



Hosting a School Board Trustees All Candidates Meeting

A STUDENT'S GUIDE

Not all civics classes will teach you about school board elections, but students have the most to gain from having a great school board trustee.

Even though you may not be eligible to vote yet, you can still get involved in elections. This guide will outline how you can support your community to make informed decisions when casting their ballots for school board trustee.

Ontario municipal and school board elections take place on the fourth Monday in October, every four years. The next election is on October 22, 2018. You can find out more about elections at a number of useful websites:

Ontario School Trustees

www.elections.ontarioschooltrustees.org

Ministry of Municipal Affairs Elections

www.amo.on.ca/AMO-Content/Municipal-101/Municipal-Elections.aspx

Association of Municipalities of Ontario Elections

www.amo.on.ca/AMO-Content/Municipal-101/Municipal-Elections.aspx

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WHY SHOULD I CARE?

Well, first let's talk about what a school board trustee is.

A school board refers to both a collection of schools in a district, and the council of trustees that govern them. While your trustee is responsible to schools and communities in your local ward or area, they also act as part of the board to make decisions for all the schools and communities in a school board's district.

Your trustee represents your community's needs and values when the school board sets priorities and makes decisions for schools in your area. They consult with the community, create policies, develop strategic plans, and discuss matters of importance to students, teachers, parents, and everyone else in the board. Together, the trustees vote on these plans and policies, and if passed, they're put into action by the director of education, superintendents, principals, teachers and other school board staff.

School board trustees create the policies that govern things like:



Transportation to and from school



Accommodation for students special education needs



Facilities and equipment for in-class and after-school activities



Student support services



Administration of schools



Hiring of teachers and other staff

WHERE DO I FIT IN?

You fit in everywhere! Your success is your trustee's job.

The decisions they make impact your teachers, principal, class offerings, after-school activities, emotional wellness and future! Your voice and concerns need to be considered when the board makes decisions. That is why it's important for you to get involved in school board elections, even if you can't vote yourself. One way to do that is by hosting an All Candidates Meeting where your community members can hear from and evaluate your trustee candidates. Learn more below.

Real
Talk

Trustees are an important part of your academic success and well-being. Look at it this way: you have the power to influence your trustee, trustees have the power to influence the board, the board has the power to improve your school experience!

STUDENT TRUSTEES

Student trustees bring the student voice to school board discussions and decision making. While adult trustees are responsible to the community and taxpayers, student trustees are only responsible to students. If you have an idea to improve your education, you can talk to your school board trustee, or your student trustee.

To learn more about to a student trustees and how to run for the position, turn to page 19.



TOP 5 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEES.

1

They set the strategic direction for the board and monitor its progress.

Trustees talk to the board's administrators, students, teachers, parents, and broader community to develop and create a multi-year strategic plan. This plan sets out priorities and goals for the board over the coming years.

2

They set school policies and assess their effectiveness.

Trustees set policies for the board and hold the director of education accountable for implementing those policies and assessing how well they are working. If a policy isn't working well or needs to be updated, the board of trustees will be involved in the process to ensure policies do what they set out to do.

3

They decide how to distribute funds.

A trustee's job includes promoting publicly funded education that is accessible to all. The board of trustees is responsible for developing a balanced annual budget that reflects the board's vision and reflects the needs of the board's community. This can affect:

- The location of schools
- The number of students in a classroom
- Funding for afterschool programs and equipment

4

They provide you with the support you need to achieve your educational goals

Students' education should be a trustee's top priority. Their job is to make sure students always have the support they need to achieve their academic goals. What does this look like in real life?

- Ensuring that there are sufficient and updated textbooks and other learning materials in classrooms so that each student has an equal opportunity to learn
- Ensuring that technology is available to facilitate learning
- Ensuring a safe space to learn without bullying or discrimination based on things like race, religion, or economic class.

5

They get the community involved in the classroom and are receptive to the needs of students, parents, and community members

Trustees are always working towards continuous improvement inside and outside of school. This means responding to local concerns specific to student life through telephone calls, emails, meeting requests and queries. If they don't know the answer or can't help, they should direct you to someone who can.

A trustee's job doesn't end at the school doors. A trustee is responsible for making the school system accessible to students, parents and other community members. They ensure everyone has access to relevant information regarding educational policies, opportunities, programs, and services, and create opportunities for the community to tell the trustee about their concerns. Trustees promote community involvement by creating opportunities to engage at spaces like parks, libraries, religious institutions, and through community associations/groups and public service providers, like hospitals, police, and fire services.

THE LOWDOWN: ALL CANDIDATES MEETING

What is an "All Candidates Meeting"?

All Candidates Meetings bring together all those running for election as school board trustee. The meeting allows the candidates to share a bit about themselves and to answer questions from the community. Any local group, organization or individual can organize a meeting. That individual can be you!

Why should I host an All Candidates Meeting?

All Candidates Meetings are a way for your community to find out about the trustees candidates, their views, and their plans for students in your area. They're an opportunity for students and voters to voice their concerns ahead of the election and figure out who will best represent the community's needs.

If you aren't of legal voting age, this is one way to be part of the democratic process this election year! Hosting an All Candidates Meeting also shows trustee candidates that students are engaged, and that student needs should be the prime focus when making decisions that affect your education and the activities you participate in and outside of school.



Real
Talk

This might seem like something that will be hard to accomplish in a short amount of time but remember, you don't have to do it all alone.

If you are interested but don't know how to take the lead, get together with a group of students to organize it. Start by contacting your Student Council and see if they can help. This helps show that you care about your school and your future.

Planning an All Candidates Meeting is a great opportunity for you to learn valuable skills such as leadership, communication, event planning, and teamwork. You will take a leadership role in your school and community, share your voice and have your concerns heard by the people who have the power to address those issues.

Don't forget to add your work planning the All Candidates Meeting to your resumé and any university applications. It may also count towards your high school volunteer hours - check with your guidance counsellor and see!

#HOWTO: TIPS FOR PLANNING A MEETING

Adult Allies

Adult allies can help you reduce the barriers you may face. Identify a supportive adult with relevant experience and connections - maybe a staff member from your school, someone from your mosque, temple or church, a parent, a guardian, or a coach - and ask them to be an ally for this project. You might have to ask more than one person, so don't get discouraged! If you don't already have a relationship with your chosen ally, meet with them to establish your expectations and discuss how the adult can support you in this leadership role.

Promoters

Reach out to many different local community partners, such as religious groups, local newspapers and journalists, libraries, schools, college/university groups, community centers, nonprofit organizations, and youth councils to see if they might help spread the word about the All Candidates Meeting. Invite them to attend, and ask them to support by promoting the All Candidates Meeting to their contacts. Ask them to put up posters in their spaces and/or share them on social media.

Download sample posters at

elections.ontarioschooltrustees.org

Youth Team

Talk to your friends, peers, and other young people in your community about your intention to host an All Candidates Meeting and ask them if they would like to be part of the planning committee or volunteer. Be sure to talk to your Student Council as well! Recruit your planning committee and volunteers as early as possible to help you plan, manage and promote the meeting. Sometimes subcommittees, such as a logistics committee or media committee who can work independently and report back to the planning committee, can help split the work up into more manageable amounts.

Media

Invite the media. Call or email your local radio and television stations, newspapers and civic bloggers. Let them know what you are doing, who will be there, when to arrive and the issues up for discussion. Let them know why the event will make a good story, and why it is important for the community to know about your efforts. Consider inviting a reporter or another member of the media to be the moderator. Doing this may increase the likelihood their media outlet will cover the event, and heighten public interest in your All Candidates Meeting.

#SQUADGOALS

THE GRIND STARTS NOW!

Inhale. Exhale. Good! We get it! It can feel overwhelming to run an event like this, so that's why we are going to break it down for you step by step! Just remember you are not alone, and to reach out to your squad of adult allies, promoters, or your youth team if you have any questions!

1. Identify your candidates. Check with your municipal clerk or your municipal website for a list of candidates. You can also find the candidates at the website www.elections.ontarioschooltrustees.org.

2. Decide on a date, time and venue.

a. Time: Early evening works best.

b. Date: Choose a date that will work for most people. Consult your school calendar as well as religious calendars of those in your community to avoid conflicts. It is best practice to choose 2 or three dates, and then email the candidates and ask about their availability on those dates.

c. Venue: Find a venue that is large, open, and easily accessible (has parking, is close to public transit, can accommodate someone in a wheelchair). Ask your principal about using your school gym. You'll want to make sure you have the space for at least 2 hours.

3. Send each candidate a formal invitation with a copy of the rules and procedures. Ask them for a short biography that the moderator will use to introduce them. Invite the candidates to bring any promotional materials they would like to display on tables outside of the All Candidates Meeting room. You'll need a minimum of two candidates confirmed in order to hold your All Candidates Meeting.

4. Consider other logistical matters such as using video conferencing or live streaming on social media to extend your audience reach.

Consider the use of assistive technologies to ensure people with visual or hearing impairments can take part. You may also want to ask a translator to participate. You may also want to consider offering child care. These can all cost money, or you may be able to find volunteers.

5. Establish a set of rules and procedures to help govern your All Candidates Meeting. A sample set of rules is included on page 17.

6. Select a strong moderator to enforce the rules, and facilitate the panel discussion and audience questions. Find a well-respected, non-partisan, prominent community member, such as a local

educator, reporter, or community leader. They will have to maintain order and ensure the All Candidates Meeting is well-run.

7. Select a timekeeper who will ensure that those speaking and asking questions are within their allotted time limits. You will also have to select a note-taker who will take a record of what was discussed.

8. Plan the meeting's format in detail. A sample meeting agenda is included on page 18 of this guide.

9. Create a list of questions for the candidates (sample questions are included on page 19). At the start of the meeting, consider displaying flipcharts with the questions and invite guests to draw a star next to questions they want to hear answered, and to write their own questions.

10. Confirm the logistics. Ensure there is ample seating, good acoustics and space for refreshments. Talk to the venue and your adult ally about liability (permission forms, insurance or security that may be needed).

11. Confirm layout. Candidates should be seated at a table at the front of the room with name signs and plenty of water. The moderator and candidates will need microphones, and you should have at least one microphone for audience questions. A podium for the moderator would be helpful.

12. Promote online. Use a free website to create an event and register participants. Use social media to create buzz and draw interest – post updates on candidates, generate discussion about issues in the board, ask what questions should be asked, and provide details about the event. You can also talk to your school, parent council, and school board about them promoting. After the event, send thank you notes to each candidate, all volunteers and the moderator! It is important to appreciate everyone who made it all possible!



WORKING ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET

Venue bookings, supplies, and refreshments cost money. Here are some ways you can find funds for your meeting.

Donation

It can be intimidating to ask people in your community for money – we get it! To inspire community members to donate, you need to make a meaningful connection by showing them why they matter, why they ALREADY care, and how they can make a difference. When practicing your pitch, remember to let the donor do most of the talking and at the end, ask for a specific amount.

In-Kind Donation

Instead of donating money to buy required goods or services, in-kind donors provide those goods and services directly. In-kind donors can be especially useful when booking a venue, but can also work to secure refreshments and tech. Reach out to venues and local caterers, tell them about the service you are providing to the community, and ask if they are willing to donate free space or food. You can remind them that they may be eligible for a tax credit or may be able to write off the donation as a business expense.

Sponsorship

Look for companies that are a natural fit. Offer promotion in return for sponsorship, sharing their logo and what their company is about on social media, and in any print material (banners, posters, etc.). If you are emailing sponsors, do not mass email — personalize! Keep it short and sweet. When securing the sponsorship, get the agreement in writing and have both parties sign. Start early because relationship-building takes time! Be sure to check your school board's policies on sponsorship.

Partnership

There are funded organizations that align and support the mission of civic engagement, youth-led initiatives, and other social causes. Start by asking your Student Council and your Parent Council if funds are available to support the event. If there is an organization, in or out of your school, that is a good fit, ask them if they would like to partner for the event. If they have an existing space that they work out of, you can ask to use that space for the meeting. They may be able to help with a venue, insurance, and may also have some budget to buy supplies.

WOKENESS 101: GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY AND CANDIDATES

You will need to create a list of questions that reflect the community's main education concerns, especially if the audience is slow to ask or suggest questions.

Create a community profile including the community's demographics, distinct culture, political environment, prominent social or economic issues, history of alcohol and drug problems, social support services and social and historical barriers to accessing services.

- **Start by searching** online for media, news, opinion, and academic articles on local issues to inform your questions.

For example, you could do an online search for "public education in Peel Region".

- In order to get an even a better grip on understanding what your community's concerns are, canvas local diverse community groups, students, parents, and school staff for possible topics and questions. Think about how to include those who are not already being consulted, such as newcomers and others who are excluded from what you found online.

For example, ask "If you could change anything about your experiences in the school system, what would you change?"

- Get to know your trustee candidates, research what they have done in the past, and their plans for the future. Have they publicly taken a stance on any issues that might affect the way they will make decisions as school board trustee? That way, you can be informed and target questions to specific candidates.

The best questions:

- Are unique to your school and community
- Can't be answered with yes or no
- Ask trustees how they plan to take action

#ADULTING: MEASURING & CELEBRATING IMPACT!

**Want to know the impact
of your event? This is where
evaluation comes in!**

Graffiti Wall

Cover a wall in paper and write a question (ex. What is your main takeaway from the townhall?) at the top. Have markers available on the side for people to write or draw their thoughts. You could also use sticky notes.

Head, Heart, Feet

This is a fun, quick and simple tool asking people to reflect on what they have learned (head), how they feel about what they have learned (heart), and what they'll do as a result of their learning (feet). Templates are available online through a google search. Bring printed copies and markers to your meeting, and be sure to ask people to fill them out.

Surveys

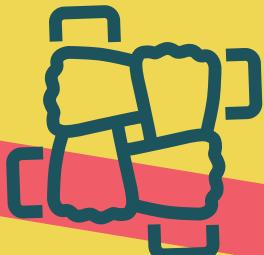
Create and print pre-survey and post-survey questions that people can fill out as they enter the meeting, and as they leave. If you have email addresses of attendees, you can also email them the pre-survey in advance and ask them to submit possible questions. After the event, you can also email them the post-survey.

Time to Get #Lit

As community advocates, activists, and organizers, when we accomplish a significant goal, we sometimes move immediately onto the next goal rather than celebrating our success. When we don't take the time to celebrate, we burn out! Organizing an All Candidates meeting is not easy, and you should be proud of all the work you and your team did!

1. Celebrating with your planning team after the meeting is over is always a lot of fun! Go out for dinner, enjoy lattes at a cafe, or watch a movie!
2. After the event, capture insights from your evaluation on social media in a creative way, and thank all those who attended, and engaged. You can also send a media release to media partners that highlights the key issues and quotes from the meeting.

REAL TALK: DON'T LET ANYBODY TELL YOU THAT YOU CAN'T DO IT!



1. The adults you work with may try to take control.

Stand your ground, make your voice heard, and return to the expectations that were agreed upon at the outset. Their role as an ally is to support you, open doors for you, and amplify your work. If they are spoiling the experience for you or other young people, respectfully let them know.

2. Don't be discouraged about the turnout if it is not up to your expectations.

Reflect on what may have affected turnout, and how to do better next time, but remember you didn't fail if you didn't reach a certain number of attendees or if it didn't go exactly as you imagined. Be proud of what went well and learn from the experience!

3. Nobody has all the answers.

Don't doubt your abilities. Instead of asking "Who am I to organize such an event?", think "Why shouldn't I be the one to organize this event?"! As a young person, you are directly affected by the school trustees who get elected to the board. If you are passionate, curious, energetic, and willing to put in hard work, you got this!

CLOSING

Hosting an All Candidates Meeting can and will be challenging, but it's worth it! You're providing a valuable public service by connecting candidates to the people they're looking to serve, and starting a conversation about what is important to your community.

You don't have to do it alone, so remember to find your squad, ask for help, and celebrate your accomplishment when it's over!

After election day, follow up with your elected trustee. Invite them to be involved in your school councils, and remind them to communicate the decision making of the board to your community. Remember, trustees are here to support your academic achievement and wellbeing.

To find out more information about your school board trustee elections, visit: elections.ontarioschooltrustees.org.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Suggested Rules and Procedures

1. Candidates should present themselves to the moderator 15 minutes prior to the call to order to draw names for order of speaking.
2. The meeting should be called to order promptly.
3. Candidates will be seated alphabetically at the speakers table and will be introduced in this order.
4. Each candidate will be allotted 3 to 5 minutes to make an opening statement. The order of these statements will be determined in advance by draw.
5. Candidates will be asked not to interrupt other candidates' opening or closing statements.
6. During the Question and Answer session, questions will be received from the floor in either written or oral form. The moderator will have the responsibility of making sure that questions are directed to the appropriate candidate and that the questions are balanced among candidates.
7. The moderator will rule questions out of order if deemed to be inappropriate, offensive and/or derogatory or if they seem to attack the integrity of the candidate.
8. The moderator will rule any person out of order who attempts to use the session for making a speech rather than asking a question.
9. Questions from the floor will be limited to one per individual to ensure as many audience members get to participate as possible. If everyone who wishes to ask a question has had the opportunity to do so and there is still time left in the Question and Answer session, members of the audience may ask a second question.
10. Answers to questions should be limited to 2 to 3 minutes to ensure a wide ranging discussion.
11. Allow 3 to 5 minutes for closing statements in the same order as opening statements.

Sample Agenda

6:30 pm

Doors open

6:45 pm

Candidates present themselves to the moderator to draw for order of speaking

7:00 pm

Call to order. A representative of the meeting organizing group welcomes the community and introduces the moderator. Moderator delivers remarks and reads the rules and procedures.

7:10 pm

Introduction of the candidates in alphabetical order

7:15 pm

Each candidate to be given 3 to 5 minutes for their opening presentation

7:45 pm

Break for refreshments and allow time for audience to write questions for candidates

8:00 pm

Question and Answer session

8:40 pm

3 to 5 minute closing statement by each candidate

8:55 pm

Moderator's concluding remarks.

Include pointing attendees to the graffiti wall or evaluation form if you have one

9:00 pm

Adjournment

Sample Questions

How will you make the most of your All Candidates Meeting? The questions your moderator asks trustee candidates are critical to the impact of your meeting. These questions should reflect the challenges your school faces currently or may face in the near future.

Suggested questions:

- What qualifications make you best suited to be our school board trustee?
- How do you plan to work with the other trustees to ensure our concerns are discussed and considered when the board makes decisions?
- What do you consider the most important way to ensure academic achievement and well-being for students?
- How do you plan to ensure our school and school board will be responsive to diverse communities, and create equity and inclusion in schools?
- What do you see as the role of schools in making sure that all Canadian students understand Canada's history in terms of First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples? What would you do to support the Calls to Action of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)?
- Can you share examples of successful programs at our schools? Where do you see room for improvement?
- What policies/strategies would you propose which could serve to promote the mission of our school board?
- How much access do you think the public should have to their school board trustees?
- What sort of relationship do you think a trustee should have with fellow trustees and student trustees? How do you plan to support a collaborative environment in the board room?
- What sort of relationship do you think the board of trustees should have with the board's Director of Education? How will this help trustees of the board respond to concerns raised by parents and other members of the community?
- What sort of relationship do you think the board of trustees should have with the municipal government?
- How do you plan to promote accountability and transparency at the board?
- Can you comment on what schools need to support the full range of student abilities, including students with special needs?
- What should be done to contribute to the overall mental health and well-being of students and staff in schools?
- What are your views on the role of technology in teaching and learning?
- What more should schools be doing to be safe and inclusive places for students, e.g., with regard to anti-bullying?

Student Trustees – It could be you!

What is a student trustee?

Student trustees represent the student voice at the board table. They act as a link between students and the school board, making students a part of the conversation and decision making. They represent student voices by informing students about key decisions that affect their academic success and wellbeing, and providing the student perspective to the board. While adult trustees represent the entire community, student trustees are only responsible to students. Depending on the school board, student trustees may also be members of their board's Student Senate or Student Advisory Council.

Responsibilities of a student trustee:

- Attending all board meetings
- Representing students views during board discussions
- Meeting with student leadership groups
- Gathering student input about issues and reporting back to students with activities of the school board

How do I become a student trustee?

1. Show that you're an active member of the community, have an understanding of what needs to be improved, and that you are able to manage your time between extra-curricular activities and school work. You could get involved in your school through your student council, clubs and committees, participating in sports teams or creating school arts projects, etc.
2. Check out the eligibility requirements of your board by looking online or asking your student council or student trustee. Though some school boards have different eligibility requirements, all student trustees in Ontario must be full-time students who will be in Grades 11 or 12 in the year they want to serve.

3. Research the election process. This is also different from board to board, so look online and ask around!
4. Prepare your application at least a week before the deadline. Some school boards require you to make a public speech, while others might ask you to interview for the position. Be sure you're aware of all the requirements and prepare for them well in advance. It's a good idea to highlight your academic achievements, leadership abilities and communication skills when pitching yourself for the position.
5. You don't have to do it alone! You can always ask your teachers, parents, or guidance counsellors for help.

3 benefits of being a student trustee:

1. Show your leadership.

As a student trustee, you are constantly learning leadership skills by listening to your peers, collaborating with the board, advocating on behalf of students, and discussing solutions/next steps.

2. Be compensated for your work.

Student trustees receive an honorarium of \$2,500 in each year that they serve. The board will also reimburse you for approved expenses like transportation to board meetings.

3. Grow outside the classroom: experience, learning, and networking!

Acting as a student trustee is also a chance for you to become more aware of issues concerning the community and the education system. You'll also expand your network, get experience in a professional environment, and gain skills that will be helpful to you in everyday or professional life such as communication skills, presentation skills, and collaboration skills.

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Note

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To access this adult-focused guide, visit:

[http://elections.ontarioschooltrustees.org/Resources/pdf/
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The Youth Research and Evaluation eXchange (YouthREX) is a province-wide initiative based at the School of Social Work at York University, with regional hubs at Carleton University, King's University College at Western University, and Laurentian University.

Our Mission is to make research evidence and evaluation practices accessible and relevant to Ontario's grassroots youth sector through capacity building, knowledge mobilization, and evaluation leadership.

Our Vision is an Ontario where shared knowledge is transformed into positive impact for all youth. Our Stakeholders include grassroots youth-led and youth-serving initiatives (frontline staff, program staff, leadership), funders, and policy makers.

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