

# Lynn Ferguson– Ward 3 & 4 – Calgary Board of Education

## Education Priorities

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

Raise awareness of the issues of the value of a strong public education system to our society and economy, lack of predictable funding for school boards & the need to support teachers for Inspiring Education vision in conversations with community associations, MLA's, school councils, provincial committees, amongst partner stakeholder groups, business and community leaders. I think funding for full-day kindergarten for at risk students should be provided and remove the cap for ELL funding. I think the provincial funding formula should be re-examined to better support large metro boards where the class composition is diverse.

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

We need to build the capacity of teachers to facilitate student learning and a personalized learning environment which encourages each student to understand how they learn best, what they need to learn, and how to access resources to enable them to learn. We need to be able to provide the resources and supports each student needs to achieve.

### 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 Commision recommendation on class sizes at all grade levels.				X	
School boards should advocate for renewed emphasis				X	

on the arts, trades and language learning in their schools.

School boards should advocate for appropriate programs and supports for ESL students.

**X**

*Please comment on any of the above statements:* In terms of kindergarten, I think we need to look at the research which shows that students at risk benefit most from full day kindergarten in this time of scarce dollars. I think that public school boards have a responsibility to respond to parents' and community's wishes regarding what they believe is the best programming for their students. As more personalized learning for each student is enhanced, I think the conversation should be switching to how we best support students' learning. I also think that we need to advocate for what is best for student success and be careful about asking for targeted funding that may not give school boards the flexibility to respond to their student profile.

## 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?

School boards need to be given the flexibility and predictable resources within long term budget cycles to respond to the needs of students. School boards need to focus their system, as ours has done, on working best for student performance, and engage with the whole community about how we define student success in order for our students to be best prepared for the future.

### 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?

As a trustee and member of a school board, it is my responsibility to participate in the provincial discussions about the new School Act, about governance, to ensure that these decisions are about what is best for students.

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

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
A trustee must be a team player and always defend the decisions of the board, even if the trustee disagrees with those decisions.				<b>X</b>	
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.				<b>X</b>	
Trustees should actively consult with constituents and school councils on important policy matters.				<b>X</b>	
At times, school boards need to take more active public stands on education issues, even if it means being critical of the provincial government.				<b>X</b>	

The provincial government has seriously undermined the power and authority of trustees and school boards.

X

*Please comment on any of the above statements:* I think a trustee has the responsibility before the board makes a majority decision to hear and consider the diverse voices in the community. Once the wisdom of the majority of the board is taken in a public vote, then it is a trustee's responsibility to assist in communicating the rationale and reasons for that decision to their community. With regards to the survey question on the business of the board, decisions are always made in public session, with the vote publicized in the minutes. The responsibility of a trustee is to create and monitor policy related to student success and hire the best professionals to achieve student success, not to run the day-to-day operations of the school system. I think the current board has shown that it is not adverse to challenging the provincial government stance, as CBE was the only school board to refuse to accept the bilateral agreement reached between ATA and the government because we did not believe it would be good for our students.

## 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?

As always, the board needs to focus on how best to use resources to provide for each student's success. The board lessened the impact on classrooms and learning in this budget year by finding 2% increase for schools while facing cutbacks in the overall budget. In 2013/14 budget, trustees decreased their own salaries and p.d., and cut their parking allowance. CBE Central Services were cut deeply to support schools. We continued to support full-day kindergarten even without any provincial government dollars because the results show it benefits students.

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

I think the provincial funding formula is flawed and does not consider the diverse student composition of large metro boards; full-day kindergarten funding for at risk students should be provided; and the provincial transportation formula needs to be changed to better reflect the expectations of parents and the community for choice and to meet student need. I also believe that we need a more predictable funding model for building and maintaining our public schools so that communities don't wait years for their schools.

### 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					X

schools is adequate.

Provincial funding should be sufficient to cover increases to teacher and staff contracts.

X

*Please comment on any of the above statements:* School boards legally cannot run a deficit and a deficit is not possible to contemplate unless school boards somehow have reserve funds that can be applied. It is not in the best interests of students to endanger the future. I think if the provincial government is going to negotiate directly with teachers and reach salary agreements, then school boards need to have long term budgets to be able to plan how best to utilize their dollars for students.

## 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?

If the government can only finance new schools through P3s and this is the only method by which school boards will receive new schools, then the contracts must consider the use of schools as community spaces, and respect the design and usage needs of the local school board so that the schools are the best for students.

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

I think that it has been a wise decision for CBE to create EducationMatters which assists with the logistics of public donations for programs and schools. CBE board policy limits the naming of school buildings and retains the right to do so. We want however to be able to invite the community to support its public education system so that students benefit long term from any partnerships.

### 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 cheaply and efficiently and should be allowed to do so.	X				
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.	<b>X</b>
---	----------

To address funding shortfalls, schools should be allowed to have corporate sponsors, including naming rights.	<b>X</b>
---	----------

*Please comment on any of the above statements:* I don't believe that these survey questions capture the complexity of the issues being addressed. In Calgary we have a growing city that needs new public schools as well as dollars to maintain its current inventory. P3's are one way to address that need so that students and communities don't wait forever for a new school. The current provincial funding formula does not address metro boards' complex student needs, transportation of students, or capital needs. In order to meet parent and student expectations, school boards are forced to cover the gap between costs and service with fees.

## School Infrastructure

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

School boards are entrusted with the financial responsibility to use scarce resources wisely. The many reasons to consider when voting for school closure are the quality of the learning environment, the programming for students, the age and maintenance needs of the building, the length of transport time to the next available school, the long term student enrollment in the existing boundaries, and the overall need for schools where students live.

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

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
Additional government funding should be provided to address the infrastructure deficit.			<b>X</b>		
Community schools with small enrolments should be closed so that larger schools can offer more programs.					<b>X</b>
The school board should work with the province to provide wrap around services in schools.				<b>X</b>	
Some schools should be closed so that the province will build new schools in new neighbourhoods.			<b>X</b>		
Schools are a part of the community and should be open to other community activities.				<b>X</b>	
Boards should advocate for changing the province's school utilization formula to account for space used in after school care and other community uses.				<b>X</b>	

*Please comment on any of the above statements:* I think that this again is a larger conversation about what is

---

community? Given the current formula, would several smaller city communities be prepared to support a school with wider boundaries in order to sustain a school long term closer to their students' residences? Large new communities only get one school after many years and it is very full when it finally opens. It is important that students have reasonable access to a public school and school boards need to consider the needs of all students..