

INFORMATION SHEET

04

Part 3 of the compulsory training for governing board members

VERBS USED (ADOPT, APPROVE, CONSULT, INFORM, ETC.)

The *Education Act* contains close to two dozen verbs referring to the functions and powers of the governing board. Board members might need to “adopt” a document, “approve” an activity or “be consulted” on a project. Below you will find some of the verbs frequently used in board meetings and how they differ from each other.

TO ADOPT

The verb “to adopt” implies that the board has **full control** over the content of a document, proposal or project it deals with. The board can **modify** them in whole or in part, **amend** them (board members vote on modifications submitted to correct, improve, complete or remove any part of a document), or **receive** them exactly as submitted (adopted by a majority or unanimous vote).

In “adopting” the board thus has all the autonomy and latitude it needs over the content and scope of what it wants to adopt. Therefore, it must carefully evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of its decisions to ensure that they are always in the students’ best interests.

During a meeting, board members may therefore make any modifications they deem necessary and then adopt the modified document at the same sitting. In certain cases, however (e.g. the educational institution’s annual budget), if individuals are calling for major changes, but the members want to first carry out an in-depth analysis or require additional information, they can send the document back to the principal or director for analysis. A decision on the proposal is then put off until a later meeting.

For example, the governing board adopts the institution’s educational project as well as its anti-bullying and anti-violence action plan and its annual budget.

TO APPROVE

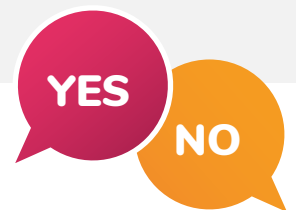
“To approve” something is **to be in agreement with it**.

The board can therefore vote in favour of (in a majority or unanimous vote) or refuse to approve a proposal in the form in which it was presented. The board cannot itself modify the content of such a proposal, which means the proposal cannot be adopted or applied.

This power of the board is restricted to most proposals developed in collaboration with the staff, since it directly concerns the responsibilities that have been conferred on them.

Therefore, when a board wishes to modify some or all of a proposal, it cannot do so itself. Instead, it must return the proposal, along with the board members’ comments, to the person or group entrusted with reviewing it. Once they have completed their work, the proposal is re-submitted for board approval at a later meeting.

For example, the board must approve the educational institution’s code of conduct and safety measures as well as the time allocated for the various school subjects and the financial contributions that may be required of parents.



Can / Must

It is important to differentiate between certain shades of meaning in the sections of the *Education Act* that deal with issues of “powers” and “duties” (e.g. the board “can,” the board “must”).

While “can” indicates a possibility, “must” refers to a duty, that is an obligation prescribed in the *Education Act*.

TO CONSULT (or to be consulted)

In this context, “to consult” is to be understood broadly as meaning “to ask for an opinion.”

Consultation may be compulsory and constitute a responsibility of the board.

For example, the board **must consult** the students at least once a year.

Consultation can also be a power attributed to the board.

For example, the board **must be consulted** on the choice of school textbooks and instructional materials required for teaching the programs of study, on the selection criteria for the appointment of principals or directors, and on the needs of the educational institution or the school service centre with regards to goods and services.

When consultation is optional, the *Education Act* stipulates that the board “can advise, can consult,” depending on the circumstances.

For example, the parents on the board **can consult** the school’s parents on any topic relating to educational services.

Where the *Education Act* stipulates that consultation is compulsory, a decision taken without prior consultation could be contested.

For example, the school service centre **must consult** the board regarding specific subjects (e.g. deed of establishment, certain documents relating to policies or regulations).

On the whole, compulsory consultations must be genuine and sufficient; the school service centre or the principal of the educational institution must provide sufficient quality information and give the board enough time to express its point of view well before a decision is taken, so that the board has an opportunity to influence it. Compulsory consultations are therefore prerequisites for the validity of all decisions made by the school service centre or the principal of the educational institution.

TO INFORM

This means transmitting all relevant information to those concerned.

MUST INFORM

The board must, therefore, inform the parents, staff members and the community of the services offered by the educational institution and report on their quality, in addition to informing the parents and staff members of the dates of board meetings, etc.

MUST BE INFORMED

The principal or director of the educational institution must regularly inform the board of proposals such as those approved under section 96.15 of the *Education Act* (e.g. criteria for the introduction of new instructional methods, the measures selected to achieve the objectives and targets set out in the educational project, the budget of the institution).

