

Belen Samuel responses Candidate for Edmonton Public School Trustee Ward A

AUPE's COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL ACTION SURVEY

Do you agree with calls to scrap the draft curriculum and start over to develop a curriculum that is accurate in capturing Alberta's colonial history, diverse present, and modernized to reflect the world we live in?

Yes, I agree with the countless calls to scrap the draft K-6 curriculum. The proposed curriculum is unacceptable and has taken us many steps back. The proposed draft is not appropriate, inclusive, nor does it serve any purpose towards building more positive and equitable possibilities and futures through curriculum development. It is essential that students have a curriculum that is inclusive to represent all peoples who historically and presently live here with a prioritization of Indigenous education as well as one that is intersectional in approach to cover a variety of areas across subjects. A rewritten curriculum should actively include Elders and knowledge keepers, educators and curriculum experts, community leaders and members as well as students.

I'm thankful to the countless advocates and groups who stood against the draft curriculum and the current Board of Trustees who heard our concerns resulting in the district's decision not to pilot the draft curriculum in the upcoming Fall.

Do you believe the current education funding formula is sufficient for your district? If not, how will you work to convince the province to provide sustainable and adequate funding?

No, I don't believe the current education funding formula is sufficient for Edmonton Public. I'm concerned that the current model based on a three-year enrolment rate does not comprehensively take into consideration the increased intake of students that will fluctuate as a growing district.

I will work to convince the province to prioritize sustainable and adequate funding by reinvesting public funds into public education:

- Speaking up and advocating as a trustee, and encouraging fellow trustees on EPSB and across Alberta to also speak up for the funding needs of their districts.
- Working with unions, parents, and students to push for adequate, sustainable funding. The people directly involved in education can tell powerful stories about the impacts underfunding is having on the classroom.

Will you oppose privatization of school services and infrastructure, including Public-Private-Partnerships aka P3s? Will you support bringing previously privatized services in-house?

Yes. I believe that in order for public schools to be able to serve the learning and comprehensive needs of all students we need to divest from the privatization of schools that limit the access and opportunity. Public infrastructure should be built by public schools to ensure that projects are not only cost-effective, but managed as internal investments that serve the needs of the district. I believe that this is possible by prioritizing the building of public infrastructure, such as schools with public interests in mind and practice and without the use of P3 partnerships.

I would like to work in collaboration with EPSB staff and unions to look at what services could be brought in house.

Will you support your employees and your community by ensuring the school board employs staff with living wages, full-time hours where desired, job security, and collective bargaining Rights?

Yes, it is a priority that employees across the district are supported with a living wage, desired hours, job security and collective bargaining rights that articulate and centre joint priorities. We need to move away from the detrimental approach towards education staff taken by the province and focus on making EPSB an even better place to work.

Will you oppose attempts from the provincial government to legislate against school staff including cuts to the Local Authorities Pension Plan, or restrictions on their right to strike?

Yes, it is every person's right to protest, strike and advocate for the rights and best interests of themselves and others. The pension plan is a part of staff compensation for the work they do, and cuts should not be imposed by the provincial government.

Do you support measures such as mask mandates, and vaccine mandates for staff to limit and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in your schools?

Yes, I support essential protective COVID-19 measures. Especially in schools, where students under the age of 12 are prone to higher risk and are thus more vulnerable to transmission, we must do everything we can to increase their safety. I also support the provision of enhanced ventilation.