

Judy Hehr – Ward 8 & 9 – Calgary Board of Education

Education Priorities

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

I would move forward to decreasing class size in the school to the levels advocated by the Alberta Learning Commission in 2003. My thirty years as a school principal and teacher has shown me that class size has a demonstrable effect on student learning. Steps to Follow: 1. Analyze the CBE budget to ensure all spending is student centered. Cuts should always have as limited impact on students as possible. 2. All hiring practices must be reviewed to ensure short-term solutions do not end up having long-term negative impact. 3. Engage all stakeholders to develop short term and long-term strategies to ensure sustainable funding for Calgary Public students. The issue is extremely challenging. Nonetheless it must be addressed sooner rather than later. A child's education cannot be put on hold.

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

1. Today's students need to elevate and enhance their ability to think. Knowledge is essential. It is even more important that students are able to apply information as they solve numerous complex issues. 2. Today's students need to be even more open to creativity and innovation than their predecessors. Present students are the first generation of digital learners. They need access to technology wherever possible and affordable.

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				X	

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: The statement that mutually excludes Alternative Programs and Community Schools is imprecise. They are not mutually exclusive.

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?

Three issues facing the school board are: 1. Trustees must make a greater effort to ensure that public schools are provided for students in new and growing communities. Older schools requiring maintenance, repair, or modernization need to have these issues addressed promptly. 2. Trustee discussions should reflect a divergent and challenging interaction regarding issues. The best decisions will be made on behalf of students when the discourse remains non-personal. Vigorous, constructive, open debate is a hallmark of a democratic society and should be encouraged and treasured instead of hidden and trampled. 3. Trustees must play a leading role in obtaining sufficient, sustainable school funding. Education is an essential component of societal well-being. Government should never attempt to balance its financial difficulties on the backs of students.

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?

There are numerous pathways to go forward on influencing financial and policy decisions by the province. The first goal of any institution is to create a coherent action plan with firm objectives on how and who to influence in any discourse in achieving those objectives. This would include basic activities like protocol on contacting the minister (an issue brought up at a recent board meeting). Once we move forward in creating these basic planks in an action plan we would then need to effectively communicate with the public, provide policy options to the province to achieve mutually satisfactory results, and begin to create an inclusive, positive dialogue that would assist the better functioning of Calgary 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
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: School trustees need to champion public education -- especially in a city which is increasingly cosmopolitan, vibrant, and ever changing. We need to build on this city we call home to build a better education system.

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?

There are immediate concerns surrounding the funding of schools. This will take an entire community focus. We need to work with the public, engage and consult, and address other possible sources of funding. Calgarians expect a level of excellence in their school system and Calgary Public has delivered on this in the past. It has taken creativity, knowledge, and a willingness to utilize the effort of many Calgarians. We already use resources such as fundraisers. We will need to do a total review of our funding mechanisms, ranging from fundraisers, casino nights, school fees, and partnerships. Moving on lotteries is another idea that may need some discussion.

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

This is a long term discussion. The government must make a long term commitment to sustainable and stable funding for schools. The impact of election promises and then the contraction of this funding creates issues, hiring dysfunction, and generally causes institutional confusion.

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: If deficits are the only way to educate our children we will have to examine it closely.

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?

It is unfortunate in a province as wealthy as Alberta that its school system has to consider P3s. However, due to the constriction of resources to the education system and the dire needs of communities for public schools this has become a new reality. There needs to be strict guidelines to ensure these schools are built with the best concerns of students in mind and closely aligned to Board standards. They must be cost efficient and effective.

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

There needs to be a fundamental alignment of values between the general public, the Board, schools, and the private firms involved. A school's primary purpose is to educate and private firms should be focused on such when involved. Students need to be safeguarded from intensive intrusion by the private sector into daily school life.

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: Calgary Public Schools must have equitable access, be publicly funded, and endeavour to provide the best education possible. Unfortunately, the unwillingness of the

provincial government and/or its inability to fund public education is creating a dire need for alternative sources of revenue. My personal belief is that public education should be fully funded by government. However, students should never suffer because of a lack of funding. Therefore alternative ideas, projects, and mechanisms will need to be explored at this time.

School Infrastructure

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

A closure should only occur after full and open consultation with the school community. The majority of that community must understand that a viable learning environment cannot be afforded and accept that the present number of students is incompatible with a successful education program. Prior to that we need to have looked at every avenue of creativity to maintain and grow the student population of the school. For example, including before and after care, full day kindergarten, Alternative Programs, and other tools to generate interest and support.

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: