

## Patricia Grell – Ward 71 – Edmonton Catholic School Board

### Education Priorities

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

The biggest issue today is large classroom sizes. I believe that we have to get back to basics in our budgeting as a Board and put money into the classroom before all other expenditures are considered. In this way, we ensure that both students and teachers have optimal conditions for learning and teaching.

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

As was discussed in Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertan, 2010, I believe that we need to tailor make our education system more to the interests and strengths of each student. A one size fits all education system will not bring out the potential of our students. I agree with the following quote from Inspiring Education: "For learners to achieve their full potential, education must make the child the centre of all decisions related to learning and education. Learners should be supported as individuals with learning opportunities to support their unique needs and interests. Furthermore, activities that consider the abilities of learners and encourage creativity and imagination should become the norm".(p.25) This approach to learning will require School Boards and administrations to consider more flexible models of schooling. We need people on our Boards who are willing to take this leap!

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

|   | Strongly<br>Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly<br>Agree | No<br>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  |                      |          |       | X                 |               |

full-day kindergarten as recommended by the Alberta Commission on Learning.

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 Role of the Trustee

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

In the case of the ECSD Board, I believe that the Board has to better represent the interests and concerns of constituents rather than the administration. The current Board I believe, listens more to their administration than those who elected them. Trustees are elected by people in a Ward who hope that their voice will be heard at the Board level.

### 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 that Alberta's School Boards need to stand in solidarity with one another when communicating with the provincial government. Together we will have a stronger voice. Some boards have an unwillingness to be too vocal with their concerns and needs because it could be seen as "biting the hand that feeds you" . If our Boards were to take a unified stand, I believe we would have more influence over the provinces financial and policy decisions.

### 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   |                          |                 |              | <b>X</b>              |                   |

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policy matters.

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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**

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

**X**

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*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?**

Our Board needs to use zero based budgeting to ensure that students in the classroom receive money first. If we begin with this as our top priority then we can allocate any other additional funds to secondary priorities such as in-services, busing etc.

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

I would advocate for better funding of education. We live in the richest province in Canada and yet our parents are asked to work casinos so our schools can purchase basketballs. I am always struck by how underfunded our schools are when I am asked every September to send 3 boxes of kleenex for my children's classrooms. I am wondering if one year I will be asked to provide toilet paper and paper towels!

**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> |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Education is adequately funded. School boards can live within their means by "cutting fat".                                     | <b>X</b>                 |                 |              |                       |                   |
| If a school board cannot balance its budget without harmful cuts to education programs, it should be prepared to run a deficit. |                          |                 |              |                       |                   |
| Provincial funding for building and maintaining schools is adequate.  |                          |                 |              | <b>X</b>              |                   |
| Provincial funding should be sufficient to cover increases to teacher and staff contracts.                                      |                          |                 |              |                       | <b>X</b>          |

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*Please comment on any of the above statements:*

## 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?

I do not agree with using P3s to build our schools and so will not advocate for this if I am elected a trustee. One guideline that must be included in the P3 contract is that the school board have the right to all decision making in regards to maintenance and any other decisions that affect the physical plant or use of the building.

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

I believe that private firms have no place in our 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 |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|------------|
| 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.  |                   |          |       | 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:*

## School Infrastructure

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

I think that if all efforts have been made to improve the enrollment of a school and the enrollment continues to decline, then I would close it. I am very wary of closing schools to begin with because I am aware that the life cycle of a neighbourhood has a direct impact on the number of children attending the local school. I am also aware that there may be too many schools for our mature neighbourhoods to sustain. I advocate a schools as community hubs model because I know that even if schools are built in new neighbourhoods, they too will experience low enrollment as their neighbourhood ages. Will we close these schools too? We need to have a new definition of school which not only includes educating children but includes pre-schools, daycares, after school care programs and other wrap around services. When a school population declines, more of the school's space can be given over to these services. When it increases, more space can be given over for classrooms.

### 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:*