



Mary Martin, Calgary Catholic School District Trustee Candidate for Wards 13 & 14

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

Adequate, sustainable, and predictable funding for public, separate, and francophone schools is crucial to the success of Alberta's students. Alberta has one of the strongest public

education systems in the world. This is no accident. In no small part, Alberta's public, separate, and francophone systems enjoy the success that they do for a number of reasons:

- There are collaborative, respectful, and effective relationships between those partners invested in education.
- There are effective advocacy groups deeply interested in education issues bringing their voices to the table.
- There are locally elected trustees, bringing the aspirations of the communities that they serve to the board table in an effort to create the very best learning opportunities for the students that they serve.

I believe one of the most important facets of a trustee's role is that of creating effective relationships with the province, which funds public education, as well as other key education stakeholders. As a trustee with 14 years' experience, I have developed these valuable relationships. I have served in numerous capacities both at the local level and provincial level, that has and will continue to create the opportunity to strengthen public education in Alberta. It is through these established, as well as new, relationships that I will be able to effectively advocate for publicly funded education.

What are your priorities for education outcomes for Alberta's students?

My priorities for educational outcomes are tied to my vision for education in Alberta.

Education in Alberta should embody that of a vibrant learning community that is inclusive, future-oriented, and well-supported. My priorities are:

- That publicly funded education in its three iterations - public, separate, and francophone, serve to provide Alberta's families with an unparalleled quality of education.
- That students benefit from an exceptional new curriculum
- That students be taught by well-supported teaching and support staff.
- That the focus of Alberta's education systems be that of preparing our students to be life-long learners and contributors to Alberta's future.



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

There is no doubt that, after many years, a new, current, aspirational curriculum is overdue. One of the most important roles of a trustee is that of ensuring that the very best opportunities for student success are put in place. The draft curriculum, in its present form, falls short, and this is why:

- To be successful, new curriculum needs to be conceived and thoughtfully piloted. Typically, new curriculum is introduced one or two subjects at a time, and with months to prepare. There must also be in place the required resources to support our teachers, in this case, there are eight strands covering K-6. The draft curriculum was presented at the end of March, with implementation as a draft in September 2021. This creates a significant challenge for our teachers.
- Introducing a new curriculum during a pandemic, when learning is already disrupted does not set up students or staff for success.
- Various strands of the draft curriculum are content-heavy and context poor.

Some strands (i.e., math) rely heavily on rote learning and memorization. Critical thinking skills are not developed. Other elements of the draft curriculum are age – inappropriate. Elements of the draft curriculum are Eurocentric. With Alberta being as diverse as it is, many students will not see themselves, or their context, within it. There is a lack of Indigenous perspective within the draft curriculum. The draft presents Indigenous people without reference to the rich tapestry of Indigenous peoples. It references the Indigenous historical timeline as being just a few hundred years, as opposed to thousands of years long. Aspects of Indigenous culture are referenced in the past tense, rather than present. The history and impact of the residential school experience has little profile.

Trustees have an integral role in advocating for a curriculum that is aspirational, future-thinking, inclusive, and a joy to teach and learn. Trustees need to ensure that the curriculum captures the vision for excellence in education in Alberta. This requires knowing one's community and working in partnership with stakeholders to influence the creation of curriculum. Engaging all relevant partners will provide the diversity of opinion and perspective that is needed to create a curriculum for all.

What is your position on charter schools?

I believe that there exists a great deal of choice and diversity of offerings in publicly funded public, separate, and francophone schools. Charter schools were conceived to provide alternatives in education where such options did not currently exist. The reality is that many public, separate, and francophone schools deliver those options undertaken by charter schools. Further, historically, charter schools were obligated to share any innovative practices that resulted in enhanced outcomes with public, separate, and francophone systems. This has not happened. Of further concern is the lifting of the cap on charter schools. I support choice in education, but only when public, separate, and francophone schools are adequately funded.

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

Families need and deserve to have schools where their children live. Given that the awarding of infrastructure to school districts lies with the province, advocacy for a transparent, predictable model of infrastructure allotment becomes critical. In the past, such a model existed. I would advocate for a predictable model of infrastructure allotment that is aligned with meeting the needs of the local community. Seeking innovative partnerships will be critical. Using public funding wisely is essential. Joint use facilities, where a site and infrastructure may be supported through complementary partnerships, is worthy of exploration, provided that the integrity of the jurisdiction is maintained. With the modernization of the



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Municipal Government Act, these collaborative partnerships between municipalities and school boards are mandated. Ensuring that these partnerships, formalized through Joint Use Agreements, is of paramount importance.

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

Public – private partnerships (P3s) have been used in the past to provide school infrastructure. It was intended that these P3 arrangements would provide substantial savings through economies of scale. In reality, these arrangements resulted in schools that took significantly longer to construct and open. Additionally, the complex arrangements required between the province, developer, and school jurisdiction created an unanticipated complexity to a number of aspects of school operations. School districts are capable and competent at constructing their own infrastructure on time or earlier, and on or under budget.