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Section 1 – Accountability

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

Trustees are ultimately accountable to parents because parents elect them to be their advocates. For that reason, it is essential that the Board obtain as much input from parents as possible. The current structure is such that a large proportion of the Board's deliberations take place in closed meetings that often produce no agreement. The Board's public meetings allocate insufficient time for parents to address all trustees directly. In addition, the Board's public meetings frequently run late into the evening, which discourages parents from taking part.

One solution would be to hold public forums arranged through the Ottawa–Carleton Assembly of School Councils or even school councils directly, either individually or in small groups. This approach would likely attract more parents, thereby contributing to the Ministry of Education's current focus on parent involvement.

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

My role as trustee is to gather as much information as possible on the opinions, wishes and concerns of parents in my zone, present that information to the rest of the Board and work with my fellow trustees to strike a balance that best serves all students.

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)?

Yes

Please explain.

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?

I would propose that the Board gather more input from parents up front, limit its in camera sessions and hold public meetings that deal with issues promptly.

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.

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?

I would seek information on how our decision would affect the overall delivery of education to students in our board, not just students in these particular programs.

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?

Having trustees engage in public consultation on current issues even while reports on those issues are being prepared would streamline the entire process. I would have faith in the Board's expert staff to compile accurate information, with input from parents as appropriate.

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?

Definitely. The more input trustees get from all sources, the more enlightened their decisions will be.

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?

We need trustees to present a united front in reminding the province that public education is still inadequately funded.

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?

Important

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?

Yes

Please explain.

It is unreasonable to think that students in a public system can transfer anywhere. That would make it impossible to plan and build schools that have the capacity to serve the communities in which they are located. Transportation and dislocation of students from their local community are genuine concerns. All schools should be able to provide the same high level of core instruction.

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?

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

Integration can be an option where the nature of the integrated student's need does not cause undue distraction for the other students or unduly increase the requirement for additional staff to accommodate special needs. Some special needs students may attain a higher level of achievement in classes where the staff have more specialized training.

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?

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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.

The delivery of many of these specialties, particularly in elementary school, currently depends on help from parent volunteers. These subjects are part of the Ontario curriculum and are most successfully delivered by teachers who specialize in these areas. The Ministry of Education has to figure out a way to make that happen.

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?

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.

I will continue to promote the Board's Equity and Diversity strategy. It is very important to me that every child and employee in our Board, regardless of background, feels safe and valued in our schools.

I will also work with other trustees to ensure that the Board shows utmost respect to members of the public when they attend our meetings. For instance, I will push for a ban on the use of hand-held devices during public meetings. All too often now, trustees are seen with their heads down using their hand-held

communication devices instead of paying attention to what is going on in the room.

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

I see education as having two components. The first consists in developing the individual, giving every student the means and opportunity to achieve his or her goals and aspirations and realize his or her full potential, academically and otherwise. The second consists in creating citizens of tomorrow by building character, instilling a sense of civic engagement and responsibility, and teaching students what it really means to be part of a community.