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Support Our Students Alberta (SOS Alberta) has created this **2021 Public School Trustee Citizen Handbook** for the public to use as municipal campaigns rev up towards election day, October 18. Citizens are encouraged to print off or email any or all of these questions to their local trustee candidates. You may also want to have it handy as reference material when researching your school board candidates. You can ask as many or as few of the questions as you feel are appropriate. You can record the answers yourself or ask that your candidate answer and email them back to you or to [SOS Alberta](#) directly! We consider this handbook to be a fluid document and would love to have people contribute and participate in gathering further questions and we can post any new ideas as we go!

Email: info@supportourstudents.ca

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SOSAlberta/>

Twitter: [@SOSAlberta](#)

Public Education:

- Support Our Students Alberta defines public education as a system free of barriers, financial or otherwise, that accepts ALL students and is 100% funded by government, and governed by a publicly elected board.
- Currently in Alberta public education includes K-12 Public, Catholic/Separate and Francophone schools. All are funded by the provincial government but user fees can be applied including for alternative programming and transportation. Not all programming is equitable or available across the province.

School Board/Trustee Election Quick Facts:

- Public school board trustees are democratically elected representatives of public schools in Alberta which include Public, Catholic/Separate and Francophone boards.
- While charter schools are 100% publicly funded they do not have trustee representation on local school boards and do not have publicly elected boards.
- Private schools do receive public dollars, but are not part of local, elected school boards and also do not have publicly elected boards.
- All Albertans who are eligible to vote in municipal elections have the right to vote for a school trustee and participate in their local school board.

Role of Trustee: Trustees are elected officials comprising a school board. They act in variety of roles including:

- setting school division goals that ensure students have the knowledge and skills that enable them to be better prepared for life;
- planning school division priorities based on provincial curriculum requirements, community input, available resources and best practices in education;
- developing and implementing an annual budget for the school division based on curriculum requirements and strategic priorities;
- developing policies to guide school division administration and employees toward division goals;
- ensuring residents of the school division are regularly informed about the work and achievements of the school division;
- advocating on behalf of the school community to decision-makers and stakeholders on important issues that affect education, and to ensure education is a top public priority;
- ensuring regular opportunities for public input and access;
- evaluating the school division's chief executive officer – the superintendent of schools.

[\(ASBA, Trustee Election Brochure\)](#)

More information about the role of trustees, school boards and elections can be found at:
Alberta School Boards Association - Why

<https://www.asba.ab.ca/home/elections-2021/election-resources-2021/>

<https://education.alberta.ca/school-board-elections/school-board-elections-guide/>

Questions for Trustee Candidates

Name:

City/Town:

School Board:

Ward/Region:

Public education:

1. Why is public education important to you?
2. Do you support publicly funded, privately run schools? **Y/N**
3. Do you support school fees, including fees for transportation and extracurricular activities and extra fees for alternative school programming? **Y/N**
4. Should publicly funded schools be able to deny students admission? **Y/N**
5. Identify areas where equity can be improved in Alberta education. What will you do to improve equity in these areas?

COVID-19

The provincial government has indicated that a return to a “normal” school year is expected, with contingency plans in place if there is another increase in COVID infections.

1. Do you support continued public health measures such as masking and cohorting in schools? Why or why not?
2. What are your thoughts on how school boards might best support children who may have experienced learning losses during the 2020/2021 academic year?

Curriculum:

General

1. Do you support the current draft curriculum? **Y / N**
2. What is your understanding of the role of school boards in curriculum implementation?
3. The majority of Alberta's school boards have declined to pilot the draft curriculum in 2021. If the government follows through on its stated intention to implement the curriculum in 2022, what position would you want your board to take on this, assuming the content is largely unchanged from the current draft?

Sexual Health

1. Do you support science-based, age-appropriate and non-judgmental comprehensive sexual health in schools? **Y / N**
2. Do you support students learning about issues of consent, body agency and body autonomy? **Y / N**
3. Should sexual orientation and gender identity be included as part of comprehensive sexual health education? **Y / N**

Mental Health Supports

1. How do you see your role as trustee in addressing the rise of mental health concerns showing up in schools? **Y / N**
2. What are some of the challenges that create barriers for supporting student mental wellness/mental health? What are some solutions to those barriers?
3. What do you believe is the role of school boards in working to support mental wellness?

Inclusion/Special Education

1. Do you support inclusion initiatives in your board? How can inclusion be improved?
2. What are the biggest issues facing students with disabilities in the classroom? How will you address these concerns?

Assessment policy

1. Do you approve of standardized testing including provincial achievement/diploma exams and the international PISA test as a means to assess student, school and board performance? **Y/N**
2. What are your ideas/solutions for making sure assessment is student focused and is used to productively improve future learning outcomes?

General Issues

1. What is the most pressing issue(s) for your school board?
2. What are your ideas or solutions for addressing these issues?

Financial

1. Schools in Alberta are carrying a significant burden of deferred maintenance. What are your ideas for working with the province to address this issue? Should information on deferred maintenance be a matter of public record for each school?
2. Rising costs and fees: Bus costs, school supplies, lunch room supervision. Why are parent councils increasingly being relied upon to support basics in schools like lunch tables, water filling stations, learning manipulatives.
3. What is the most critical budget issue in your school board? How will you work to improve this issue?
4. Do you support parent and school generated fundraising as a means to fill funding gaps in the system? **Y/N**
5. How would you suggest that boards address funding for essentials to ensure that schools without extensive school council resources are still able to meet student needs in their budgets?

CBE-specific:

The Calgary Board of Education has indicated [it may close up to 16 public schools](#) in the next 8 years due to low capacity. This is concerning because these facilities may be purchased or leased by private or charter schools that will then further draw students away from nearby public schools. At the same time, CBE has worked to “rebalance” some enrollments in areas where one school is over capacity while a nearby school may be under capacity.

How will you work to ensure that community schools are best used to their capacity before shutting them down?

What is your position on the sale of CBE assets to private or charter school organizations?