



## **Julie Kusiek, Edmonton Public School Board Trustee Candidate for Ward F**

How would you advocate for sustainable and adequate funding for our students?

I will advocate for fair funding for Edmonton Public Schools. The new weighted moving average formula results in less funding for rapidly growing districts. This means Edmonton Public loses out. As your school board trustee, I will advocate for a “growing district top-up.” This top up will fill the gap between the weighted moving average formula and the new students Edmonton Public enrolls above that funding number. I will work with my board colleagues, then reach out to other growing school districts in Alberta. Together, we will advocate for a “growing district top-up” for school districts like ours.

The province also recently created new grant funding streams for education in Alberta. This change resulted in cuts to some important programs, such as program unit funding (PUF). I will advocate that the province reinstate this funding. In the meantime, children continue to grow and their learning journey cannot wait. I will work hard to find innovative ways to support learners in the interim.

### **What are your priorities for education outcomes for Alberta’s students?**

Educational outcomes need to prepare Alberta students to be successful in life. Competencies like critical thinking, citizenship, leadership, creativity, and collaboration should be the focus. Knowing their math facts and how to read are essential, too. We want students to build the skills they need to become lifelong learners. We want to prepare them to tackle the issues and problems of the future with resilience, insight, and understanding.

To achieve these outcomes students need safe and caring classrooms. This includes support for educators in professional development and opportunities for collaboration. Advocacy for mental health and learning support for diverse learners is also essential. I believe students are best able to learn when they feel like they belong and when they feel safe and supported. This will give them the confidence and purpose they need to succeed. Promoting a sense of community, belonging and wellbeing are a top priority of mine so that we can achieve the educational outcomes Alberta students need.



### What is your position on the current draft K-6 curriculum?

I do not support the current draft K-6 curriculum. I am proud of the current Edmonton Public School Board for their stance to “delay and redraft.” That is a stance I will continue to uphold if elected as your next Trustee for Ward F. The draft social studies curriculum for K-6 is of particular concern to me.

As your trustee, I will advocate for a less rushed, more transparent, and accountable process for curriculum development. It is essential we return to a process that brings together curriculum experts, educators and parents.

The curriculum I want to see for Alberta students is one that:

- is developmentally appropriate,
- is based on best practices, and
- that ensures students have the knowledge and skills to take on the challenges of their future

I believe Alberta can develop a first-rate curriculum we can be proud of. Once again, other provinces and territories will see us as a leader in the field. The current proposed draft K-6 curriculum does not meet those standards. I will advocate that no curriculum changes hit Edmonton classrooms until concerns raised by parents, educators, and curriculum experts are fully addressed.

### What is your position on charter schools?

I do not support charter schools as part of our public school system. I believe charter schools privatize education interests using public dollars. Public dollars should be for public schools. “Public” needs to represent an equitable, accessible education for every Alberta student.

Charter schools intend to provide “choice” and “innovation,” and receive public funding for this. However, they are independently operated. Their boards are not democratically elected. Alberta’s public, separate and francophone school boards are. They are accountable to the public in ways charter schools are not. In addition, charter schools are not required to accept every student seeking admission. This is especially problematic for me. We need strong public education that is there for every student.

The best way to reduce demand for charter schools in Alberta is to provide a public education system that is strong, desirable and equitable. Programs of choice are a great way to do this. Programs of choice reflect the diverse learning needs and preferences of families and students. As trustee, I will support programs of choice as a way to sustain the strength of Edmonton Public Schools. I’m looking to work with you to make Edmonton Public Schools so awesome that families won’t want to look anywhere else!



### What are your priorities for new school buildings and other infrastructure?

I will continue to support the current EPSB Three Year Capital Plan for replacement and modernization of Ward F schools. This includes Harry Ainlay, McKee, and Lendrum. I also support the current plan to build schools in Edmonton's newest neighbourhoods, where demand for schools is high.

That being said, I do not believe building the school is good enough. We need to strengthen our planning through collaboration. We need to work more closely with the City of Edmonton, communities, and separate school boards. I would draw on my experience as a community advocate and bridge builder to make this happen.

For example, what if the City's infill approval process supported mature neighbourhood schools? Rather than so many one or two-bedroom units, more family housing would keep enrolment levels up.

How about encouraging walking and biking to school? EPSB needs to be part of the conversation around protected bike lanes. We need to make it easier to upgrade bike racks to more secure options. No student should have their bike stolen while at school. Safe school zones should happen through road design, not dictated by signage that drivers ignore.

Let's save on operations and maintenance by collaborating with the separate school board. Wouldn't it be great if side-by-side Catholic and public schools shared yellow bus service? Or did bulk supply purchasing together to save money?

Recreation is also a consideration. I've been at the forefront of keeping Scona Pool open since 2009. The positive impact of the pool on students at Strathcona High School is immeasurable. While not every school needs a pool attached, I do think all schools need a recreation amenity within walking distance. This encourages sport without incurring travel costs. I'd like to do an inventory of recreational assets within walking distance of schools. If existing assets aren't used, let's figure out why. Let's improve on the Joint Use Agreement with the City of Edmonton. Can we partner with local community leagues to use their recreation facilities? Where no amenity exists, let's talk with the city about recreation opportunities. Rec doesn't need to be big. Small-scale facilities can be based on the Rollie Miles Rec model I've been co-leading for many years.

At the end of the day, community members, students, and families don't care who owns the building. They want to make sure it is well-used and available for public use. This is one major pillar of my platform of "education grounded in community." Our schools are stronger when we work together.



## Public Interest Alberta

### What is your position on public-private partnerships to build new schools?

I do not support public-private partnerships (P3s) to build new schools. Albertans will be better served by publicly built, owned, and operated schools. I made a similar statement against the use of a public-private partnership to build Rollie Miles Rec Centre, a project I have been co-leading for many years.

I recommend that everyone read the Public Interest Alberta article on P3s ([https://www.pialberta.org/p3s\\_in\\_education\\_a\\_bad\\_deal\\_for\\_alberta](https://www.pialberta.org/p3s_in_education_a_bad_deal_for_alberta)). I agree that Albertans should push back against using a P3 model for new school construction. That said, the current provincial government will be in place for at least half my term as trustee. They have made it clear they are in favor of a P3 model. Edmonton Public has several high-priority building projects. I'll work with my colleagues to push AGAINST P3s while pushing FOR public construction of the schools we need.

We all have a role in keeping public education infrastructure free of private interests. Trustees can advocate, but we will need the partnership and cooperation of parents. I promise to do the heavy lifting by using my experience as a successful community organizer. I ask that parents and community members be loud when we need to be. Let's make sure our views for publicly built public schools are heard. I want to do this with you. If we are unable to get a school built unless we agree to a P3, let's cross that bridge together. In the meantime, let's keep up the fight for fully public school buildings.