

YORK REGION DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



Policy and Procedure #225.0, Governance Procedure 225.1, Governance: Board of Trustees' Assessment

The Governance policy and procedure outlines the roles and responsibilities within the Board of Trustees. It establishes a framework upon which the collective and individual effectiveness of the Board of Trustees and its individual members may be evaluated. The evaluation process will ensure alignment with the Board's strategic leadership, accountability and professional development responsibilities.

Stakeholder Groups with Responsibilities Under this Policy and Procedure

- Board of Trustees
- Individual trustees
- Director of Education
- External Stakeholders
- External Consultant

Relationship to Board priorities

York Region District School Board is committed to demonstrating ethical leadership and ensuring good governance of the York Region District School Board in support of the Mission, Vision and Values and strategic goals and priorities outlined in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan. Regular and ongoing review of governance practices contributes to a system that demonstrates accountability, transparency and confidence in public education.

Department

Corporate Secretariat and Trustee Services

Related Documents and/or Legislation

[Board Policies, Procedures and Supporting Documents policy and procedure](#)

[Broader Public Sector Procurement](#)

[Director of Education Selection policy and procedure](#)

[Director of Education Performance Review policy and procedure](#)

[Ontario Education Services Corporation](#), Good Governance for School Boards, Trustee Professional Development Program

[Ontario Public School Boards' Association](#), Guide to Good Governance

[School Board Governance: A Focus on Achievement](#)

[York Region District School Board Communications Protocol](#)

Policy #225.0, Governance

1. Policy Statement

The York Region District School Board is committed to demonstrating ethical leadership and ensuring good governance of the York Region District School Board in support of the Mission, Vision and Values and strategic goals and priorities outlined in the Multi-Year Strategic Plan. Regular and ongoing review of governance practices contributes to a system that demonstrates accountability, transparency and confidence in public education.

Governance extends beyond the legal responsibilities of the school board. The decisions that are made and the way in which trustees interact with each other, staff and members of the public contributes to organizational culture.

This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities within the Board of Trustees. It establishes a framework upon which the collective and individual effectiveness of the Board of Trustees and its individual members may be evaluated. The evaluation process will ensure alignment with the Board's strategic leadership, accountability and professional development responsibilities.

Specific information about good governance is available on the [Ontario Public School Boards' Association \(OPSBA\) website](#) in the Good Governance Guide publication and on the [Ontario Education Services Corporation \(OESC\) website](#), in the Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program.

2. Application of Policy – Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Role of the Board of Trustees

Only the Board of Trustees as a whole has the authority to make decisions or take action.

Specific duties of the Board of Trustees are outlined in Section 169.1(1), Board responsibility for student achievement and effective stewardship of resources, of the Education Act.

2.2 Role of the Board Chair and Vice-Chair

The Board Chair helps the Board of Trustees focus on strategic priorities, facilitates dialogue, promotes trustee growth and demonstrates strong leadership, interpersonal and communication skills. The Chair of the Board is annually elected at the Inaugural Board meeting.

To build capacity and ensure continuity in the absence of the Board Chair, a Vice-Chair is elected annually and performs all duties of the Chair in their absence and other duties as assigned. The Vice-Chair of the Board provides mentorship to the Student Trustees.

Additional duties of the Board Chair are outlined in Section 218.4 of the Education Act, with further detail in OESC's, Good Governance for School Boards, Trustee Professional Development Program, Module 15, What Makes a Great Board Chair?

2.3 Role of Committee Chairs

Committee Chairs are elected by each committee or the Board of Trustees and similar to the Role of the Board Chair helps to facilitate effective meetings in accordance with the Board and/or Committee Operational By-Law.

As outlined in OBSPA's Guide for Good Governance, in order to run effective meetings, the Committee Chair should:

- a) have a basic knowledge of the rules of parliamentary procedure and the board and committee Operational By-Laws;
- b) ensure that all relevant information has been provided;
- c) allow open debate;
- d) provide opportunities for and encourage all members to speak;
- e) manage conflict;
- f) ensure that issues are separated from individuals;
- g) lead the board as a team; and
- h) help the board reach its decisions.

Like all other Committee members, the Chair is entitled to one vote that contributes to the decision of the Board as a whole. The Committee Chair should build relationships with members and ensure that all members have an opportunity to share their thoughts on items under consideration.

2.4 Role of Individual Trustees

Individual trustees do not have authority to make decisions or take action on behalf of the Board. Only the Board of Trustees as a whole has this authority under the Education Act.

As elected representatives of the public, trustees listen to their local communities and communicate with constituents to understand and navigate the public education system in York Region. Individual trustees advocate for the interests of their constituencies which may include conveying the opinions of their communities during Board deliberations. While this constituency responsibility is critical to the role as a publicly elected official, the Board of Trustees as a whole is responsible for making decisions in the best interest of all students in the York Region District School Board.

Trustees support members of their communities to navigate the public education system and work closely with the local superintendent of schools to connect members of the public with the staff members who are able to support the needs of students and their family.

Specific responsibilities of individual trustees are outlined in Section 218.1, Duties of board members, of the Education Act and in OESC's Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program, Module 3: Roles and Responsibilities.

2.5 Role of the Director of Education

The Director of Education is hired by and reports to the Board of Trustees as a whole. The Director is also accountable to the Ministry of Education with regard to the implementation of legislation and curriculum. The Director of Education is responsible for hiring and allocating all staff resources to support Board priorities.

Specific duties of the Director of Education are outlined in the Education Act and are included in the more comprehensive [Position Profile](#) which outlines the Accountabilities, Leadership Competencies and the current Strategic Priorities assigned to the role.

Additional information about the role of the Director of Education can be found in Module 3: Roles and Responsibilities and Module 5: Performance Review: Director of Education of the Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program

3. Framework for Board Effectiveness

3.1 Strategic Planning

The Board of Trustees is responsible for establishing strategic priorities and goals for the York Region District School Board and ensuring they are aligned with the Board's Mission and Vision.

Every four years, the Board of Trustees will engage in a fulsome review of the Multi-Year Plan which will include input and consultation with stakeholders in York Region including, but not limited to, students, parents/guardians, staff and community and educational partners.

Trustees will work with the Director of Education to monitor the achievement of the goals and identify new goals that will further support achievement of organizational priorities.

Additional information about the strategic planning role of the Board of Trustees is outlined in OESC's Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program, Module 6: The Strategic Role and Multi-Year Strategic Planning.

3.2 Budget and Financial Stewardship

The Board of Trustees is responsible for establishing the conditions for the appropriate stewardship of Board resources including the annual Budget, and establishing Board policies and strategies that are in alignment with Board priorities.

Additional information about the role of the trustees in financial stewardship is outlined in the OESC's Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program, Module 3: Roles and Responsibilities and Module 13: School Board Finance.

3.3 Policy Development

The Board of Trustees is responsible for approving and communicating Board policy in accordance with the [Board Policies, Procedures and Supporting Documents policy and procedure](#).

Additional information about the role of the Board of Trustees in policy making is outlined in OESC's Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program, Module 7: Exercising Effective Governance: The School Board's Role as Policy maker.

3.4 Oversight of the Director of Education

The Board of Trustees is responsible for hiring the Director of Education in accordance with the [Director of Education Selection policy and procedure](#) and monitoring performance in accordance with the [Director of Education Performance Review policy and procedure](#).

The Board is also responsible for applying outcomes from the Performance Review process to the ongoing training and leadership development of the Director of Education.

3.5 Ethical Leadership

Trustees are responsible for balancing their roles as elected officials and as a member of the Board of Trustees. This means navigating the fine line between the needs of the local community and making decisions that are in the best interest of public education in York Region, while at the same time ensuring compliance with legal responsibilities.

Ethical leadership is a reflection on how relationships are nurtured and respected in order to achieve the common good. Trustees can demonstrate ethical leadership by modeling and inspiring the Board's shared mission, vision, values and priorities while innovating, empowering others, collaborating and respecting individual differences.

Additional information about ethical leadership can be found in the OESC's Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program, Module 1: Effective Governance through Ethical Leadership.

3.6 Relationships

Establishing effective relationships founded on honest communication is critical to developing trust and making effective decisions that support the achievement of organizational goals and priorities.

Trustees will work to develop meaningful and professional relationships with all stakeholders, including, but not limited to:

- (a) trustee colleagues;
- (b) the Director of Education;
- (c) senior staff and staff who support the role of the trustee;

- (d) constituents;
- (e) members of the community; and
- (f) partners in public education.

Additional information about the relationships in school boards is outlined in the OESC's Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program, Module 4: Common Ground, Common Purpose, Key Relationships in School Boards.

3.7 Communication and Engagement

Effective and constructive communication is critical to developing relationships and building trust. Engaging with students, parents, staff, advisory committees and members of the community is critical to the decision-making process and supporting the needs of each student.

Details with regard to trustee communication with the media, parents/community members, schools and superintendents and staff members is outlined in the [York Region District School Board Communications Protocol](#). Trustees and staff are expected to adhere to the communication requirements outlined in this protocol.

Additional information about managing conflict and the role of trustees in family and community engagement and engaging the public is outlined in the OESC's Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program, Module 8: Conflict – Managing it Creatively, Module 9: Family and Community Engagement and Module 10: Advocacy: Engaging the Public.

3.8 Assessment of the Board of Trustees

Module 21: [Board Self-Assessment: Governance Performance](#) from OESC's Good Governance Guide: Trustee Professional Development Program states:

“Effective boards of trustees will have a governance review policy which includes processes that can contribute to the continuous improvement of board governance.

Self-assessment is a valuable process that results in a range of benefits. In addition to improving communication among board members and building understanding of the effectiveness of the directions taken by the elected board, the key outcome is greater certainty around what works for the benefit of students. “

Self-assessment includes examining how well the Board works together and the effectiveness of individual group dynamics.

Regular assessment of governance performance will provide the Board of Trustees with data which will be used to refine practice, change behaviour and develop policies and strategic priorities and goals that support continuous improvement in the York Region District School Board.

Assessment of the performance of the Board of Trustees will be conducted in accordance with the Governance: Board of Trustees' Assessment procedure.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- (a) understanding and adhering to the individual and collective responsibilities of trustees and the Board of Trustees outlined in the Education Act and the Governance policy;
- (b) entrusting the day-to-day operations of the York Region District School Board to the Director of Education;
- (c) recognizing and supporting the Board Chair as the representative of the Board of Trustees;
- (d) understanding and adhering to their legislative requirements outlined in the Education Act; and
- (e) approving and authorizing any changes to the Governance: Board of Trustees' Assessment procedure.

4.2 Individual Trustees are responsible for:

- (a) understanding the governance responsibilities of individual trustees and the Board of Trustees as outlined in the Governance policy, the Education Act and as outlined in OPSBA's Good Governance Guide and OESC's Good Governance for School Boards: Trustee Professional Development Program;
- (b) understanding that any trustee who is found to have violated the Governance policy is subject to investigation under the Trustee Code of Conduct and Protocol for Trustee Code of Conduct;
- (c) requesting support and guidance with regard to *governance-related* matters through the Board Chair, Director of Education or Corporate Secretariat and Trustee Services;
- (d) requesting information related to *system* matters through the Director of Education and Corporate Secretariat and Trustee Services;
- (e) requesting information about schools or requesting support for *school or student-related* matters to the local superintendent of education; and
- (f) participating in the professional development portion of the Trustee Orientation Program and ongoing professional development throughout their Term of Office.

4.3 The Director of Education is responsible for:

- (a) responding to requests for support and guidance to trustees with regard to governance-related matters;
- (b) responding to requests for information related to system matters and ensuring that all trustees receive relevant information; and
- (c) allocating staff and resources to support the Board's governance responsibilities.

5. Contact

Board Chair
Director of Education
Corporate Secretariat and Trustee Services

6. History

Working Document: October 2018, February 2019
Revised: February 2019, December 2020

1. Procedure Statement

“Board development is an aspect of capacity building that focuses on enhancing the ability of board members to function as a group. A useful approach to building this capacity is through board self-assessment, which can serve a number of purposes, including developing a shared understanding of effective governance, enhancing the board’s strategic capacity, improving decision-making processes and identifying governance information needs. Board assessments generally focus on core areas of the board’s mandate.”¹

This procedure outlines the Board’s commitment to engaging in regular assessment of their governance performance and the process by which the results will be used to create and implement a Governance Action Plan for the Board of Trustees. This will help the Board of Trustees and individual trustees improve their effectiveness in supporting the achievement of the goals and priorities outlined in the Multi-Year Plan.

2. Application of Procedure

Achievement of good governance requires commitment and engagement of all trustees. It is a shared responsibility of trustees, the Director of Education and the staff members who support trustees.

2.1 Planning

Planning is done by the Board Governance Review Committee which decides on the following:

- (a) what information will be collected;
- (b) how the information will be collected;
- (c) who will have access to the information;
- (d) how it will be analyzed and compiled;
- (e) how reporting and feedback will occur;
- (f) how the assessment results will be acted upon; and
- (g) how recommendations related to agreed-to changes will be monitored

The Board Governance Review Committee will recommend its methodology to the Board for approval.

¹ [School Board Governance: A Focus on Achievement](#), page 31

2.2 Administration of the Trustee Assessment

To promote open, objective and candid commentary, with the assurance of confidentiality, anonymity and proper understanding of context, the Board of Trustees' Self-Assessment and Comprehensive Board of Trustees' Performance Review Questionnaire will be administered by an external consultant. Consistent with [Broader Public Sector Procurement](#) requirements, consideration may be given to the consultant that oversees the performance evaluation of the Director of Education, where appropriate.

2.2.1 Board of Trustees' Self-Assessment

The Board of Trustees' Self-Assessment shall include input from all trustees in a format which asks participants to evaluate the Board of Trustees as a whole and to engage individual trustees in a self-evaluation of their contributions as a member of the Board of Trustees.

The process will be as follows.

- (a) Aligned with the timelines associated with the Director of Education Performance Review, the Board of Trustees will engage in a process to assess their performance associated with the governance of the York Region District School Board in May annually.
- (b) The Board Governance Review Committee will review any previous questionnaire(s), the Governance policy and the Governance: Board of Trustees' Assessment procedure and submit a timeline, final set of questions and any policy and/or procedure amendments to the Board of Trustees for consideration by October annually.
- (c) Each trustee will be asked to complete the questionnaire in November, except in the year when a Comprehensive Board of Trustees' Performance Review Questionnaire is being administered. The results will be consolidated and reported to the Board Governance Review Committee in January.
- (d) Working with the consultant, the Board Governance Review Committee will prepare a report to the Board summarizing the results and making recommendations for action in the form of a Governance Action Plan in February annually. This report will also outline progress in achieving the goals outlined in the previous Governance Action Plan.
- (e) Once approved by the Board, the Governance Action Plan will be made available to the public.
- (f) Achievement and progress on the completion of actions outlined in the Governance Action Plan will be monitored through regular reports to the Board Governance Review Committee and the Board in June and October.

In the year of a comprehensive assessment, as outlined in Section 2.2.2, the Annual Board of Trustees' Self-Assessment will not be administered.

2.2.2 Comprehensive Board of Trustees' Performance Review Questionnaire

In addition to the Annual Board of Trustees' Self-Assessment, a comprehensive review of the Board of Trustees, which includes feedback from external stakeholders will be conducted once in the Trustees' Term of Office.

The process will be as follows.

- (a) In the second year of the Trustees' Term of Office, the external consultant will support a comprehensive assessment of the Board of Trustees. At a minimum, this process will include input from;
 - trustees,
 - the Director,
 - members of Senior Team,
 - staff members who directly support the Board of Trustees,
 - advisory committee members including, but not limited to, non-Trustee members of the Audit Committee, Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee, the Special Education Advisory Committee and the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Advisory Committee, and
 - representatives of unions, federations and associations, as identified by the Director of Education and confirmed by the Chair of the Board.
- (b) The Board Governance Review Committee will review any previous list of respondents, previous questionnaire(s), the Governance policy and the Governance: Board of Trustees' Assessment procedure and submit a timeline, final set of questions, list of respondents, a communication strategy and any policy and/or procedure amendments to the Board of Trustees for consideration by October.
- (c) Each of the identified respondents will be asked to complete the questionnaire in November. The results will be consolidated and reported to the sub-committee in January.
- (d) The Board Governance Review Committee will prepare a report to the Board summarizing the results and making recommendations for action in the form of a Governance Action Plan in February. This report will also outline progress in achieving the goals outlined in the previous Governance Action Plan.
- (e) Once approved by the Board, the Governance Action Plan will be made available to the public and communicated to identified respondents.
- (f) Achievement and progress on the completion of actions outlined in the Governance Action Plan will be monitored through regular reports to the sub-committee and the Board in June and October.

2.2.3 Input from the Director of Education

The Board of Trustees' Self-Assessment and Comprehensive Board of Trustee Performance Review Questionnaires shall include input from the Director of Education with a focus and format to be determined by the Board Governance Review Committee.

2.2.4 Input from the Board of Trustees

Information collected as part of the Board of Trustees' Self-Assessment or Comprehensive Board of Trustee Performance Review Questionnaire shall be compiled by the external consultant and submitted to the Board Governance Review Committee for review and then to the entire Board for discussion using an analysis and a reporting format that facilitates discussion on:

- (a) opportunities to leverage personal and collective strengths; and
- (b) areas for improvement.

2.2.5 Governance Action Plan

Using the input from the Board of Trustees, the Board Governance Review Committee shall work with the consultant to develop a Governance Action Plan (GAP) for the Board of Trustees. The GAP must include a monitoring and evaluation framework for each improvement goal.

Each identified action should:

- (a) be specific such as, but not limited to training, professional development and policy needs and resources;
- (b) include explicit connection to the Board's governance function and Multi-Year Strategic Goals and Priorities;
- (c) identify timelines for completion;
- (d) summarize status and evidence of progress; and
- (e) outline recommendations for further actions, where applicable.

The Board of Trustees will consider and approve the Governance Action Plan annually in February.

The Governance Action Plan shall be made available to the public and shared with stakeholders who responded to the Performance Review Questionnaire.

In accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, any information that may identify a specific individual will not be included in Governance Action Plan.

2.2.6 Individual Trustee Self-Assessment

Individual trustees are encouraged to engage in an assessment of themselves using pre-established guiding questions. Each trustee may seek support and guidance from the Board Chair to discuss professional learning and growth opportunities to support the needs identified by their self-reflection.

2.2.7 Board of Trustees' Informal Reflection

Regular informal conversation will occur following each regularly scheduled Board meeting to reflect on meeting *process* with the following:

- (a) the Director and trustees; then
- (b) the trustees only.

Decisions will not be made as part of these conversations nor will they move forward the business of the Board.

2.3 Board Governance Review Committee

A committee of the Board that is responsible for considering all governance-related matters as required and working with the external consultant to execute the Board of Trustees' Assessment in accordance with the Board of Trustees' Assessment procedure.

The committee will be composed of the Chair of the Board and three additional trustees approved by the Board. It is recommended for continuity, the trustees' term on this committee be two years. The external consultant and Director of Education are non-voting members of this committee. When necessary, the Director may be excused to allow trustee members to engage in discussions privately.

Administrative support will be provided by Corporate Secretariat and Trustee Services.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Trustees shall:

- (a) approve changes to the Governance: Board of Trustees' Assessment procedure;
- (b) approve the timelines, questions, lists of respondents and communication strategy associated with the Board of Trustees' Self-Assessment and Comprehensive Board of Trustees' Performance Review Questionnaire; and
- (c) approve the Governance Action Plan.

3.2 Individual Trustees shall:

- (a) understand that the Board of Trustees' assessment process is the responsibility of all trustees and contributes to governance effectiveness of the Board as a whole;
- (b) engage in actions outlined in the Governance Action Plan;
- (c) consider engaging in the individual trustee self-reflection process;
- (d) discuss learning needs with the Board Chair, as appropriate; and
- (e) participate in informal reflection conversations.

3.3 The Board Governance Review Committee shall:

- (a) ensure compliance of all elements of the Governance: Board of Trustees' Assessment procedure;
- (b) retain the services of an external consultant to support the Board of Trustees' Assessment processes; and
- (c) ensure that achievements and progress on the completion of actions outlined in the Governance Action Plan are monitored and reported through regular reports to the Board Governance Review Committee and the Board in June and October;

3.4 The Director of Education shall:

- (a) allocate staff and resources to support all elements of the Board of Trustees' Assessment process;
- (b) support the Board Governance Review Committee, as required;
- (c) support the implementation of items identified in the Governance Action Plan;
- (d) provide strategic support to the Board of Trustees to ensure good governance and ethical decision making;
- (e) support the implementation of actions identified in the Governance Action Plan; and ensure the Governance Action Plan is available to the public and communicated to identified respondents.

3.5 The External Consultant shall:

- (a) work with the Board Governance Review Committee to facilitate the Board of Trustees' Assessment process in accordance with the Governance: Board of Trustee Assessment procedure;
- (b) provide professional advice to the Board Governance Review Committee, as required;
- (c) support the drafting and administration of the Board of Trustee Self-Assessment and Comprehensive Board of Trustee Performance Review Questionnaire, in accordance with the Governance: Board of Trustee Assessment procedure;
- (d) administer the Comprehensive Board of Trustee Performance Review Questionnaire ensuring;
 - appropriate timelines for completion, and
 - identified respondents have an opportunity to provide input;
- (e) collate all responses and submit a report to the Board Governance Review Committee by January annually;
- (f) support the Board Governance Review Committee in preparing a report to the Board summarizing the results and making recommendations for actions in the form of a Governance Action Plan.

4. Contact

Board Chair

Director of Education

Corporate Secretariat and Trustee Services

5. History

Working Document: October 2018, February 2019

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