

Chris Ellis
Zone 12
Chris_Ellis@ChrisEllis.ca

Section 1 – Accountability

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

The input of parents is key to inform decisions made by the school board. My years of advocating for broad consultation as an executive member of Ottawa–Carleton Assembly of Schools Councils and as an individual will continue and be intensified as a trustee. Personally I will seek out constituents input to inform positions I will take at the board table.

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

An important part is to bring detail understanding of communities to the larger policy decisions so the reality of on the ground results are positive for student outcomes. To bring a different perspective to the debate that will not always be constrained by the funny situation where the board may be compelled to a course of action due to a mandate from the province.

But above all for me is to be focused on the impact decisions will have on the success of students and communities.

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?

Seek a Director of the Board that would encourage a more open and honest work place. I as trustee will articulate the challenges that the board faces, treat parents and the community as adults who can understand the situation and seek to include them in finding solutions.

As an example I will use the waiting lists for children needing additional resources to succeed. It is important that the board states the true numbers and not to play games to keep those numbers artificially low or hidden.

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?

[no response]

Please explain.

I did not check off the above as I think that depending on the issue I would give one or another more weight.

An issue that has significant impact on a community I would think parents and communities should be given more weight.

On an issue of a technical/pedagogical import then the educational professional should hold sway.

But I would seek input from professionals and parents and communities on all matters to be as thoroughly informed as possible.

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

Additional Comments

I would also seek to go into camera after parents and community members who have come to a board meeting have had their matter heard and dealt with instead of making them wait where possible.

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 within a consultation process to have a more robust literature search made and that information provided. I would hope that with a more open culture that the real issues can be fully discussed.

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?

I will be insistent that information is produced and shared. From my experience I expect this to be quite a challenge but one that I am up to.

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! Yes! Yes!

Teachers and support staff are our major partners in delivering a sound and full education to our children. They are the professionals that I want to hear from the most.

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?

I will be seeking partnerships to support children to succeed. whether that be a breakfast program, public health services or support for families.

But ultimately we need to have public support to increase funding to education. I will make connections with community associations and inform them of the joys and challenges in providing a good education. I will join with other trustee in Ottawa and across teh province to make the case that investing in our children is a wise investment.

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?

Very important

Additional Comments

It is also important that the board develop the expertise to deliver Special Education services within a French Immersion program.

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.

But it is important once again for the board to face the facts. If there are schools that have high transfer rates out then the board must address those issues and rectify them.

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?

Try to bring awareness of the situation to the attention of the public to gain support for greater provincial funding.

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?

I didn't answer no but there will be students and/or parents how seek an integrated setting and I believe that also needs to be an option. I believe we need more Educational Assistance so the classroom is equatable to all students.

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.

--

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?

[no response]

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.

A greater integration of school and community.

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

To paraphrase the old African proverb, it takes a community to educate a child and it is important for communities and the schools that serve them to forge links that foster healthy learning and growth for their children and families. Partnership opportunities may exist to coordinate after school activities and family services among community organizations. Community volunteers can enrich the life of a school and its students in many ways. It is also important for communities to have a voice in how their children are educated and to share their expertise and experience with the School Board. Communities are complex

and varied and all should be encouraged and empowered to work with their schools and the School Board.