



**YOU MATTER  
TO PUBLIC EDUCATION**  
British Columbia School Trustee Elections

# **SERVE, LEAD, INSPIRE:**

## Your Guide to Becoming a School Trustee



British Columbia  
School Trustees  
Association

# About the British Columbia School Trustees Association

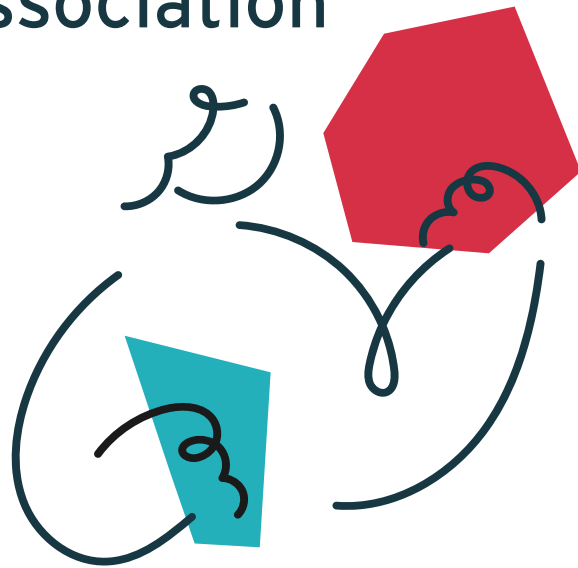
**Public education matters to us, and we know it matters to you, too.**

The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) promotes good governance practices among school boards through professional development and province-wide advocacy, creating public education champions who are dedicated to ensuring the success and well-being of every student across British Columbia.

With a legacy spanning more than 120 years, BCSTA remains a key partner in the provincial education system, working collaboratively as a co-governor with the Ministry of Education and Child Care and other partners, while remaining non-partisan and grounded in local governance to ensure student success and well-being remain top priorities.

We represent and support boards of education that govern British Columbia's public schools, serving over 550,000 students and supporting more than 400 trustees through professional development, advocacy, legal counsel, communications, and strong governance practices that helps boards govern effectively.

Good governance is the foundation of our society. As democratically elected boards of education continually develop and focus on this goal, they drive positive change and inspire passion and innovation within school districts. Through their unique role as stewards of their local education systems, boards strive to create exceptional learning environments where students can thrive and reach their full potential.



Today's students are tomorrow's parents, workers, and leaders. We rely on them to make our communities vibrant and our economy strong. School trustees play a vital role in ensuring that local districts uphold this promise through effective strategic governance.

At BCSTA, we act as the strong, unified voice for boards in advocating to government, education partners, and the public on matters affecting public education. We have a non-partisan and co-governance relationship with the Ministry of Education and Child Care and meet directly with provincial government officials, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), Members of Parliament (MPs), and Ministers to advance the priorities of British Columbia's public education system.

We are dedicated to supporting trustees in their crucial work by harnessing their deep understanding of local education systems and the unique challenges they face in their own contexts.



# A Message from BCSTA Chief Executive Officer



## Public education needs you.

School trustees are essential to the integrity of British Columbia's public education system. Through sound governance and countless hours of dedicated service to their communities, school trustees shape the conditions in which students thrive – placing student achievement and well-being at the centre of every decision.

A strong public education system is the foundation of a healthy democracy. Providing the governance that sustains this foundation is the responsibility of democratically elected local school trustees. Choosing to stand for this position is a meaningful and consequential way to serve your community – one whose impact on students and families will be felt for generations.

At the heart of every trustee's role is the exercise of responsible governance on behalf of the public. Just as students benefit from

skilled teachers, dedicated support staff, and experienced administrators, trustees are supported by their board, by BCSTA, and by a community of over 400 colleagues across BC who share a common commitment to student success and equity.

BCSTA is proud to support all of BC's locally and democratically elected boards of education through professional leadership development, governance resources, legal support, government and media relations. We are committed to advancing equitable, high-quality public education by keeping students at the centre, and we look forward to working with every successful candidate.

Thank you for considering this vital role. Your commitment to public education, to your community, and above all to the students of our province, is what makes this work matter.

## You Matter to Public Education.



# YOUR COMMUNITY. YOUR VOICE. YOUR IMPACT.

Imagine being the influence behind shaping the future of education for students in your local community. As a school trustee, you won't just witness change, you'll help drive it.

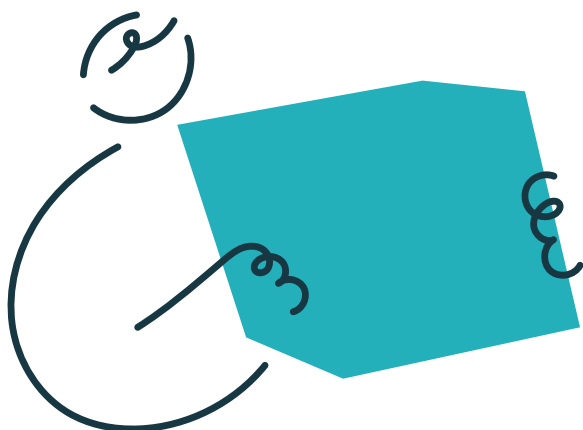
School trustees are democratically and locally elected members of a board of education, responsible for setting the strategic direction of public education in their district and ensuring schools are governed with transparency and accountability. They are the link between their community and the public education system, making decisions that affect students, staff, and families across their district.

School trustees are public education champions rooted in student success and well-being.

This is local democracy in action, where your voice directly influences the learning environment for every youth in your district.

Today's students are tomorrow's parents, workers, and leaders. As trustees, you ensure they're ready to make our communities vibrant and our economy strong.

**The role? Governance leader.  
Local community advocate.  
Education champion.**



Public education is the backbone of healthy communities and strong democracies. Behind every school district is a dedicated board of education and locally elected trustees who:

- **Set strategic direction that shapes thousands of young lives**
- **Hold fiduciary responsibility of significant public resources with transparency and accountability**
- **Bridge community needs with education policy**
- **Champion equity so every learner can reach their full potential**

Right now, British Columbia needs diverse, passionate and student-centred leaders ready to drive local impact with strong ethics in mind.



# Why School Trustees Matter to Public Education

School trustees are the vital link between the local community and the public education system. As locally elected representatives, trustees ensure that the unique needs, priorities, and voices of students and families in districts are heard at every level of government.

When schools face inadequate budgets, lack essential resources, or encounter systemic challenges, school trustees are required to make tough decisions, pass balanced budgets, and ensure that decisions reflect the needs of students and their district.

School trustees also address these challenges through diverse advocacy – both individually and through the BCSTA and connecting with their local Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). The role of a school trustee

is essential to public education. They provide government decision-makers with real-world, local context on how policies and funding decisions actually impact classrooms, students, and families. They translate community needs into actionable recommendations, working collaboratively with provincial partners, like the BCSTA, to strengthen the education system for BC students and the education community.

Whether it's securing adequate funding for growing enrollment, addressing facility needs, or championing specialized programs and supports, school trustees are BC's local community voice in shaping education policy. A trustee's work ensures that public education remains responsive, accountable, and truly public, reflecting the values and priorities of the communities they serve.



# SCHOOL TRUSTEES ARE UNIQUE

School trustees bring something essential to education governance: real-world experience and deep knowledge of their communities. They understand what matters to local families, the challenges they face, and the priorities and dreams that shape their lives.

This connection ensures that school board decisions reflect community values while supporting the success of all students. Trustees also serve as powerful advocates, working with government, education and community partners to champion public education and amplify the stories of the students and families they represent.



## The Weight of the Role

When you join a board of education, you're not just representing your community – you're accepting a legal responsibility to act in the best interests of all students across the district, even when that's not easy.

Similar to directors on any corporate board, trustees carry a fiduciary duty. This means trustees have a legal and ethical obligation to put the interests of the school board and the students it serves above personal opinion, community pressure, or the priorities of any single group.

In practice, that means some of the most important decisions you'll make as a trustee won't be simple. In fact, you will face challenges. You'll weigh budget trade-offs that

affect real classrooms and real staff. You'll vote on policies where community members hold strong, opposing views. You'll sometimes need to set aside your personal opinion in favour of what the board's legal advice and strategic priorities indicate is best for students as a whole.

This is the professional side of being a school trustee, and it's what sets elected trustees apart from advocates or advisors. You won't just have opinions. You'll have governance responsibility.

It's a meaningful distinction, and it's one of the reasons the role attracts people who are serious about public service.



# What Makes a Great Trustee?

**The question isn't whether you're qualified.**

**It's whether you're committed.**

Effective school trustees are guided by core values that shape their decision-making. They demonstrate a strong commitment to human rights, recognizing that education is a fundamental right for every child. They take accountability for their decisions and lead with ethical integrity in all aspects of their role.

Most importantly, a great trustee is someone who holds a deep conviction that all learners deserve equitable educational outcomes. They don't just acknowledge barriers, they actively work to remove them. A great trustee champions inclusive practices, advocates for resources that support diverse learning needs, and ensures that every student, regardless of background or circumstance, has access to the opportunities they need to thrive.

**The strongest boards bring together people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives**

**What matters most:**

**✓ A Collaborative Spirit**

You value teamwork, respect diverse viewpoints, and understand that boards make decisions collectively, one voice, united impact.

**✓ Focus on the Greater Good**

You balance community voices with district-wide needs, always asking: "What serves all students best?"

**✓ Commitment to Human Rights**

Creating schools where every child feels welcome isn't just good values, it's the foundation for the academic success and well-being that trustees are elected to champion.



# What Makes a Great Trustee?

## ✓ Prepared and Timely

Being a great trustee starts long before the meeting begins. It means setting aside the time to read board packages and agendas, arriving prepared and on time, and walking into the boardroom ready to contribute.

Trustees who prioritize preparation demonstrate their commitment not just to the role, but to the people they serve. Combined with a positive, team-focused mindset, this kind of readiness helps build cohesive, effective boards focused on what matters most: student success.



## ✓ Commitment to Learning

You're ready to grow, learning about governance, education law, finance, and reconciliation through ongoing professional development.



## ✓ Integrity & Accountability

You make transparent decisions, uphold board commitments, and take responsibility seriously.

## ✓ Equity-Minded Leadership

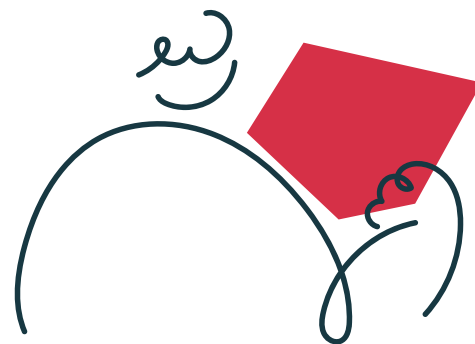
You actively work to remove barriers and create inclusive environments where every student feels seen, supported, and empowered.

## ✓ Effective Communication

You engage in difficult conversations respectfully, listen actively, and understand that boards speak with one voice.



# THE ROLE OF A SCHOOL TRUSTEE



## ✓ Set Strategic Direction

School trustees work with their board to develop the district's strategic plan, the roadmap for student success that guides decisions, priorities, and resource allocation.

## ✓ Govern Finances Responsibly

School trustees oversee significant public funds, approve annual budgets and capital plans, and ensure every dollar supports student learning, well-being, and district goals.

## ✓ Hire & Support Leadership

School Trustees appoint the superintendent (district CEO) and ensure effective systems are in place, without managing day-to-day operations or individual staff.

## ✓ Improving Student Achievement

The core responsibility of a school trustee is to improve student achievement for the communities they represent. School trustees play a vital role in shaping the conditions that allow every student to thrive. As elected representatives of their communities, trustees are ultimately accountable for ensuring that the decisions made at the board table translate into improved outcomes for the students they serve, from the policies they set to the resources they prioritize.

## ✓ Champion Your Community

School trustees work alongside parents, First Nation communities, local governments, and organizations to strengthen public education for all.

## ✓ Make Collective Decisions

School trustees debate ideas, vote on direction, and uphold board decisions, even when they personally disagree. This requires a fundamental shift in mindset. As a trustee, you are an individual elected by your community – but you govern as part of a corporate board that speaks with one voice.

Once a decision is made, it belongs to the board, not to any single member. A trustee who voted in the minority carries the same responsibility for the success of that decision as every other board member. Authority rests with the board, not with individual trustees, and the board's credibility depends on each member honouring that principle.



# Understanding the Role

## **GOVERNANCE VS. OPERATIONS**

As a school trustee, you'll focus on **GOVERNANCE**, setting direction, creating policy, and ensuring accountability. You won't manage daily school or district operations, which is the role of the superintendent or make personnel decisions.

### ✓ Key Responsibilities

- Attend board meetings
- Set strategic direction
- Set district policy
- Employ the superintendent
- Manage district budgets
- Community advocacy
- Hear appeals affecting student education, health, or safety

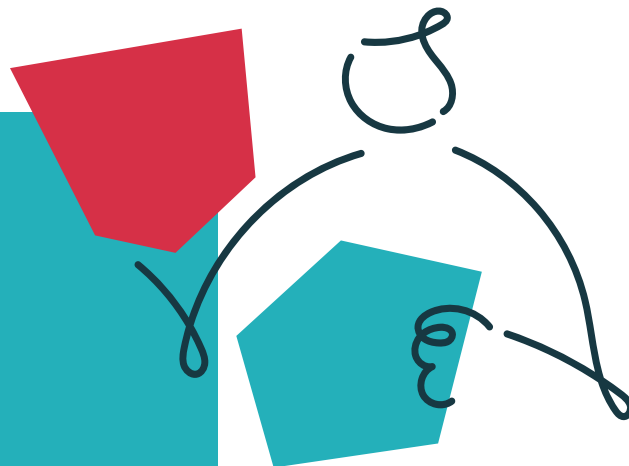


# The Work of a School Trustee: Knowing Your Role

School trustees operate within a legally defined framework, typically a *School Act* or equivalent provincial legislation, which is established by the provincial government, not by the trustees themselves. This legislation grants trustees the authority to govern a school district, but it also mandates the boundaries of their power, duties, and operational procedures.

Beyond the *School Act*, trustees must comply with other regulations, including the *Human Rights Code*, *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and the *Criminal Code*.

One of the most important distinctions a trustee can understand is the difference between governance and operations, and why that distinction matters.



## Trustees and boards of education govern the “what” and the “why.”

The board sets the district's strategic direction, establishes policy, and determines the outcomes it aims to achieve for students.

Trustees ask: What do we want to accomplish? Why does it matter? These are the decisions that belong at the board table.

## Staff manage the “how.”

The superintendent and district staff are responsible for implementing the board's direction. They determine how goals are achieved, how resources are deployed, and how day-to-day operations are carried out. Trustees trust and empower staff to do this work without directing or interfering in operational decisions.

When trustees govern and staff manage, the entire system works more effectively for students, families, and communities.

## Understanding Conflict of Interest as a School Trustee

A conflict of interest as a school trustee is a situation in which a trustee's personal, financial, or professional interests could, or could appear to, influence their decision-making in their role as a trustee. Trustees are required to declare and excuse themselves from discussions and votes where a conflict of interest exists, and are under the obligation to consider all factors available at the time of any decision, and therefore cannot be predetermined.



# The Commitment

Time - Approximately 10-15 hours per week, including:

- Board and committee meetings (with preparation time)
- Community engagement as a board representative
- Professional development and learning about new issues
- Responding to constituent concerns

## The following example illustrates a trustee's typical yearly commitment at a glance:

\*Please note, this does not include district-specific events or committees

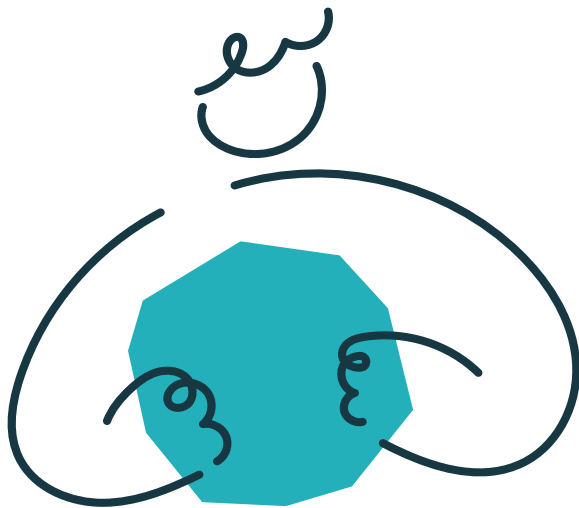
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools Open (Jan. 5)</li> <li>• January Board Meeting (Jan. 27)</li> <li>• Board/MLA's Meeting (TBD)</li> <li>• Approve Local School Calendar</li> <li>• Mid-Year Strategic Plan Report (Q1/Q2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve Amended Budget for current fiscal year (24/25)</li> <li>• Receive and review Fiscal monitoring report (financial forecast)</li> <li>• Review and adopt school fees for 25/26 school year</li> <li>• Receive February enrolment update</li> <li>• Municipal Partner Meetings</li> <li>• February Board Meeting (Feb. 24)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive preliminary budget revenue information for the upcoming year's preliminary budget – Ministry of Education funding announcement</li> <li>• Municipal Partner Meetings</li> <li>• Annual Facilities Grant planning</li> <li>• Partner Liaison Meeting</li> <li>• March Board Meeting (March 10)</li> <li>• Spring Break (March 16-27)</li> </ul>
APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review draft budgets for the upcoming year</li> <li>• Review draft Capital Plan bylaw</li> <li>• April Board Meeting (April 28)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve preliminary budget for upcoming budget year</li> <li>• Approve 5-year Capital Plan for submission to BC Ministry of Education</li> <li>• Review 2026/27 District Operational Plan</li> <li>• Receive and review fiscal monitoring report (financial forecast)</li> <li>• Board Annual Self-Assessment</li> <li>• Municipal Partner Meetings</li> <li>• May Board Meeting (May 26)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive and review fiscal monitoring report (year-end estimates)</li> <li>• Complete Superintendent Growth Plan Review</li> <li>• Attend graduations and school year-end celebrations</li> <li>• Approve 2026-2027 District Operations Plan</li> <li>• Receive Year-End Strategic Plan Report</li> <li>• June Board Meeting (June 23)</li> </ul>
OTHER	<h3>Remuneration</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Each board sets trustee compensation. Contact your local school district for details.</b></li> </ul>	



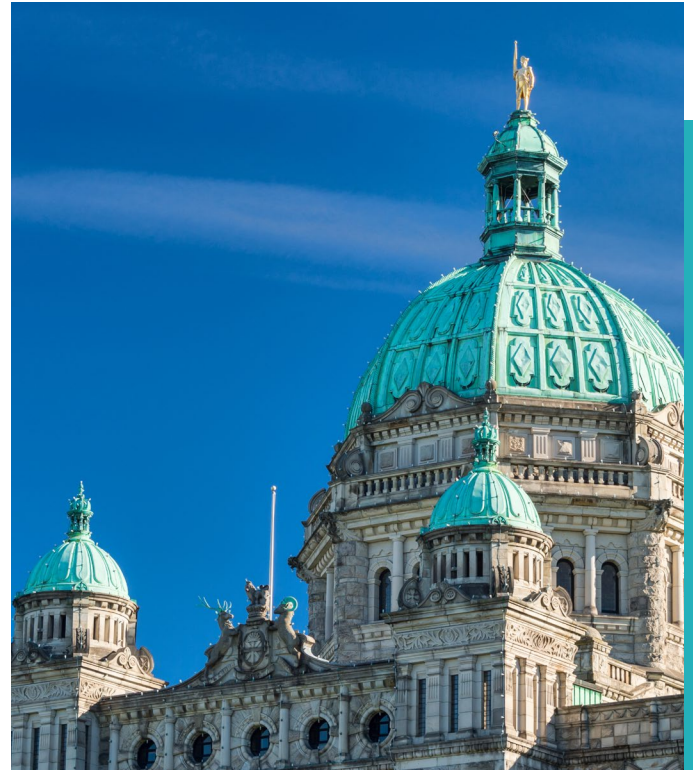
# DEMYSTIFYING DEMOCRACY

Under BC's co-governance model:

- The provincial government sets the curriculum, funding frameworks, and legal requirements
- Locally elected boards govern districts, set policy, and make decisions that reflect community values



Your role as a school trustee shapes real outcomes for real students.



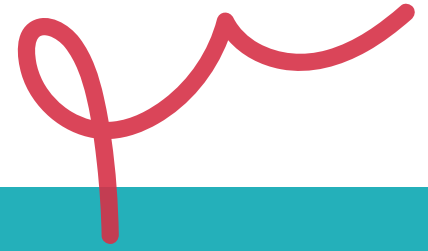
## Who Should Run?

**Individuals committed to putting students first.**

BCSTA believes that strong school boards reflect the rich diversity of the communities they serve and encourages all interested individuals to consider running for their local school board. Whether you're a parent, business leader, recent graduate, community organizer, advocate or concerned citizen, your unique perspective matters.



# Before You Run



## DO YOUR HOMEWORK

- Attend local board meetings
- Review your district's bylaws, governance policies, and code of conduct
- Talk to current trustees about their experience
- Understand district priorities and community needs

## BUILD YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- Learn about the *School Act* and education legislation
- Familiarize yourself with district finances and strategic planning
- Understand BC's education funding model

## SUPPORT

You won't do this alone. As a school trustee you will become a member of The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA), which provides:

- Professional development and leadership training
- Legal services and communications support for boards of education
- Networking with 400+ fellow trustees in BC
- Governance resources and best practice guidance



For 120 years, BCSTA has championed good governance in public education.

### Connect with BCSTA or your local district

Access resources, training, and support designed specifically for trustee candidates and newly elected members.



# Ready to Lead?



# PUBLIC EDUCATION MATTERS AND YOU MATTER TO PUBLIC EDUCATION.

The 2026 trustee elections happen on **October 17, 2026.**

Your community is counting on passionate leaders ready to step forward.

### Next Steps:

Download the Complete Candidate Guide and Get Started (available in [English](#) or [French](#))

### Learn More About BCSTA

Visit: [bcsta.org/elections](https://bcsta.org/elections)

Contact: [bcsta@bcsta.org](mailto:bcsta@bcsta.org)

### Contact Your Local School District

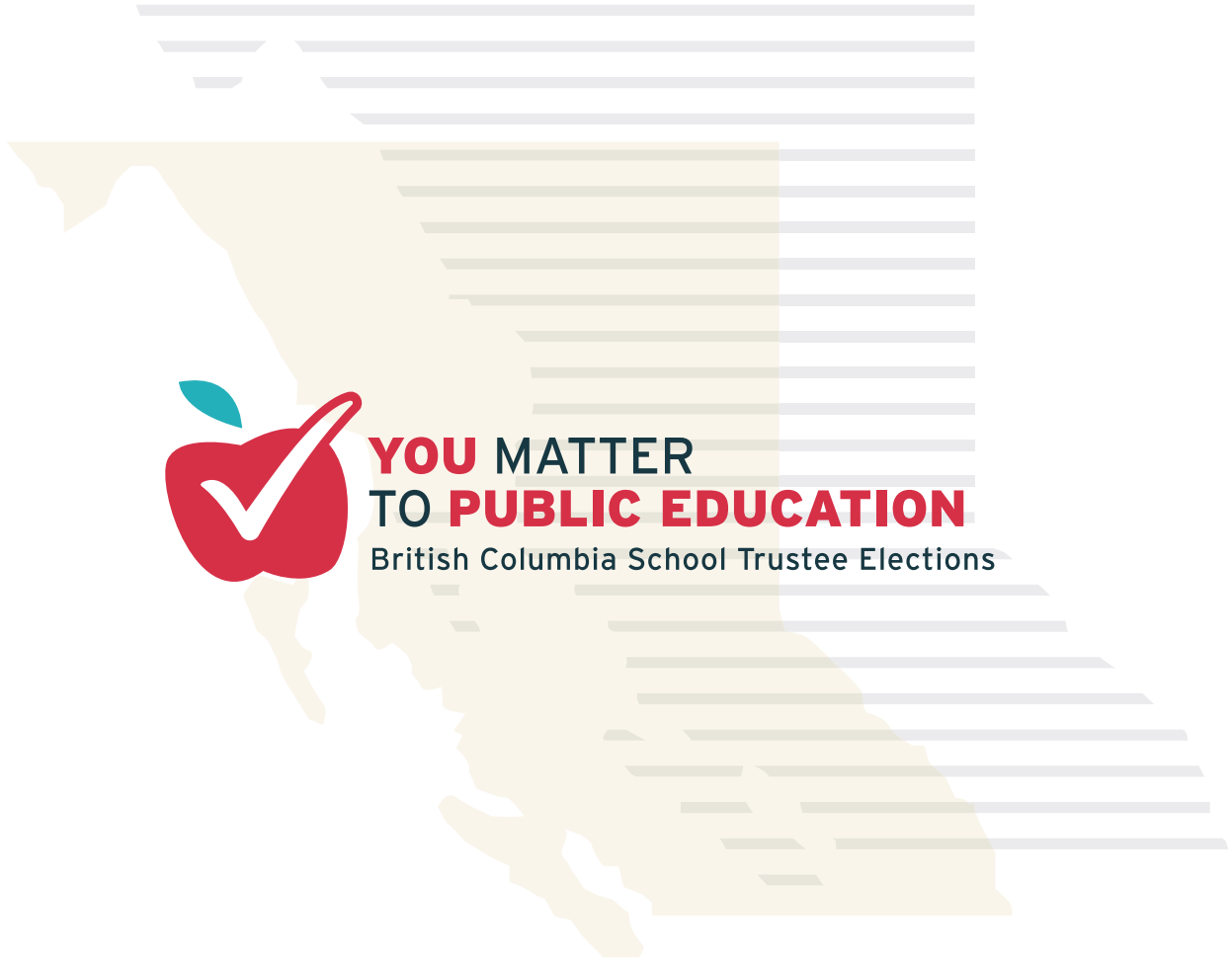
Find remuneration details, meeting schedules, and district-specific information

### Be Part of Local Decision-Making

The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) represents the democratically and locally elected boards of education across BC, serving over 555,000 students and supporting over 400 trustees dedicated to the success and well-being of every student in the province.

[www.bcsta.org](https://www.bcsta.org)





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