

SAM FILICE

Contact information

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1. What is the role of a Public School Board Trustee?

Advocacy is the primary role of the trustee. The primary concern is for the health, safety and development of our children. It is working with 8 other trustees to assist in the direction of the schools while working in conjunction with the school community, parental groups, student groups, community partnerships and of course our provincial government to prepare our students for a successful future.

2. What do you see as the main issues facing public education today? Of these which is your priority? How will you address that priority?

There is a need to enhance basic literacies and math skills. We live in an age where these skills are essential to compete in a global economy. This will require our schools to put more resources, like reading specialists, in our elementary schools. This will be a difficult task given that we are dealing with overcrowded classrooms. Teachers and support staff are facing challenges that are difficult to adequately address in the light of a class sizes. We need to ensure that school resources are directed to keeping class sizes at a manageable level.

There is no question that our students cannot end at the diploma and will need the above mentioned skills in post-secondary education. We must do our best to provide students with the knowledge needed to be successful in their lives following graduation. The development of responsible citizenship is also needed to face the challenges that they will surely face later in life.

3. Do you believe that education in Alberta is adequately funded? If you answered “no”, what will you do to advocate for more educational funding?

Education does deserve more funding but given Alberta's financial situation at present, it will difficult for the government to increase per capita student funding. Edmonton Public Schools with partnership with other boards should keep the government appraised for the need of extra funding for essential programming such as mentioned above.

4. What will you do to support the success of FNMI students from K - 12? Please indicate goals and objectives, and also action steps.

To support indigenous students, we need to include FNMI cultural activities as part of the curricular practise. For example, in elementary schools we could create art projects or play first nations games as part of, not added to, curriculum practise. There is no doubt in my mind that if we look at first nations customs and traditions and include activities throughout K-12 schooling it will also lead to improved achievement. Currently FNMI students lag behind their non-indigenous classmates and inclusive activities will not only assist aboriginal students but their peers as well. The specific goals and objectives to infuse cultural curricular practises can best be produced by our consultants in conjunction local bands and government support to ensure grade level activity is appropriate.

5. What is the appropriate level of government funding for private schools? (For comparison, funding of private schools in Canada ranges from 0% in Ontario, to 70% in Alberta.)

We are fortunate in Edmonton Public that we do have a wide range of choices when it comes to schools. Edmonton Public already supports schools that in other jurisdictions would be considered private such as language schools. Therefore, there is no need for private schools that are publically funded as Edmonton Public already provides different choices.

6. Do you support the right of students to keep their sexual orientation or gender identity as private information (information that can be shared by teachers only with express consent of the student)?

Yes, period.

7. Do you support inclusion in the classroom? If so, what supports would you consider necessary to make inclusion successful?

The most important ingredient for inclusiveness is how the teacher presents their classrooms. Nothing beats a welcoming classroom to help students feel valued. As our students come from unique backgrounds we also need to consider how we program their courses. For example, in some cases, this will require special support (i.e. language classes for ELL students) to enable them to be successful in a regular classroom. Whenever possible, it is always positive to include all students, despite their individual differences, to engage in group activities that enhance their sense of belonging. I know there is no shortage of literature and support through our district consultants and teachers to provide assistance for inclusion. As a society, we need to develop attitudes of acceptance of others to promote tolerance and understanding.