



Characteristics of a good trustee (and hence a good board)

Feb 18, 2010 Heather Welwood Past President ASBA

Prepared, upfront, open minded, flexible, patient, respectful, courageous and passionate

Prepared:

- Set aside the time to read your agenda package and the background material.
- If you miss a meeting, or come late, catch up on your own time.
- A good trustee does reading between meetings on educational topics.
- Have or learn the appropriate computer literacy skills.
- Do you know about the social media tools your students and staff are using such as twitter? <http://politwitter.ca/hash/abed> , www.asba.ab.ca

Upfront:

- If an item requires research, then give notice of motion or respect the process such as “future board meeting’ agenda items.
- Don’t play “gotchya” with your superintendent, fellow board members or staff who attends meetings

Courageous:

- You were elected for your points of view so have faith in them.
- Don’t be a “Hallway trustee”.
- Age old habits may need to be examined. Have the courage to ask: “Does this fit the board today?”
- The right thing to do is not always the most popular thing to do- Always ask “Is this good for students?”
- Continue to have the courage to put motions on the agenda even if they fail.

Open minded/flexible:

- Be open-minded/flexible.
- A good board should not have predictable split votes
- It is ok to change your mind and the board’s position if it is the right thing to do after receiving more information
- Be open to all points of view especially the community’s and disenfranchised groups
- Major on the major issues and minor on the minor.

Patient and respectful:

- You don't need to change everything at once- learn your board norms and culture and respect them yet still be firm and enthusiastic
- Show respect for other's opinions by your words and actions. Their opinion is just as important to them as yours is to you.

Passionate:

- A great trustee believes in the power of education.
- Trusteeship is not just a job or a retirement "filler-inner".

Does not put the board above family and business:

- As important as serving on a School Board is, NEVER forget what is most important! When your time on the board is completed, you still need a life and family to go back to.

Some Suggestions:

- *If your board has not already done so; go around your table and ask each person why they ran and what they want to accomplish in the next three years. It will give you some insight. .*
- *Ask your board to agree on key messages after the board has made a decision on a controversial issue. You would be surprised at the different interpretations the staff and board members may have taken public.*