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### **Section 1 – Accountability**

#### **1. In your opinion, what is the role of parents in the Board's decision-making process?**

To my mind, there are two levels of decisions that take place within the board – those at the school level, or perhaps I should say those that more properly belong at the school level, and those at the board level. I think parents should play a pivotal role at both levels but their degree of influence might vary depending on the type of decision to be made. Regardless, the process should always be transparent and there should be opportunities for \*genuine\* consultation.

#### **2. If you are elected, how do you see your role as a trustee in the decision-making process?**

I believe that trustees should listen to input carefully and gather as much information as possible prior to making decisions. They should vote in the best interest of students and communities overall on the basis of the evidence gathered.

#### **3. Do you believe that trustees should serve as intermediaries between parents and the Board and/or their school (when all other avenues have been exhausted)? Please explain.**

Yes

#### **4. Do you believe the Board's decision-making process could be more transparent?**

Yes

#### **If yes, what measures would you propose to improve the Board's transparency and accountability?**

#### **5. What do you believe should have greater weight in the decisions made by trustees: the advice of educational professionals or the input of parents and communities?**

Input of parents and communities

**Please explain.**

While there certainly are better or worse practices within education, it is not a science similar to medicine where there is a body of evidence-based knowledge to draw upon. Given the range of children's individual personalities and attributes, education is probably best thought of as an art.

Parents know their individual children best, educators know what works in a classroom with a group of children, and the community perhaps better understands future societal needs and opportunities. Ideally, it's not a question of weight in decision-making. Rather it's a question of encouraging a dialogue where all players contribute toward better outcomes.

**6. This past year has seen an increase in in-camera (closed-door) committee and Board meetings. As a trustee, would you undertake to ensure that in-camera meetings are held only when necessary to protect the privacy of individuals?**

Yes

**7. Last year, the Board reviewed its Alternative Schools program and its Secondary Gifted program. Despite strong stakeholder support for these programs, Board staff recommended that they either be closed or eventually phased out. As a trustee, what kind of information would you seek and what kind of questions would you ask in order to come to a decision when staff recommendations are opposed to the views of the community?**

Ultimately I think we have to ask staff in various ways to identify student needs that are served by differing programs. When the student need for a program is articulated clearly, it becomes difficult for all concerned to justify its closure.

**8. Good decision-making requires good and comprehensive data which is shared with all public education stakeholders. What will you do as a trustee to ensure that Board reports are released to the public in a timely fashion and contain accurate information?**

Regarding timeliness, see my answer to question 4.

The accuracy piece is harder. Some of it is about asking the right public questions of staff. Some of it may be addressed by ensuring that certain types of surveys and studies are done in advance. Some of it is about having a good

ear to the ground. Ultimately, it's about framing the right question, limiting and specifying staff response, and then understanding the limits of generalization.

**9. Teachers and support staff who work in the classroom every day with students are well-acquainted with student needs, yet are not permitted to contribute to the public discussion when changes to programs and services are under consideration. Do you believe that the experience and knowledge of the professionals in the classroom should be better represented in the Board's decision-making process?**

Yes, there should be far more honest dialogue between all stakeholders without fear of consequence.

## **Section 2 – Educational Issues**

**10. Given the chronic under-funding of education, what new ideas would you bring to the table to address the Board's ongoing financial challenges?**

Ottawa is a caring, generous and wealthy community. There should be more partnerships between the school board and the community that are similar to the Pathways to Education project (see <http://www.pathwayscanada.ca>), an initiative that utilizes and depends on community resources and volunteers to ensure that student needs are met.

**11. It can be a challenge to meet the demand for French Immersion while maintaining a strong, viable English program. How important do you think it is for the Board to respond to the ever-increasing demand for French Immersion in this region?**

Less important than other needs

**12. Do you favour the Board's revised student transfer policy that restricts students' ability to transfer from their neighbourhood school to the school of their choice?**

No

**Please explain.**

Particularly at the secondary school level, many students need a "hook" to motivate them to work or remain in school. Students who are passionate about arts or sports at school are more likely to be motivated toward academic achievement overall. Students who have friends at school are less likely to be bullied. Whether it be access to arts programming, sports activities, or simply

their friends, these can be real needs for many students and these needs should be addressed when possible through student transfer.

**13. While the Ontario Ministry of Education is encouraging school boards to integrate students with special learning needs into the regular classroom whenever appropriate, it recognizes specialized classes as one of a range of options for exceptional students. At present, the OCDSB provides specialized classes for students with autism, Asperger's syndrome, developmental disabilities, giftedness and a number of other exceptionalities. Do you support the continued provision of specialized classes for students with these and other special educational needs?**

Yes

**13. a) If yes, what would you do to reduce waiting lists and improve student access to these classes?**

I think a multi-faceted approach is necessary. I would expand the number of alternative schools to ensure that all students throughout the city have access to these schools. Parents repeatedly said during the Alternative Review that their children, who had been floundering in regular schools, were flourishing in alternative schools.

I would provide more remedial programming. In other words, I would not wait to intervene until a child's achievement falls 3 years behind his peers. Rather if a student is struggling academically in grade one or two, he or she should be pulled from the regular classroom immediately for a short period of time for more intensive intervention.

Finally, I would provide more accommodations to address various learning styles. Our teaching methodology and curriculum are becoming more narrowly focused to achieve very defined results and this may be less than motivating for many students and teachers. Universal testing (EQAO) may also tend to skew teaching methods toward written rather than project based approaches.

If implemented, all these measures would reduce waiting lists while ensuring that student needs are really and truly met. As a consequence, there would be an improvement in student access to specialized classes for students truly in need, perhaps without even increasing the number of specialized classes needed.

**13. b) If you answered no, how would you ensure that both exceptional students and their peers without special learning needs receive the support they need in order to learn and thrive in the regular classroom?**

**13. c) When changes are proposed to special programs, would you agree that any proposed changes should first be evaluated through pilot programs with well-defined, measurable outcomes?**

Yes

**14. Recent changes to program delivery at this Board have reduced access to specialist teachers in the arts, science, physical education, and other subjects, especially at the intermediate level. Do you believe that students are receiving enough subject specialist education in the elementary/intermediate years?**

No

**Please explain.**

I have seen wonderful tech shops that have been mothballed and there are few guidance teachers in intermediate schools. Often the only music instruction that elementary students receive is sporadic and dependent on school council funding. This is not good enough but understand that these are natural outcomes that flow from a funding formula that does not provide adequate financial support to hire enough teachers overall.

**15. At the same time as students have less access to outdoor education centres, research is showing that children need experiences in the natural world for improved learning, for their well-being, and to be informed citizens about the environment. Would you increase the role of outdoor education centres in our students' education?**

Yes

**If yes, how?**

**16. The Alternative Schools program was reviewed this past year and found by the Board to have many benefits for students. As a trustee, would you ensure this program is continued and is extended to zones where it's not currently available?**

Yes

**If yes, what are your ideas to make this happen?**

Initially the boundaries of our Alternative Schools should be expanded to cover areas not currently served. The benefits of alternative schooling should be publicized more and there should be a greater emphasis to recruit staff to work in Alternative Schools who truly share the alternative philosophy. Finally as numbers warrant, I think that new alternative schools should be opened.

**17. Ottawa receives more refugees than any other city in Ontario, has the second largest immigrant population in the province, and the first language of approximately one third of Ottawa residents is neither English nor French. Do you believe that the OCDSB is doing as well as it could to serve the needs of students and families that are new to Canada?**

No

**If no, what changes would you propose?**

### **Section 3 – Philosophy**

**18. Current trustees: Please give an example of something you did last year to further public education. Other candidates: Please name a specific effort you would promote if you were elected.**

This past year, I worked hard to save the Alternative School program and Rideau High School. I helped initiate and am now on the board of the Pathways to Education project, a community initiative that provides financial, academic and social support to needy secondary school students. In three short years, Pathways to Education has helped reduce the dropout rate in needier neighbourhoods by over 80%. In 2009, I received the Community Service Award from the Pinecrest–Queensway Community Health Centre in recognition of this work.

**19. What is your vision of education and its role in our community?**

I don't believe the education of our children should be left to any one agency. Rather it must become a collaboration between families, schools and the community. Particularly in these rapidly changing times, we need young people with a combination of good skills, good ethics, and the ability to think. Community agencies and the people of Ottawa have a lot to contribute to our students and schools if given a chance. And if given the chance, I have no doubt that they would do just that.

**Additional Comments**

Yes and there are trustees who do question the need for in-camera discussion on certain topics. This past year, many personnel issues have come forward including negotiations of new collective agreements that require, according to the Education Act, closed-door sessions