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Section 1 – Accountability

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

Parents are the client base for decisions in that they are the ones who are directing their children's education and have should be consulted on decisions that effect them and their child.

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

I see myself as someone who will consult widely with parents and members of the community. I am someone who is known for listening before making decisions. I also want as much information as I can before making a decision so I will be asking a lot of questions to staff and other resources.

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 use what is at my disposal to communicate information from the Board and the impact it has on schools and parents. I hope to have a regular dialogue with school councils and to distribute information through a variety of sources including community newspapers to reach the community at large.

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 believe it is a balance of the two since we need to know what has happened before in similar circumstances and what is being done elsewhere. Parents and communities must be consulted first but we need to talk to experts as well.

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

In-camera meetings should have set parameters on when they come into play. They should not be used to hide information from parents and communities.

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 want to hear from parents and also parents with children who have graduated from these programs as well as the graduated children themselves. My own son was in the gifted secondary program and it was very useful to him. I am not sure if he would have stayed in school in a regular stream program. We need to see how these programs are working in the long term with good research and information from sources beyond our own board.

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?

The best way to ensure good data is to review it and ensure that it is reaching standards. It is important to raise questions on reports at meetings to make sure the goals of the report are to show actual situations and not whitewashing problems.

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?

We need to have a mechanism that allows us to hear from teachers and support staff. We have to be able to understand what is going on in the classroom. This has to be done carefully to ensure we do not have isolated anecdotes and are hearing about real trends and factors in our classrooms. This should not be a platform for teachers to air grievances. We need a delicate balance in how we approach this wealth of information and to make real changes that are useful to the students.

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?

The real problem at hand is the paternal approach of Queen's Park in allocating funding to our Board. They consider that they know best and limit the funding we receive. This leaves everyone's hands tied particularly the trustees. This needs to be challenged by parents and voters in general. I would suggest raising questions with provincial candidates for the 2011 election.

In the short term we need to work in partnership with community groups to help bring new ideas and a sense of involvement to students and the schools themselves. I would also look at the importance of bringing in young teachers into the system particularly for substitution. This would save money and bring youth and energy into classrooms.

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

I feel strongly for the need to keep french immersion as a strong component of our children's education. I have two sons who are graduates of the program and it has been very important in their career paths and development overall. We cannot treat Canada's two languages as one being optional. All children should be given the opportunity to learn their second official language.

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.

We need to increase the sense of community schools. School shopping is usually done by higher income families who think their local schools are not good enough. This type of thinking only makes things worse. We end up with schools that are stigmatized. There are valid reasons for transfers but we have to be careful that these do not get out of hand.

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?

We can only continue this integration if we have assistants in the class to help these special needs students. We cannot expect a teacher to have this extra responsibility without adequate resources. My sister is one of these assistants and it is a huge responsibility with physical and mental challenges for everyone involved.

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?

[no response]

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.

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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?

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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?

I will need to discuss this with parents and teachers as well as Board staff. This has proved to be an important program to many children and we need new parents to know about it.

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.

[no response]

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

My vision is quality education for all children. This means different things depending on the needs of the child. It is about having the resources to let every child reach their full potential. This includes programs such as sports and music as much as math and english.

Schools are the lighthouses in the community that bring people together. We need to keep communities involved in schools. We all benefit when schools are graduating top students who become integrated into society. We all have to support schools and understand their importance in the community.