



COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (PUBLIC)
Report No. 23-071

17 October 2023

Board of Trustees Key Areas of Focus and Work Plan 2023-2024
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PURPOSE:

1. To present the Board Work Plan for the 2023-2024 school year, as well as 'Areas of Focus' for discussion and approval.

STRATEGIC LINKS:

2. Responsible resource use is one of the Board's four key value statements within the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. The development and approval of the 'Areas of Focus' and the creation of a Board Work Plan help to move the work of the Board to a higher level of governance, focusing on directing and/or protecting the high standard of achievement and well-being of all OCDSB students, and building public confidence.

CONTEXT:

3. [Board Policy P.130.GOV Evaluation Process for the Board of Trustees](#) requires that the Board conduct an annual reflection to assess its progress, determine opportunities for growth and establish key areas of focus based on the strategic plan and feedback from trustees. In June 2023, the Board approved the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. Through extensive community consultation and focussed conversations, three key areas of focus were identified: Learning, Well-Being, and Social Responsibility.

In developing the 2023-2024 Work Plan, the Board has reflected on its accomplishments over the past year, identified areas of growth, reviewed its new strategic plan, addressed areas for priority focus, highlighted work to be carried forward from the previous year, and discussed new opportunities and strategies for the coming year.

The development and approval of the Board Work Plan and Areas of Focus enables the Board to direct its time and attention on the things that matter the most, the goals and objectives identified in its multi-year strategic plan. The Work Plan provides the Board with greater clarity about what the board and the senior team need to be working on both separately and collectively.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

3. Annual Reflection

At its Annual Reflection held on 07 September 2023, the Board met to review the results of its informal evaluation questionnaire, reflect on their work in 2022-2023, and consider goals, areas of focus, and emerging needs for the upcoming year.

A Self Evaluation Questionnaire was made available to the Board of Trustees between 2 September and 7 September 2023. A total of 10 responses were collected from trustees. During the session, the Board had an opportunity to share its thoughts on the work of the Board as a whole, their own practice as trustees, their relationship with the Director, and to provide any additional comments and feedback. This evaluation process was the first in a four-year cycle for the 2022-2026 Board of Trustees.

In discussion, the members reviewed the questionnaire results dashboard. Generally, the feedback reflected the importance of open communication, building trust and respect for differing opinions, engaging all members of the community, transparency in decision-making, and leading with kindness.

As part of the evaluation, the Board reflected on its development over the course of their first term and their accomplishments including:

- hiring a new Director of Education;
- a strong commitment to equity, transparency, and accountability;
- an effective, participatory and supportive orientation program;
- a budget aligned with strategic priorities and responsive to financial pressures; and,
- the development and approval of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

4. Areas of Focus

The Board used the second half of the Annual Reflection to discuss and build consensus on the Board's work for the 2023-2024 school year. The Board rooted its discussion in and reaffirmed its commitment to the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. As a result, the work plan mirrors the three key areas of focus and embeds critical reviews of plans and strategies to direct the District's work.

Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program and/or Service Review• Student Achievement Action Plan
Well-Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employee Wellness Strategy• School Safety Plan• Mental Health Strategy
Social Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indigenous, Equity and Human Rights Roadmap renewal• Greening Plan• Leadership Development and Mentorship Plans

5. **Fiduciary Roles and Responsibilities**

Section 169.1 of The *Education Act* clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of trustees. It states that the Board shall:

- promote student achievement and well-being;
- promote a positive school climate;
- promote the prevention of bullying;
- ensure effective stewardship of the board's resources;
- deliver effective and appropriate education programs to its pupils;
- develop and maintain policies and organizational structures that promote the board's goals;
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies developed by the board;
- develop a multi-year plan aimed at achieving the board's goals;
- review annually the multi-year plan with the board's director of education; and,
- monitor and evaluate the performance of the board's director of education.

Further, the Board is also accountable for its fiscal and operational performance and for the academic achievement of students and well-being of their students and staff. The Board is responsible for effectively communicating the Board's performance to parents and the communities of the Board – both where the Board is succeeding, and where the Board is struggling to meet expectations, and what steps are being taken to improve outcomes.

The ongoing fiduciary responsibilities of the Board support the District in achieving its strategic objectives. These legislated requirements as prescribed in the Education Act are critical components of the work plan and are highlighted in the Work Plan attached as Appendix A to this report.

The relationship between the Board and staff is important. For this reason, an infographic accompanies the work plan. It serves as a reminder that both the Board and staff are working together for the same common purpose, student achievement and well-being. This goal must be centered in the work of the Board.

6. **Work Plan Development Process**

The Board Work Plan has been structured to connect with the 2023-2024 Strategic Plan areas of focus, manage the Board's fiduciary obligations, and allows for the pursuit of engagement strategies and learning opportunities.

The Work Plan is a tool that allows for the management of matters for consideration during the year and to track the status of these matters at the Board. The Board Work Plan used in combination with the Board's goals provides the benchmark for annually evaluating the performance of the Board in relation to its roles and responsibilities.

7. **Board Work Plan vs. Long Range Agenda**

The Board Work Plan is an important tool to keep the work focused on the priorities and initiatives identified in the Strategic Plan. The Board must be thoughtful and intentional in the use of its time, focusing agendas on issues that directly relate to student achievement and well-being.

The Board Work Plan identifies the key responsibilities of the Board and the work the Board must do to support the operations of the District over the course of a school year. The Work Plan is intended to align with the Director's Work Plan but not duplicate it.

The long range agenda is a tracking tool which identifies exactly what items will be presented to the Board, Committee of the Whole, and its statutory and advisory committees on a monthly basis. Long range agendas are used by the senior team and agenda planning to manage the meeting cycle.

8. Professional Development

Professional development is important for trustees both individually and collectively. The Board will continue its learning on subjects that align with the Strategic Plan and help further their knowledge and skills as fiduciaries. The schedule for this year's professional development includes:

- Annual Reflection (September)
- In the Boardroom.How Great Boards Meet - workshop with Marion Thomson Howell (October)
- Anti-Hate Toolkit (November)
- Issues Management (Communications) (December)
- Equity in Data with Heather Krause, We All Count (January)
- Community Partner Dinner (February)
- Board/Senior Staff Retreat - Program Review (April)
- Human Rights (May)

9. Monitoring Progress

Once approved, the Board Work Plan will be added as an item to the Board agenda to ensure trustees and the public have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on progress.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

10. The emphasis on strategic monitoring in the Board Work Plan will have some resource implications on reports prepared by staff and the use of meeting time for Committee of the Whole and Board meetings. Specifically, the Board's desire for deeper monitoring requires measurement reports which facilitate this. To support more generative discussions, meeting time will need to be privileged to create opportunities for focused discussions. Professional development and advocacy sessions may also require an investment of financial resources to cover the cost of speaker(s) and hospitality.

COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:

11. This report will be discussed at Committee of the Whole, enabling community members an opportunity for input into the areas of focus and priorities for the upcoming year.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the 2023-2024 Board Work Plan and 'Areas of Focus' as outlined in Appendix A to Report 23-071 be approved.

Michèle Giroux
Executive Officer, Corporate Services

Pino Buffone
Director of Education and
Secretary of the Board

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Board Work Plan and Key Areas of Focus for 2023-2024