

Dana Downey responses

Candidate for Calgary Board of Education Wards 1 & 2

1. 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?

As a teacher that has been involved in curriculum creation and content development, I am not in support of the new proposed curriculum. In my view, there are numerous problems with the document, the overarching issues relating to lack of understanding regarding the latest research and proven methods in teaching and learning. I also feel that the goals specifically relating to younger children are developmentally inappropriate, not only in content, but also in expected skill development. I have great concerns regarding the assessment of these skills, especially in relation to students with exceptionalities, for whom I was an advocate in my position as a resource teacher for 7 years with the CBE. Proper consultation with peer reviewed experts, Indigenous representatives, teachers, parents and others is an integral part to creating quality and effective curriculum.

Funding:

Alberta continues to be a growing province, with more students entering the system. While we're told funding is tight for public education, Alberta continues to subsidize private education with millions in public dollars.

2. 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?

If elected, I would use the opportunities I would have as a trustee to communicate to all levels of government the direct impact that underfunding has on student success in our schools. As a resource teacher that has worked in CBE schools, I can speak with authority on the matter. I believe in accessible education for all learners. Public schools serve everyone, so we must prioritize funding to keep our community schools open and support them with adequate and sustainable funding.

Privatization including P3s:

AUPE members know very well that privatization regularly fails to find "efficiencies" and any cost savings are often off the backs of workers who become de unionized, with lower pay and benefits.

They also work on the front lines of service delivery and see the problems caused by high-turnover low wage private providers, and the bureaucratic burden caused by having to deal with a third party instead of an in-house provider.

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

School services and infrastructure should be fully funded by public dollars. Previously privatized services should return in-house.

Schools as Employers:

As our economies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, good jobs are an important factor. Public sector workers spend in their communities, and many households impacted by private sector recessions have been able to keep the bills paid thanks to a stable public sector job.

4. 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?

Many families struggle with underemployment and the need for living wages is real. I support measures to guarantee living wages and workers rights across all services and institutions.

5. 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?

Teachers and support staff are front line workers that make education happen. To support our students, we must support teachers and support staff.

COVID Safety:

With the negligent provincial response to now three preventable waves of COVID-19, school boards have been put in an awkward position of needing to take measure to protect their students and staff throughout the pandemic. Many are introducing measures of their own, but not all have.

6. 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?

I believe that we should use every measure possible to keep students and staff safe in schools. I support improved ventilation in schools, handwashing and sanitizing, the use of face masks, cohorting, in-school vaccination programs, and other proven measures to prevent outbreaks and school closures.