

Debbie Engel – Ward 74 – Edmonton Catholic School Board

Education Priorities

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

Everyone talks about class size, and although class size is important, class composition is far more important. Meeting the needs of a diverse population in an inclusive setting is extremely challenging for our teachers and support workers. I believe we could help by recognizing, supporting, and encouraging professional development that supports inclusive education techniques. In addition teachers must be able to readily access resources to support their classrooms. When speaking with new Teachers they continually express that they were not prepared for the classroom of today! Boards must work more closely with post-secondary to ensure graduates have the tools they need in the ever changing diverse classroom. Often several Government ministries such as Health, Human Services and Education are working on solutions to the same problems in isolation of each other. My strategy would be one of setting joint protocol for cross ministerial work to ensure that information sharing occurs in an expedient manner with smooth transitions between the services. This would save dollars and better serve our children! Also, I will push hard to see mandated universal assessment of children, by age 30 months, to identify children who are at risk of not achieving to the level of their full potential. Investment in this would save huge\$\$\$\$ overall. Another strategy -- Look at economies of scale. Edmonton Catholic is a large metro Board in the Capital Region and could offer services to other Boards. Some examples would be printing, purchasing, and support for IT. Often, employees on the front line are able to find efficiencies not obvious at the Board Table, it is essential that we keep open communication with our employees.

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

- Earmarked funds to support full day kindergarten programming, especially for vulnerable students. The government must make good on their funding commitment. Premier Redford gave this promise during the spring 2012 Provincial Election.
- Mandatory universal assessment of children by age 30 months in order to identify children at risk of not achieving to the highest level of their potential so that appropriate supports may be put in place.
- Improving access to supports for mental health and guidance counseling for at risk children
- Increasing the relevancy of provincial curricula and sequencing of high school core courses to ensure that the learning needs, aspirations and interests of non-university bound students can be addressed effectively in school programs. This will increase high school completion rates.
- Differential funding modifiers to support socio-economically vulnerable students who do not fit into the current funding model

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
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Schools currently have enough specialized staff and resources to develop the full potential of all students.		X			
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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 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: Please visit my website debbieengel.com I have information on each of these questions

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?

Go back to local bargaining with teachers. More community engagement

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?

Lobby efforts that involve the community. Power in numbers.

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
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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: Once again more information on my website debbieengel.com

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?

Often several Government ministries such as Health, Human Services and Education are working on solutions to the same problems in isolation of each other. My strategy would be one of setting joint protocol for cross ministerial work to ensure that information sharing occurs in an expedient manner with smooth transitions between the services. This would save dollars and better serve our children! Also, I will push hard to see mandated universal assessment of children, by age 30 months, to identify children who are at risk of not achieving to the level of their full potential. Investment in this would save huge\$\$\$\$ overall.

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

The funding formula is very flawed. Funding for inclusive education, Support for English Language Learners is not sufficient to meet the needs. Boards are robbing other areas to make up the shortfall. This causes class size to increase.

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		X			

can live within their means by "cutting fat".

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:

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?

Many changes were made on the second round of P3's and the contracts were much easier for school boards to work with. If P3's are the only way we can schools built where kids live, I support the new P3 model.

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

The an not infringe on the beliefs and mission of the School Board. They can not have a bias influence on 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
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
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To address funding shortfalls, schools should be allowed to have corporate sponsors, including naming rights.	X
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Please comment on any of the above statements:

School Infrastructure

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

If the school environment is not safe, or is unable to provide an adequate 21st century education.

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: