

Amber Stewart – Ward 12 & 14 – Calgary Board of Education

Education Priorities

1. What specific steps would you advocate to improve the quality of education?

First, I would like to see more detail in the CBE budget. With more detail, I believe that we are better able to advocate for increased funding the areas needed.

2. What are the main directions we need to take to develop the full potential of all students?

We need to work harder to keep the money in the classrooms to better reach students where they are at. There are many different styles of learning and we need to assist teachers and support staff in their work with all students.

3. Please indicate if you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or have no opinion on the following statements

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
Schools currently have enough specialized staff and resources to develop the full potential of all students.		X			
Increased class sizes will hurt the high school completion rate.				X	
The board should provide support for community schools rather than expanding alternative programs.			X		
The school board should make sure that students with special needs should be provided additional supports.			X		
School boards should work with the provincial government to assure access to early childhood education and quality before and after school care programs.			X		
School boards should advocate for the Alberta government to fully fund junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten as recommended by the Alberta Commission on Learning.			X		
School boards should advocate for the Learning Commission recommendation on class sizes at all grade levels.			X		
School boards should advocate for renewed emphasis on the arts, trades and language learning in their schools.				X	
School boards should advocate for appropriate programs and supports for ESL students.			X		

Please comment on any of the above statements:

The Roles of the Trustee

1. What are the most important changes that need to be made regarding the role of school boards in Alberta?

I think that this is an exciting time for school boards in Alberta with many opportunities. I would like to see school boards have a greater voice in education in Alberta. They are the representative at the local level and have a good grasp of the issues pertaining to their community.

2. How can the school board and you as trustee most effectively influence the financial and policy decisions made by the provincial ministry of education?

I believe this can happen in two ways. First, at the local level we can bring a higher level of transparency to our financial decisions, thereby showing that we are responsibly and efficiently using our current funds. With that information, we can then respectfully advocate to the Provincial government for additional funding, specifically siting those areas in which it is needed.

3. Please indicate if you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or have no opinion on the following statements

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No opinion
A trustee must be a team player and always defend the decisions of the board, even if the trustee disagrees with those decisions.			X		
All business of the board should be dealt with in open public sessions except when the board is required to protect the privacy of employees or students.				X	
Trustees should actively consult with constituents and school councils on important policy matters.				X	
At times, school boards need to take more active public stands on education issues, even if it means being critical of the provincial government.				X	
The provincial government has seriously undermined the power and authority of trustees and school boards.			X		

Please comment on any of the above statements:

Education Funding

1. In light of the current funding situation, what strategies should the board use to meet the needs of students and the community?

I think that we need to remember first and foremost, that we have a fantastic education system! I believe that the board should look at strengthening it's community partnerships in the interest of all students. We also need to bring forward more ideas and discussion on how to wisely use the limited funds that are currently in place.

2. What changes respecting the funding of education would you advocate for?

I would advocate that we need to have another look at how certain programs such as Charter schools, that are allowed to restrict their registration, are funded. We need to recognize that just as the pool of students that they may service are different than that within the public education system, so should the funding be.

3. Please indicate if you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or have no opinion on the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No opinion
Education is adequately funded. School boards can live within their means by "cutting fat".		X			
If a school board cannot balance its budget without harmful cuts to education programs, it should be prepared to run a deficit.		X			
Provincial funding for building and maintaining schools is adequate.	X				
Provincial funding should be sufficient to cover increases to teacher and staff contracts.				X	

Please comment on any of the above statements: Q2: Although I do not support running a deficit (and I believe that it is actually against the law for a school board to do so), if cuts are HARMFUL and all other options have been exhausted in a transparent manner, then I would take it under thoughtful and serious consideration.

Privatization and Commercialization

1. Should the provincial government continue to use Public Private Partnerships (P3s) for building new schools, what guidelines would you propose be placed on P3 contracts?

Any contract entered into should always be looked at with the student's best interest in mind. Like everyone, I would like to see schools built quickly and efficiently but not at the sacrifice of the integrity of our great education system.

2. What limitations, if any, should the school board place on the involvement of private firms in schools?

Just as in the last question, any private involvement needs to be taken into serious and thoughtful consideration before proceeding and even then, only with a great deal of community involvement and discussion.

3. Please indicate if you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or have no opinion on the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No opinion
Private sector businesses can operate schools more		X			

cheaply and efficiently and should be allowed to do so.

The financing, construction and maintenance of a school should be undertaken as a public private partnership.

X

Parents should be expected to contribute towards the cost of their children's education by paying school fees and fundraising.

X

School boards should ban commercial advertising in schools.

X

Students should be provided with all necessary books and learning materials at no cost.

X

The public interest is best served by schools that are publicly owned and operated.

X

To address funding shortfalls, schools should be allowed to have corporate sponsors, including naming rights.

X

Please comment on any of the above statements: Many of these questions are not "black and white". The key to a P3 is that it is a PARTNERSHIP with responsibilities on both sides of the table. These partnerships should be the OPTION of individual school boards based on their community needs and only with extensive community consultation.

School Infrastructure

1. What reasons, if any, might you vote for the closure of a school?

1. If the school is deemed no longer safe for students to learn in. 2. When the cost of repairs required to bring a school to the minimum standard are higher than rebuilding.

2. Please indicate if you strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree or have no opinion on the following statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No opinion
Additional government funding should be provided to address the infrastructure deficit.				X	
Community schools with small enrolments should be closed so that larger schools can offer more programs.		X			
The school board should work with the province to provide wrap around services in schools.				X	

Some schools should be closed so that the province will build new schools in new neighbourhoods.

X

Schools are a part of the community and should be open to other community activities.

X

Boards should advocate for changing the province's school utilization formula to account for space used in after school care and other community uses.

X

Please comment on any of the above statements: Schools are the heart of a community and we need to work together to find better solutions on how to utilize this "heart" when the demographics of a community shift temporarily.