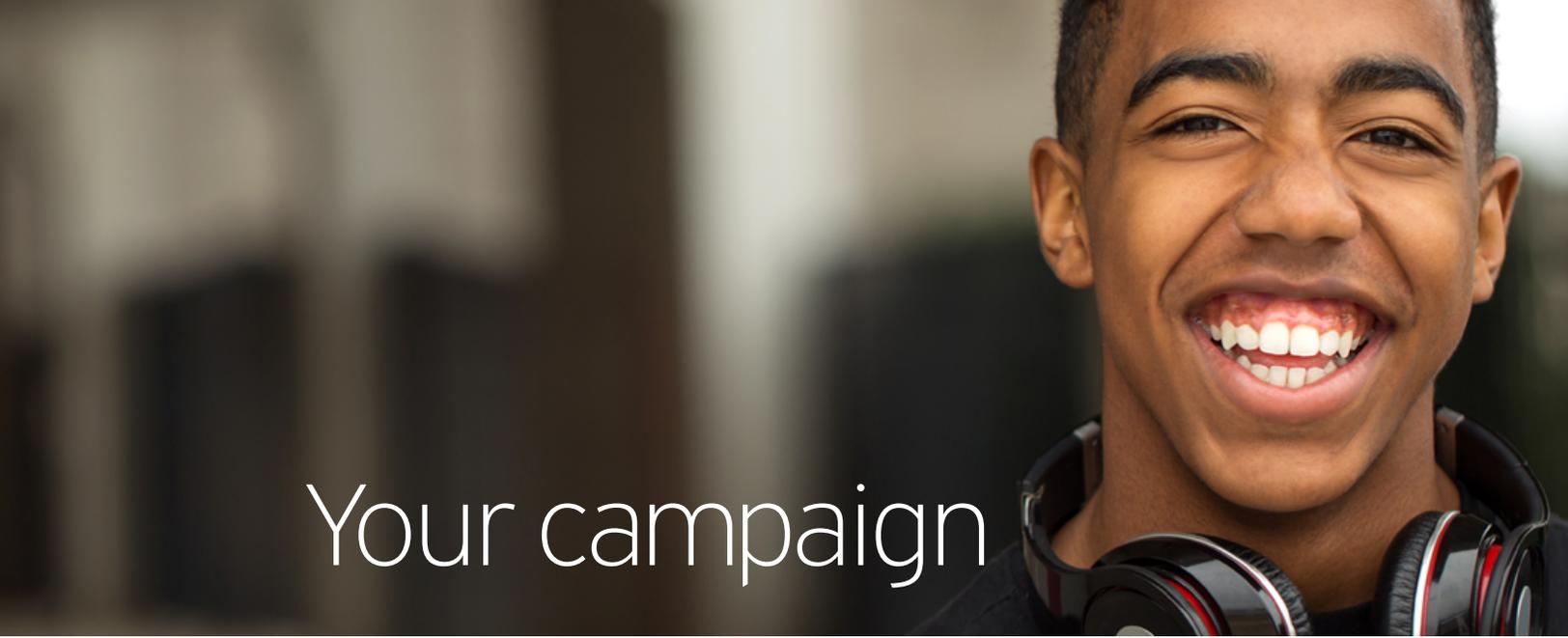
- Mayor's dinner
- School visit/Parent Advisory Council meeting
- Select Standing Committee presentation
- ELL consortium meeting
- Fire hall opening
- Policy committee meeting
- Personnel/finance committee meeting
- Richmond Teachers' Association teachers induction ceremony

## **November**

- Sister city committee meeting
- Ministry of Education visit
- Council/board meeting
- Two board meetings
- Policy committee meeting
- Mayor/council/board meeting
- BCSTA Trustee Academy
- School principal interviews

## **December**

- Board meetings
- Richmond Chamber of Commerce luncheon
- Richmond Secondary School Christmas celebration
- Personnel and finance committee meeting
- School district event



# Your campaign

## Key dates

The next general school election is October 15, 2022. A list of key election dates will be available from the **Ministry of Education**.

## Filing your nomination

You will submit paperwork to the local chief election officer during the nomination period (see page 12). Most boards prepare candidate packages, including samples of necessary forms. Different districts require different numbers of nominators. Confirm that you have the correct number.

## Financial interests

You must also include a written disclosure of your financial interests, as required by section 2(1) of the **Financial Disclosure Act**. This statement must provide details of both your corporate and personal holdings.

## Election rules

You are responsible for complying with the election rules, including ensuring all of the documents and the deposit (if required) connected with your nomination are filed with the chief election officer for your community by the deadline.

## Campaign financing

School trustee candidates are governed by the same campaign financing rules as are local government candidates. They are found in the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

Elections BC administers the campaign financing and election advertising rules under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act*.

The *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* became law in 2014 and is available from **BC Laws**.

Campaign financing rules are complex. They are described in more detail in **here**.

## Campaigning

Ensure you are familiar with rules relating to your campaign including local signage bylaws, Ministry of Transportation signage policy, election advertising and campaign rules applicable to voting day.

Your campaign may include, social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), interviews, door-to-door canvassing, mainstreeting (meeting voters in a public space), paid and unpaid media coverage, a website or blog and all-candidates' meetings.

In preparing for campaigning, ensure you understand the role of a school trustee and gain an awareness of regional and provincial issues in education. Attend board of education meetings, familiarize yourself with local education issues and learn about other candidates and their positions.



# Timeline

## B.C. local elections

Election period  
**January 1 - September 16**

Pre-campaign period  
**July 18 - September 16**

Nomination period  
**August 30 - September 9**

Campaign period  
**September 17 - October 15**

Voting Day  
**October 15**

Find out more at [Elections BC](#).

Read the School Trustee Election Procedures [here](#).

## Conseil scolaire francophone

CSF membership  
deadline to vote  
**17 June**

CSF membership  
deadline to run for trustee  
**27 July**

Call for candidates  
**17 July**

Candidacy submissions due  
**1 August**

Candidates declared to members  
**6 August**

Voting starts  
**15 September**

Results declared  
**15 October**

Find out more at [CSF](#).



# Resources

## BCSTA

The BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) supports B.C.'s boards of education in their key work of improving student achievement. BCSTA acts as a unified voice advocating for public education.

Our mission is driven by the following beliefs:

1. A high-quality public education system is the foundation of a democratic society.
2. Improving student achievement is the key work of locally-elected boards of education.
3. The interests of B.C. students are best met through local decision-making with an engaged community.
4. Providing a strong, representative voice for boards of education throughout the province is important.
5. Helping to build effective boards of education by providing development, communications and support services continues to be a vital role.

Our member boards set the direction for BCSTA's work through resolutions at our annual general meeting in the spring, and at smaller Provincial Council governance meetings over the year.

BCSTA participates in a variety of government and partner group committees and initiatives, where trustee input significantly shapes final outcomes.

More about membership benefits can be found on our [website](#).

## CAMPAIGN RESOURCES

- [Ministry of Education](#)
- [Ministry of Municipal Affairs](#)
- [Elections BC](#)
- [CivicInfo BC](#)
- [General Local Elections](#)



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[bcsta.org](http://bcsta.org)