

# CTA NEWS



## SD33 Board of Education Trustee Election Candidate Responses to CTA Questionnaire

### Trustee Candidates:

**Carin Bondar**  
**Elliott Friesen\***  
**Darrell Furgason**  
**Kaethe Jones**  
**Heather Maahs**  
**Greg Nelmes**  
**Barry Neufeld**  
**Darren Ollinger**  
**Lewis Point\***  
**Richard Procee\***  
**Willow Reichelt**  
**Margaret Reid**  
**David Swankey**  
**Brian VanGarderen**  
**Teri Westerby**

*\*Responses unavailable by deadline*

General voting day will be Saturday, October 15, 2022, between 8:00 am and 8:00 pm at the following locations:

#### Locations to Vote:

##### Chilliwack:

Landing Sports Centre, 45530 Spadina Ave

##### Greendale:

Greendale Elementary School, 6621 Sumas Prairie Road

##### Promontory:

Promontory Heights Community School Gym, 46200 Stoneview Drive

##### Rosedale:

Rosedale Traditional Community School Gym, 50850 Yale Road E

##### Sardis:

Sardis Secondary School, 45460 Stevenson Road

##### Yarrow:

Yarrow Community Hall, 4670 Community Street

#### Advance Voting Opportunities: October 5 and 12, 8am - 8pm

Landing Sports Centre, 45530 Spadina Ave

Mail Ballot Voting: for more information go to City of Chilliwack  
<https://www.chilliwack.com/main/page.cfm?id=3063>

Each school trustee candidate was sent 10 questions. Their corresponding answers can be found on the following page:

1. What is your motivation for running for school trustee? *Page 2 & 3*
2. Working collaboratively and professionally with other trustees, teachers, support staff, and district staff is essential in this role. How will you maintain these relationships? *Page 4 & 5*
3. How would you use the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) as a lens when developing Board policy? *Page 6 & 7*
4. As a trustee how would you inform yourself on teacher perspectives and issues? *Page 8*
5. The FSA does not accurately reflect student progress or give enough salient information for teachers to use to adjust or update instruction. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? *Page 9 & 10*
6. Do you support free collective bargaining and the right to strike? Please explain. *Page 11*
7. Do you believe public funds should be used to support private education? Why or why not? *Page 12 & 13*
8. Ministry of Education policy states, "Educators are best suited for determining the resources that are most appropriate for use in their classrooms." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? *Page 14*
9. As a trustee, how will you ensure that our schools are safe spaces for all students, staff, and families? *Page 15 & 16*
10. There are a variety of issues plaguing school districts throughout the province, such as lack of space, decreased funding, and severe staffing shortages. Do you see your role as trustee as being an advocate on these issues? If so, how would you advocate for improvements? *Page 17 & 18*

**Time to make a choice!**

**On October 15th, vote for the candidates who are committed to  
QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION!**

## 1. What is your motivation for running for school trustee?

**C Bondar:** I love being a school trustee. I consider it an honor and a privilege to do this work, and I also love that it meets my skill set. I am an educator and communicator, a biologist by training. In my current role at the University of the Fraser Valley, I teach in areas of biology and environmental science. I love being able to share ideas, pedagogy and projects across the school and university systems. Our district is growing rapidly, and our world is changing. I feel proud to be able to contribute to public education at such an important time for District 33.

**D Furgason:** To improve student achievement for all grades in the District.

**K Jones:** The primary focus of a School Trustee is to improve student achievement. I am running for School Trustee to work with like minded Trustees who understand that helping our students succeed in reading, writing, math and science give them an advantage for future opportunities in their life. Anything that distracts from this is not helpful for our student body in this district. Another reason for running is to give back to the parents a voice to speak to the Board of Trustees. As important stakeholders in their child's education they should be free to speak when they have concerns. This has been sadly lacking in the last 4 years. A gag order has been placed on parents at Board meetings and this is not acceptable.

**H Maahs:** My motivation has always been to support early learning, the science of reading and fundamental skills so that there are no road blocks to learning.

**G Nelmes:** My motivation for running for school trustee is to ensure that the interests of students comes first. Kids first and I want to be part of a United Board that can disagree in camera but presents a united front to the media. In short, I will listen carefully to all and make level headed decisions.

**B Neufeld:** My motivation to run for Trustee again (the 9th time) is to ensure that public education continues to prepare children to enter the "real world" equipped with the knowledge and skills to lead a productive, fulfilling life.

**D Ollinger:** My motivation for running for School Board is to secure a future for our resources of student body such that they become competently employable and earn enough to pay for both the basic costs of living, that includes university tuition, and to support the social network infrastructure of old age pension where emphasis would be put on eventually finding a job that matches a student's skills and aptitude in a workplace where the worker should not have to contend with morality issues, but rather ethical ones to make a buck. Currently being a God Father, and wanting to become a Father, I possess the disposition of both a parent and a teacher wanting to make a difference on how to educate the children with morality and ethics in mind.

**W Reichelt:** I grew up in Chilliwack and have raised my children here. I love my community, and I want it to be a thriving city where our diversity is celebrated. I am proud of many of the things we have accomplished as a Board during my first term. Our strategic plan is a forward-thinking document that directs our resources to the vital areas of reading and numeracy while also acknowledging the systemic barriers that some students face and that need to be addressed. In my next term, I want to make further progress on equity and reconciliation. We've made improvements, but we have more work to do. I want to prevent the Board from being distracted by those who seek to drag education back to the last century: I'm focussed on the future.

**M Reid:** I have always been passionate about advocacy and public education. When I was 16, I served on the Educational Policy Board as a Chilliwack high school student because I wanted to know more about the rules we were asked to follow and why. Now, I am a mother in the same District and I have frequently been frustrated with the conditions for both students and teachers. I have always been an action-oriented individual and I feel I can serve the board well. Chilliwack is facing many challenges; recovery from the flood and 2.5 years of COVID, economic uncertainty and rising living costs, and struggles with uniting to find a shared vision for our school district and community. I'm a collaborator and a mom who wants the best for my community and my kids, and my experience can bring energy, action, and unity to the board table.

**D Swankey:** More than anything, I want to contribute to and build upon the successes in our district and the good work being done every day. Part of contributing to that success requires trust in the decisions made at the board table. I hope to support a board that models integrity and helps restore trust and I believe my conduct over the past term has reflected the values and ethic needed to help this board move forward. There is lots to focus on over the next term and I don't intend on limiting those priorities; however, this election I am focussing on early learning, district infrastructure, and gaps in student achievement. Each point is expanded on in my platform and I believe each is part of our future success in the Chilliwack School District. There is more that I would like to share, but in the interest of affording your attention to all trustee candidates I invite you to visit my website or to reach out directly: [www.davidswankey.com](http://www.davidswankey.com)

**Question #1 Continued: What is your motivation for running for school trustee?**

**B Van Garderen:** I have two main reasons for running for school trustee. The first is my family, specifically my daughter, she will be attending public school and I was looking for ways to be involved in her education. As I was looking at joining PACs or volunteer programs I started reading more and more about what was happening at the trustee level in Chilliwack. At that point, I realized that I have the skills, background, and expertise that could benefit the district and make an impact on many children's lives while they attend school. The second reason I am running for school trustee is to find a meaningful way to give back to my community in an area that I am familiar with.

**T Westerby:** I repeatedly hear stories from students and their families about students being bullied, excluded from their education, sent home early, and about events that occur within the schools that show their lack of accessibility, and other similar events that prevent students from being included and accessing their education in the Chilliwack School District. Students in the district are underserved, and teachers are often unsupported in their efforts. Many teachers work hard to ensure their classrooms are inclusive and accessible, but they cannot do it alone. They need allies in the district who will fight for them and for inclusion and accessibility in creating classrooms that all students can access. This is why I chose to step up as a candidate for Trustee - so that I can stand up for the teachers, the students, their caregivers and their families.

***Strategic Voting***

*Boost the power of your vote with strategic voting! In a multi-candidate election, each candidate is running against each other. Therefore, if you don't want to split the vote, sometimes it is better to 'plump' for fewer stronger candidates. You do not want to dilute the power of the vote by voting for someone who could end up beating your preferred candidates.*

**2. Working collaboratively and professionally with other trustees, teachers, support staff, and district staff is essential in this role. How will you maintain these relationships?**

**C Bondar:** Collaboration is an essential part of the work that I do. My current role on the Chilliwack school board includes participating in committees and groups – from Child and Youth Care to Scholarships and Audit. I am a good listener, and I spend time getting to know various members/staff/colleagues in a genuine way. This kind of connection-building is a skill that benefits my work and role(s) as a school trustee. In addition, as I keep listening (and keep learning), I am able to give more specialized advice/connection/information to people when they ask. I will maintain these relationships by doing good work and being a productive member of any team that I am on.

**D Furgason:** I believe in dialogue, listening and respect for all staff, teachers, etc. Maintaining a listening ear is my objective.

**K Jones:** There are many ways in which to maintain collaborative and professional relationships with the people who work in this district. Contact in committee meetings, school meetings, DPAC meetings, small group and individual conversations about needs and concerns in their area of expertise would be vital to understanding how this district functions on a daily basis. Taking all options into consideration for making decisions is important.

**H Maahs:** Over the last 14 years I always had a respectful relationship with trustees and staff in our schools and will continue to do so.

**G Nelmes:** Working collaboratively and professionally with other trustees, teachers, support staff and district staff is essential in this role. I will be an active listener. Understanding each of their roles and perspectives is the key.

**B Neufeld:** Working collaboratively is the best way to come up with the wisest decisions. I support and enjoy regular meetings with our partner groups. But I must keep in mind that “the buck stops with the board.” We must accept accountability for not only successful decisions but also the bad ones.

**D Ollinger:** Working collaboratively, I shall keep home and work separated. Any relationship at work will be treated as professional and approached to diplomatically.

**W Reichelt:** I have a strong working relationship with district staff. I am always available to talk to any of our partner groups or any individuals who have concerns about anything happening in our district. When people email me, I answer their question when I can; when I don't have an answer, I either seek more information or direct them to the person who can best answer their question. When sitting on committees or participating in partner group feedback sessions, I make sure that all participants are able to speak up. I am not afraid to hear criticism from partner groups; when our first draft of our Vision, Mission and Motto was soundly rejected by partners, we went back to the drawing board: The new versions are so much better!

**M Reid:** I'm a community builder- both in my job and in my volunteer work. I've learned through all of this work that in community-building, you are often required to work with people that you do not agree with in order to get good work done. I have an established resume of solid working relationships with professionals in many sectors that I have built by asking questions, listening to the answers, finding projects that pull people together for a common goal, and developing trusted pathways for regular and meaningful communication between everyone involved. I will make it my priority on the Board to ensure that all stakeholder groups are heard, and to adjust communication methods until everyone has a seat at the table.

**D Swankey:** Trust is the foundation of any healthy relationship and there are several values and behaviours I'd like to draw attention to in maintaining trust and supporting strong working relationships that are both professional and collaborative.

1. Being willing to listen, and to have my assumptions challenged. Showing up when I am invited to do so and being sure to follow through on the assigned responsibilities of my role.
2. Being prepared, knowing the context I am working in, and reviewing the information necessary to inform my role.
3. Embracing learning, both my own and that of those around me, and acknowledging that mistakes are part of learning.

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**Question #2 Continued: Working collaboratively and professionally with other trustees, teachers, support staff, and district staff is essential in this role. How will you maintain these relationships?**

**B VanGarderen:** With respect and humility. Due to the divide between party groups, something has been lost when working together. It takes respect and humility to listen to those who disagree with you and come up with a compromise that represents the community as best as possible. This also means that all parties and concerns must be heard and responded to in some way. Even if a decision or policy is made that a party disagrees with, they should still feel like they were heard and what they brought up was discussed at some point. As a trustee, it will be difficult for me to come into schools to meet with the different communities that help run a school due to my other job as a teacher in the Abbotsford school district. I will be willing to meet after school hours and I will always answer emails that are sent to me. If there are special events or things that I feel I must be there for I will take a personal leave of absence to attend. Clear communication is extremely important to me and how I work with others.

**T Westerby:** I listen. In meeting spaces, you will often find me quiet, more often than not, because I want to be sure I am listening to everyone, and fully hearing them from their perspectives. I advocate for those who are often unheard, to give everyone's view a chance to be fully considered. I will amplify the voices of those who are muted and will work to ensure equity in meeting spaces and within the district. I strive to create a sense of community where folks of all backgrounds can come together and feel like they belong. This includes, and is especially important internally. Teachers, support staff and district staff need to feel comfortable that I am open to them, available and ready to listen and to hear them, and to work hard for them. I can only do that by proving it with my actions because actions always speak a multitude louder than words. I will always have an open door for everyone and will dedicate myself to creating space for people to speak up for themselves and their values.

### 3. How would you use the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) as a lens when developing Board policy?

**C Bondar:** DRIPA (Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act) is meant to serve as a framework for the reconciliation work that is critical to our education system. All board policy should be constructed through the lens of the calls to action (CTAs) within it. CTAs 62-64 include implementing specific frameworks for Indigenization of the BC school curriculum. The Chilliwack school district (under the guidance of District Principal Brenda Point) has a strong plan for Indigenization. We recently received a presentation on this topic, it was exciting and inspiring to know that Chilliwack is a leader in Indigenization. Indigenization has already seen action from the government of BC with their updated requirements to [BC Graduation](#) for the 2023/2024 school year (which is an excellent step forward). This work needs to continue until Indigenous graduation rates are equal to non-Indigenous rates. Our education system is not democratic until this work has been thoroughly done.

**D Furgason:** I am committed to any action that would serve to promote understanding and reconciliation.

**K Jones:** I am not too familiar with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act but have lived and worked on 2 reservations (isolated & semi-isolated). From my experience on reservations I have seen how many words are spoken about improving the life for the indigenous peoples but have yet to actually see much improvement. Words are cheap, what we need is action. First of all, we would need to talk with the First Nations Educational Committee in our district to understand what they see as their needs/concerns and not impose our own agenda. This has probably been the biggest issue most of the time. Board policy would come from this communication.

**H Maahs:** This is actually embedded in directions from the ministry and staff is doing a great job of its development.

**G Nelmes:** First of all, I need to have a careful read of this DRIPA Act. I'm a team player and believe strongly in our District Motto "Partners in Learning". It all comes down to respecting everyone and treating everyone with dignity.

**B Neufeld:** This DRIPA focusses primarily on real estate and mineral rights. We are already doing an outstanding job in ensuring our aboriginal students are engaged and receiving the best possible education. And we will continue to do so. The DRIPA will guide our annual talks with the local band chiefs. However, as available land becomes scarce, the DRIPA may be the key to negotiating with Band Councils to build new schools on reserve lands.

**D Ollinger:** In the case of using the Declaration on The Rights Of Indigenous People Act (DRIPA) which I am not familiar with, I suspect that policy, whether recommended or mandatory of the Act would provide the lens on how to approach policy development. On a side note, I would expect that the use of Standard English would be used in policy implementation, as If I would have to learn a second language, that would be Latin.

**W Reichelt:** We begin every meeting by acknowledging that we are on unceded Stó:lō territory, and it's important for all trustees to realize that this means we have an obligation to make sure that Indigenous students and families have a true voice in shaping our education system. We have Local Education Agreements with all of the First Nations in our district, and we must make sure we meet our obligations. DRIPA commits us to combatting anti-Indigenous racism, so we must make sure to teach the real history of our country (including the truth about the genocidal residential school system) as well as celebrating the successes of Indigenous people in our community and across the country.

**M Reid:** DRIPA is hugely important to Reconciliation in BC and must be applied by default to all things coming to or out of the Board. I work in a First Nations community locally, and because I aim to do so in a culturally safe manner, I have a lot of experience with the practical application of policy when impacted people are not included in planning. I would advocate to have more Indigenous representation where policies are being made, and ensure that all Board members and participants are familiar with DRIPA, the TRC, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Action Plan. I would also encourage investigations into policy impact, because lived experiences matter. This lens would include Indigenous students and families, but also Indigenous staff, teachers, and local First Nations.

*Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education. Franklin D. Roosevelt*

**Question #3 Continued: How would you use the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) as a lens when developing Board policy?**

**D Swankey:** There is a lot that can be done, not just in policy development but in almost every role the board plays in public education. First, supporting and contributing to the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan](#) commitments is important; the provincial government has made this work a priority and the Chilliwack School District has the opportunity to follow through on commitments under the purview of the Ministry of Education and Child Care for the benefit of our district. Looking past the provincial Action Plan, the board must be consistently mindful of DRIPA in all discussions at the board table. This includes continuing the Equity Scan with particular attention to work in policy and governance. This will be important as the policy manual review is continued and completed, and as policy is reviewed in accordance with Policy 150. Finally, honouring and welcoming the work of the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee (IEAC) both in policy development and in better informing the work of the board.

**B VanGarderen:** When developing board policy it is extremely important to have all parties consulted but even more so it is important to honor the traditions, titles, and rights of Indigenous peoples. It is important to have a representative from the Indigenous community who has been chosen by them to represent their interests and honor the rights to self-government. It is also important to create policies and intentional opportunities like professional development days focused on learning more and supporting opportunities for local people to teach and share in schools, to help educate and end racism and discrimination towards Indigenous peoples through education. I would also like to explore the potential of supporting extracurricular activities that help connect Indigenous students across the district to share their stories and experiences to help foster stronger relationships among youth.

**T Westerby:** Under the framework of DRIPA, it is imperative that all policies that are passed through the board are in alignment with Reconciliation and the 94 Calls to Action. This means collaborating with the many local First Nations that have students in the District, so that they are receiving an education that aligns with, affirms and celebrates their culture and identities and ensures the First Nations communities that they have self-determination in their education and choices in learning. The board and policies must work for truth, and work to bring to light the inequities and discrimination of the system that we are currently leading, while simultaneously working to dismantle the barriers and marginalization that occur. This means challenging policies that are missing these factors, constantly educating myself and immersing myself in Indigenous teachings. It means policies that reflect the diverse identities of the First People here in Chilliwack. It means collaboration and partnership.

**4. As a trustee how would you inform yourself on teacher perspectives and issues?**

**C Bondar:** I have many conversations/meetings/committees/grads/celebrations where I can (and do!) directly interact with teachers and students. I also receive emails or have short discussions on social media. I am the current BCPSEA rep, which has given me the opportunity to learn about another perspective in the school ecosystem. Lastly, I enjoy reading the 'Teacher' magazines that arrive in the mailbox.

**D Furgason:** I have advocated for increased opportunities for Trustee-teacher dialogue. Excellent teachers produce excellent outcomes in terms of student achievement.

**K Jones:** I would want to speak with teachers about what they are experiencing in the classroom and school about the needs of their students. Also how their experience affects them personally. The health of the teacher is vitally important to doing their job effectively.

**H Maahs:** The Corporate Board has forums and venues for teachers to bring their perspectives forward.

**G Nelmes:** I was a teacher and school administrator in Chilliwack for 38 years. Most of my teaching was at the Grade 5/6 level but I also have experience as a Grade 2 teacher. Listening carefully to the teacher perspective will be a top priority for me.

**B Neufeld:** I do a lot of reading and research on my own. I compare our district and our province to other jurisdictions. But I also read the periodicals from the BCTF, BCSTA and Canadian School Board's association. As a trustee, I am reminded that I am not alone: I am a member of a board of seven and we have only ONE employee: the Superintendent. Trustees need constant reminding that their job is to: "lay the track and avoid playing with the trains." When I am allowed back in schools, I would regularly meet with teachers and observe their classrooms.

**D Ollinger:** As a Trustee reaching out to teachers on perspectives and issues I would make accessible: my Email for on demand, participating in the PTA with both teacher and parent, and if warranted, regularly scheduled in person assembly meetings.

**W Reichelt:** I taught in the district, my husband is a teacher, and I have many friends who are teachers; therefore, I have both personal experience of teaching and many opportunities to discuss current issues. I also connect with the CTA when I have questions or concerns and want to know what they've been hearing about their members' experiences.

**M Reid:** As an individual Board Member, I will reach out to the CTA and other stakeholders for regular input on arising issues, but I believe communication should be ongoing. I will advocate for a Board liaison to the CTA. I believe a concentrated effort should be made to make sure the Board and District foster an environment where teachers and staff feel respected and valued. As the people who are with our kids 6 hours a day and see the classroom challenges firsthand, teacher perspectives are essential in the boardroom.

**D Swankey:** First, I'll again highlight the importance of showing up when invited to do so and always being willing to listen, even when it challenges your assumptions. More specifically, I believe school visits are both a privilege and a responsibility of being a trustee, providing an opportunity to gain perspective in the school rather than at the board table. I have also appreciated the opportunity to attend CTA organised professional development opportunities this term and I hope that invitation continues to be extended. Finally, I believe established norms for partners to meet with the board must be a priority over the term. Routine meetings were not established and followed through on; that must change starting this school year.

**B Vangarderren:** Being a teacher myself I would be informed of larger struggles and perspectives that are a part of BCTF concerns and issues that are common around the province. To stay informed of local struggles I hope to create a respectful relationship with the local union and be able to hear concerns and perspectives on different topics/issues. I would also welcome emails and comments from teachers as well that could be more localized to schools and different communities. The more informed I am as a trustee the better I can serve my community and help keep the best interests of all parties in mind.

**T Westerby:** I hope to have open communication and healthy professional relationship with teachers, the DPAC, and CTA - I also hope to make relationships with those on the BCTF, and BCPSEA, and have an open door to teachers who wish to share experiences with me. I listen to and consider all viewpoints, I ask questions and learn as much as possible. I do not plan to ever speak for "myself" only, but for the community as a whole, including teachers and staff. I want to ensure that my choices as a Trustee are what is best for the whole community. The only way to do this is to learn about teacher perspectives and issues, directly and indirectly, to gain a whole picture and full perspective.

**5. The FSA does not accurately reflect student progress or give enough salient information for teachers to use to adjust or update instruction. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?**

**C Bondar:** I agree that the FSA should NOT be used to update instruction, but I do see some value in the FSA as a universal metric shared across many districts. The FSA measures a limited set of questions and skills, which means that it should not be used in an extrapolative way (ie this INCOMPLETE measure does not say anything about the COMPLETE student). However, as one metric for comparison of one skill set across different districts, it is a useful metric to obtain.

**D Furgason:** Objective tests are only 1 important way to measure SD33's academic outcomes. They must be taken into consideration, however, with other local data.

**K Jones:** I believe the FSA is intended to be a measuring stick for how schools in our district perform, how our district compares with others in our province, how our province compares with other provinces in Canada and lastly how Canada compares with other G7 countries and other 78 participating countries globally. It is not to be used as a measure to necessarily inform teachers of how to adjust or update instruction on a daily basis. That is what authentic assessment is for, and which teachers use to inform them of a student's progress and make adjustments in their instruction to the pupil or class.

**H Maahs:** The FSA is the only standardized measure we have left in this province. Whether they are 100 percent accurate is of course up for debate, however they do provide the board with a benchmark for measuring where we need to put funds to help students with the most important skill sets.

**G Nelmes:** I partially agree. October testing is good for teachers to find out how individual kids are doing in the key areas of literacy and numeracy. It enables them to determine starting points for the year. May testing is no longer necessary and the Fraser Institute must not publish the results in the media.

**B Neufeld:** I agree that the FSA is flawed and does not provide enough useful data regarding student achievement. Furthermore, it has been changed so often, that one cannot find a trend going on over the years. There are many other assessment tools, and they also keep changing. I do believe in standardized testing. But we need a better tool. THE FSA scores have been used inappropriately in the past. When a new reading and math program were introduced about 7 years ago, the board was shown FSA scores that seemed to indicate these programs were increasing academic achievement. So the board allocated \$1.5 million to support these programs with resources and professional development. But then four years ago, we discovered that the FSA scores we were given were flawed. Student achievement was flat lining or decreasing despite the extra money for these experimental programs. No one was held accountable for this expensive mistake.

**D Ollinger:** I am not sure whether to agree or not that the FSA does not accurately reflect student progress because I don't know what the FSA is. I suspect that, through it, it is a piece of work that is the basis for editing where it can be improved whether currently being accurate or not.

**W Reichelt:** I have administered the FSA. I found it to be a waste of time, and it did not inform my instruction in any way. I have heard that there have been some improvements in the years since I have taught grade 4, but from what I hear, teachers do not find this test useful. It is important to note, however, that the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is a passionate defender of the FSA, because they see it as an equity-seeking tool. They are adamant that we need to have a province-wide, standardized test in order to track and fix disparities in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Therefore, I believe we need to stop trying to get rid of the FSA and focus on creating a new version of the test that is less time consuming and more useful for informing instruction.

**M Reid:** We can educate students, or teach them how to take a test. It's difficult to do both. I understand the desire to use these tools to attempt to find metrics to evaluate our students' learning, and our staff's teaching, but they simply don't reflect core competency. These types of tests have also consistently shown bias against already marginalized students and schools. Overall they're incomplete- it's just a snapshot, and students' learning can be shown and assessed in many different, and more accurate ways. Teachers need to be involved in finding new assessment tools that reflect the new curriculum directions. As a parent with a child that has high test anxiety, I am personally frustrated that her teachers are required to administer a stressful test that won't be used to make her school life better. Until the FSA can be replaced, the opt-out system needs to be changed to be lower barrier.

**Question #5 continued: The FSA does not accurately reflect student progress or give enough salient information for teachers to use to adjust or update instruction. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?**

**D Swankey:** I agree. It provides a snap-shot, complete with faults, and does not track progress. To my knowledge it does not provide enough information for teachers to adjust or update instruction. Teachers are in the best position to speak to whether or not the FSA provides value in updating or adjusting their practice; my discussions with SD33 teachers have not suggested this is the case.

**B VanGarderen:** I agree with this statement because as our curriculum evolves and changes a standardized test doesn't accurately represent all of the diverse communities and needs that are in a school system. It is one way to assess students learning but if we look at the curriculum there are many ways to represent your learning and outcomes to help provide the most opportunities for each student to share the knowledge they know. FSAs can be a useful tool as a larger body when looking at the performance of averages across BC but it does not accurately reflect every school district's unique needs and diversity that can impact the average rating of the district.

**T Westerby:** I agree with this statement, in the sense that, a student's ability to learn and absorb information is highly dependent on a number of things in their life that are not noted or remarked in the FSA. Things such as home life and stress, cognitive and learning abilities, learning style, other accessibility challenges and more that I could name for a long time, including whether or not the student ate that morning. These are nuances, or "soft data", that a basic test cannot pick up or help the teacher adjust to the specifics of the student's needs. "Hard data", such as whether the student knows their 2 times tables, is not relevant to the reality of how well the student is absorbing the content and knowledge of mathematics, or how well they are progressing.

**6. Do you support free collective bargaining and the right to strike? Please explain.**

**C Bondar:** Yes, I support free and collective bargaining and the right to strike. These are important aspects of a democratic society. Teaching is among the most important professions that exists, and the remuneration and benefits offered must be reflective of the diverse and dynamic roles that they play, especially in growing districts like ours.

**D Furgason:** Yes, striking is one of the rights we all have as Canadians.

**K Jones:** A union's members should have free collective bargaining and the right to strike if the issues are clearly laid out. Unions have fought for the right for free collective bargaining for decades and as such this should be honoured.

**H Maahs:** I do not support the right to strike. Teaching children is a most sacred trust and should never be used for political purposes.

**G Nelmes:** Yes, I do and always have. I started teaching a Grade 6/7 class at FG Leary back in September 1977. We didn't have collective bargaining rights back then but that started to change in the 1980's. I walked the picket line several times back then as part of the CTA and also supported teachers as much as possible when I was a building school administrator.

**B Neufeld:** Yes, I support free collective bargaining and the right to strike. Because that is essential in a free and democratic society. In the past, I have demonstrated my support by joining CTA and CUPE members on the picket lines.

**D Ollinger:** I support Free Collective Bargaining and the Rights of teachers to strike because they are [the teachers] entrusted with the responsibility of the development of our children, an essential service that they should be compensated reflectively with wages to, as a standard, to be able to afford the costs of living in the current economic market considering inflation. The teachers should be paid what they are worth.

**W Reichelt:** I support free collective bargaining, including the right to strike. I believe that unions are vitally important, because they reduce income inequality and create better working conditions for all workers. Unions have also been responsible for some major benefits, like parental leave. I know that when teachers enter collective bargaining, they are thinking about their students' learning conditions as well as their own working conditions.

**M Reid:** Yes, I do. I am a proud CUPE member who is endorsed by her union. I see teachers as an essential component in a functioning education system- their right to seek quality of life is as inherent as it is for any other profession and must be respected.

**D Swankey:** Yes I support free collective bargaining and the right to strike. I support it on principle, and acknowledge both the history and value of labour rights in British Columbia. I also acknowledge that regardless of any individual position on these rights, both free collective bargaining and the right to strike are rights affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2015, citing them as protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

**B VanGarderen:** I do support free collective bargaining and the right to strike. The reason being is that when governments look at education and budgeting first thing they ask of districts is to do more. Asking more out of schools, more from teachers, support staff, and leadership but are not willing to provide more funding. Creating an optimal learning environment is difficult as schools become more diverse and the needs increase so it is important that the voices who work in these environments are heard. It is also important to continue to have appropriate compensation for staff as inflation continues to grow and salaries do not, in the lower mainland housing and cost of living have skyrocketed and it becomes more and more difficult to live in these communities with the salaries that are previously negotiated.

**T Westerby:** Yes. It is absolutely imperative that workers have the freedom to collectively bargain for better pay and benefits. Education is the cornerstone of our free society, and we need teachers to be invested in order to deliver education to our future generations. The only way for this to be possible is with a well-compensated and well-supported workforce. If the only way to achieve this is with a strike, then I fully support that action in order to obtain the compensation and support the teachers deserve for the work they are expected to deliver - and many of whom go above and beyond expectations.

**7. Do you believe public funds should be used to support private education? Why or why not?**

**C Bondar:** Private schools receive public funds for private curricula, which does not correspond to the definition of a public education. Therefore, I believe that public funds should not support private education.

**D Furgason:** Taxpayers pay taxes, which are used to fund education and schools. Private schools receive only 50% of the funding that public schools receive. Yet they produce the same outcomes as public schools.....namely student graduates. They are thereby saving the taxpayers a lot of money. In addition, the public system could not cope financially, or in terms of facilities if required to absorb all the private school students in BC.

**K Jones:** Yes, public funds should be used to support private education because the citizens, whose children attend the private schools, are also tax payers, pay for public education , and deserve to access the money from the public purse.

**H Maahs:** It is actually irrelevant what I believe on this issue because it's a provincial matter.

**G Nelmes:** Public funds should not be used to fund private education. The public education system needs all the money that they receive which is inadequate due to rising inflation rates these days. Moreover, parents/guardians that choose to enrol their children in private school pay tuition fees.

**B Neufeld:** I believe that in a free and democratic society, parents should have the opportunity to choose. Currently parents who choose private subsidize the government...not the other way around. The Provincial government only funds about half of the private school budget. If private schools were suddenly eliminated, the provincial education budget would be overwhelmed, and the education of all students would suffer. Education is already fighting a losing battle with the health ministry for a share of provincial revenue.

**D Ollinger:** Yes, public funds should be used to support private education because some conscientious parents may not want their children to be exposed to matter that is presented in the public curriculum, or to get something that the public system does not provide: either with respect to religion, military school among others including home schooling.

**W Reichelt:** I do not support private schools, and I do not think they should get public funding. The only argument I've seen for funding them is that in order to receive funding, they have to follow BC curriculum; this ensures that their students are not deprived of a modern education. However, I think that this could be better achieved through legislation rather than funding.

**M Reid:** I do not. I am a strong believer in public investment into public resources. I do not agree with tax dollars paying into inequitable institutions which all taxpayers do not have access to. I also believe strongly in the separation of church from government operations and while I respect everyone's right to attend a religious school, I do not feel that public dollars should be used to instruct people in that religion.

**D Swankey:** Public funds belong in public schools. Too often private schools extend opportunity to those already in a position of privilege, furthering inequity in our province.

**Question #7 Continued: Do you believe public funds should be used to support private education? Why or why not?**

**B VanGarderen:** I have two trains of thought in this area. The first is that I think that public funds should go to supporting private schools if they are using and following the BC education curriculum and policies. I think that if public funds are going to be used in a private school then they should be held to the same policies and learning as a public school. If the school would like to add religious teachings into their school then they would have to provide the extra fund through tuition. Then they can add content and materials on top of what is required when using public funds but there needs to be oversight on these schools to make sure the funds are being used appropriately and following the policies set. One of the downsides to this is that only those who have the means to pay the tuition can attend and they can feel privileged because of this. When I was in university in Edmonton Alberta I thought how the Edmonton public school district distributed funding was interesting. The private schools were under the public school board. They funded Christian schools an Islamic school and even a Jewish elementary school. They were all overseen by the public school board. That style intrigues and I respect the school system for trying to provide a space for all learners but also ensuring that they follow the public education guidelines. This is something that I would have to explore more but it is something that I have thought about. This is my personal belief on funding and when it comes to schools in our local community I still believe in public schools and the quality of education given. I also understand the desire of those who would like to have religion taught in school and the want for private schools. However, funding of public and private schools is determined by the government and not trustees.

**T Westerby:** No, I do not believe public funds should be used to support private education. Public funds are for public access. The public education system is not perfect, but it is a collective group of individuals who work hard to ensure knowledge is passed down from generation to generation. It is meant for everybody, just as the funds are meant for everybody. Private education means a different education, it means isolation from the rest of the public, and it means some form of segregation is occurring. I don't support this with public funds. Everyone is free to do as they wish, subject to laws, however, they should not be funded with public (collective) funds.

**8. Ministry of Education policy states, “Educators are best suited for determining the resources that are most appropriate for use in their classrooms.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?**

**C Bondar:** I agree with this statement. While ministries can make blanket guidelines and recommendations, it's always best for decisions about immediate needs to be made at corresponding levels. Teachers know their own students, the level of comprehension and interest that they have towards specific subjects. At a large scale (i.e. for graduation requirements/successful completion of each grade) there should be guidelines, but teachers and educators should have some leeway for selecting resources that they prefer, and ones that they know will be useful for particular groups.

**D Furgason:** I agree with the statement, but with the following caveat.... Educators must still be accountable for what they teach.....to the parents, to the School Board (aims values, and policies) and to Canadian law.

**K Jones:** Years ago I might have agreed but not now. Now I would say that some of the resources teachers have access to cross the line when it comes to appropriate material especially if it has sexually explicit/deviant content. Let's face it. The majority of parents do not send their children to school to learn about sexual behaviour.

**H Maahs:** The Ministry of Education also says Board of Education will approve learning resources. The Ministry has done this as it understands the need to set parameters around expectations for the children in regard to appropriateness and science on behalf of the communities they serve. Please see Legislated Order July 1, 2017. Teachers also have professional autonomy in their classrooms as it should be, however controversial topics need top down parameters providing continuity in the school district.

**G Nelmes:** Yes, I agree with this statement. However, teachers must be very familiar with the Ministry Curriculum Strands and the Resources available.

**B Neufeld:** Educators certainly have a unique skill set and their ability to determine the most appropriate resources is important. But I am a firm believer in a multidisciplinary approach. While a resource might be effective in a classroom, educators might be blind to other unintended effects. There should be an open, collaborative effort to select resources involving parents and other professionals.

**D Ollinger:** I agree with the statement that teachers or educators, parents being included in that set; are best suited for determining appropriate resources in the classroom because their [the educator's] watchful eyes are on the frontline to witness how the student relates socially at school and at home. Up to a certain age the educators are entrusted to make the decisions regarding the child, for example: as the parent provides censorship on the family television set and to implement security features on the internet. Likewise they decide on whether the relationships with the child and their friends are appropriate, or more succinctly, socially healthy. Teachers can report to the parents at PTA meetings not only on academic issues but those including the disposition of the student and his or her social development.

**W Reichelt:** I agree wholeheartedly with this statement. Teachers and librarians are trained to select resources that address curriculum and that generate student interest and create a love of reading. It is preposterous as well as impractical for anyone to suggest that trustees (the majority of whom have no background in education) should have control over learning resource selection.

**M Reid:** Absolutely. The teachers I know are passionate about their work; about children, education, and excelling at their jobs. Teachers also receive the most up-to-date professional development to ensure they're making research-driven decisions. I also think we can continue to provide teachers with great resources to ensure they have access to fund new classroom purchases to include fresh materials that reflect our community's diverse backgrounds, experiences and needs. I am also mindful of the job description for Trustees, and that approving/denying specific curriculum is outside their purview.

**D Swankey:** My position is as it was in 2018. “Teachers are professionals and have the autonomy to determine the resources they use in their classroom. This flexibility is essential so educators can connect the material with the student.”

**B VanGarderen:** I agree with this statement, the reason being is through each teacher training program teachers are taught how to use information and resources that students can connect with and help them draw their own ideas and conclusions. Resources are also ways teachers can connect with student experiences and help foster a more inclusive environment. As a teacher, I believe it is important to keep teachers' autonomy as professionals, as long as it creates a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment.

**T Westerby:** I agree with this statement. Educators are the experts, and they know their students and all the individual nuances of their learning styles. They would best know how to deliver the education to those students! However, there are times when a teacher may be ignorant of how best to support certain students, or how best to create a classroom that is accessible to all of their students. This is why the district and staff must continue to push education for teachers as well so that they can understand how to best select the resources that can support all of their students, which I know, they all want to do their best!

**9. As a trustee, how will you ensure that our schools are safe spaces for all students, staff, and families?**

**C Bondar:** As a trustee, I strongly advocate for inclusion, kindness and safety at school. I will continue to work together with our district staff to promote our district values of inclusion and diversity. I think that it's an important time to empower educators and students through difficult situations with empathy and patience. Also, it's an important time for students and educators to speak out against hate and hate speech when they see it.

**D Furgason:** Absolutely.

**K Jones:** School district #33 has had a zero tolerance policy for bullying for decades. Bullying occurs in many forms and to many children for many different reasons, not just the children who identify as part of a select group in the schools. ALL children matter and need to be respected and kept safe. ALL staff and families matter. Years ago my school, as well as others, had a Code of Conduct which was taught to all children in the school and reinforced. There was and probably still is a process that one goes through to work out issues that arise in a classroom or school. Administrators, teachers, parents and students need to work together to learn about bullying and encouraging the by-stander to get help and keep someone safe. I will look into the Policy book to see what has already been implemented about safe spaces for all.

**H Maahs:** I trust the people we've hired with great confidence to do their job as they've always done very successfully providing safe schools.

**G Nelmes:** Safe, healthy schools are critical and the COVID 19 epidemic has taught us all much about the importance of request hand washing and clean washrooms and other areas. Custodians play a central role in cleanliness. A school staff committee must be established in the first week of the new school year. This committee will consist of at least one school administrator, two teaching staff, 1 or 2 CUPE members and 1 or 2 PAC members. This committee will establish dates for fire drills, earthquake drills and stranger danger drills asap. This calendar will be shared by the end of September with all committee members and building staff including school custodians and the Chilliwack Fire Department.

**B Neufeld:** I would ensure that all staff have professional development in the priorities of Anti-Bullying programs like Bully Beware. Bullying, Harassment, assault and stalking are both the cause and effect of stress and mental health problems. But most importantly, I am an advocate of multidisciplinary approaches to student mental health. And I am an advocate for removing the systemic stigma against mental illness. The recent COVID restrictions caused a dramatic increase in student mental health problems. When our district received millions of dollars in Federal COVID assistance, only \$50,000 was allocated for mental health services. I objected strongly that this was not enough, as this only was about a half time position to cover a district of fourteen thousand students. We spent five times as much outfitting school buses with electronic card passes.

**D Ollinger:** As a Trustee, to ensure that schools are safe places, I would recommend that in addition to already existing policy, that vigilance be exercised in both the classroom and at home and online to be aware of triggers or warning signs, that because of the disposition of the student(s) that something catastrophic could be avoided and by intervened with imposing appropriate measures for those red flag conditions or situations.

**W Reichelt:** The last four years have been challenging, but I have remained steadfast in making sure that the official position of the Board is one of supporting and celebrating diversity and inclusion. I speak out strongly and consistently in support of LGBTQ2S rights. I support anti-racism initiatives. I denounce book banning efforts that seek to remove LGBTQ2S and BIPOC voices from our classrooms and libraries: Every student deserves to see themselves and their family represented. I sit on the Advisory Committee for Inclusive Education, and we are working to make this a committee that has real input into how we best support kids with disabilities and diverse abilities.

**M Reid:** Absolutely. The teachers I know are passionate about their work; about children, education, and excelling at their jobs. Teachers also receive the most up-to-date professional development to ensure they're making research-driven decisions. I also think we can continue to provide teachers with great resources to ensure they have access to fund new classroom purchases to include fresh materials that reflect our community's diverse backgrounds, experiences and needs. I am also mindful of the job description for Trustees, and that approving/denying specific curriculum is outside their purview.

**Question #9 Continued: As a trustee, how will you ensure that our schools are safe spaces for all students, staff, and families?**

**D Swankey:** First and foremost by working to support and uphold the district's responsibilities within the broader legal framework public education operates within; this includes but is not limited to ensuring the BC Human Rights Code is upheld. These are legal obligations that supersede district policies and motions of the board. Second is working to both model and uphold district values as outlined in [Policy 110](#); values of inclusion, equity, kindness, innovation and collaboration need to be more than a page in our policy book, they should inform all the work being done in our district and every policy from draft to implementation. Finally, following through on priorities outlined in the district [Long Range Facilities Plan](#). There are more considerations than I can touch on here, but the physical spaces we work and learn in are an important factor when considering safety in our district.

**B VanGarderen:** This is a very difficult question as there are many things we can do to create a safe place for all. The first is coming from our leadership they must embody the policies they set in place for schools to follow. If our leadership cannot attain those levels how can people trust that issues that arise in schools can be dealt with effectively? Secondly, it is important that staff who are working with individuals with diverse needs feel equipped with tools to help de-escalate situations or to keep themselves safe. There are always incidents that happen in school and it is important at that time to have clear communication with all parties, parents, support staff, teachers, and admin, to create a plan that all can agree on and feel comfortable implementing. There might be difficult decisions that have to be made but it is important to keep records of these concerns that way trustees can use this information to help articulate the complexities happening in the district and advocate for the need for better resources. Offering training, supporting new staff development by allocating funds, and creating policies that help protect employees with difficult situations is an important part of a trustee's role.,

**T Westerby:** It starts at the very top - from the School Board Trustees to the District staff, to the administrators and teachers, to the students! Ensuring all levels are open to hearing everyone's voice and standing up to make a change in the areas in which students and teachers struggle. It means listening and creating equity through advocacy to have those who are affected speak up and share their stories and create a space for them to be heard. It means being present, showing up, and standing up, authentically, for every member of our community. It means creating discomfort, and handling it with grace so that everyone can follow suit in creating safe spaces. It means leading with compassion, but also firmness in upholding the human rights of students and staff.

**10. There are a variety of issues plaguing school districts throughout the province, such as lack of space, decreased funding, and severe staffing shortages. Do you see your role as trustee as being an advocate on these issues? If so, how would you advocate for improvements?**

**C Bondar:** In the coming year, I think that we will see an increased ability of teachers and students to be 'back to normal' after the pandemic. Yes, there are issues plaguing the province – including the aforementioned ones – but I think that first and foremost, seeing post-covid levels of function will be a goal for many classrooms and teachers. We've seen several completed expansions and a new school in the past term, which is great news. However, there will always be a demand that exceeds what the district can provide. We are a rapidly growing municipality, and unfortunately there is no current dialogue between the city and the school board. I think that our district could be better prepared for changes to our student population, as this is reflected in many aspects across the district including facilities and transportation. Yes, I do think that trustees can be advocates for issues like this because of our level of knowledge about the entire system. As advocates and community members, we can inform people on issues that resonate. As trustees, we can join committees at the provincial level to work towards policy change/construction in specific areas. Granted, this is a lengthy process, reflective of the complexity of the system.

**D Furgason:** Over the last 4 years I have voted on many motions that have specifically advocated for all of those issues. We have worked to provide more spaces, new schools, more funding for TOC's, EA's and Staff. The Covid impact was greatly reduced by our efforts.

**K Jones:** Advocating for the best teaching and learning environments for students and more staff is necessary to improve optimal learning. Again, promoting provincial funding increase if possible would be a good start but making sure that current resources have been used wisely and thinking outside the box for the best way to use district funds is also a good strategy.

**H Maahs:** If an issue arises that puts students in jeopardy, of course I would advocate.

**G Nelmes:** Yes, I do see my role as an advocate on these issues. Portables should only be used as a last resort. The recent additions at Promontory Elementary and Vedder Elementary are current examples.

**B Neufeld:** I would make every effort to publicize the success of our public education to convince taxpayers that education dollars were well spent. But I would ensure public confidence by admitting when we have made mistakes, and that I and the board are willing to be accountable for our expenditure of public funds. Our board is an active member of the BCSTA and BCPSEA who regularly advocate for increased funding. Our board has also had regular meetings with our two local MLA's and successfully advocated for the construction of new schools and additions.

**D Ollinger:** As a Trustee, I see the issues of space, funding, and staff shortages as articles worth advocating for improvement. Since it all boils down on how to spend money, rather than shuffling around funds from one place to the other in the budget compromising for money that does not exist; but rather to lobby the Provincial and Municipal governments for funding and to implement creative means and methods to provide funds to put capital into the budget.

**W Reichelt:** Yes, I do see this as part of my role. One of a trustee's duties is to work with their board to advocate on behalf of the district. Our Board has sent several letters to the Ministry of Education over the past few years. I also attend the BC School Trustees Association AGM every year, and we have passed many resolutions calling on the government to increase funding and support.

*An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you do know and what you don't. Anatole France*

**Question #10 Continued:** There are a variety of issues plaguing school districts throughout the province, such as lack of space, decreased funding, and severe staffing shortages. Do you see your role as trustee as being an advocate on these issues? If so, how would you advocate for improvements?

**M Reid:** I absolutely am an advocate for these issues- I have kids of my own struggling to have their needs met in a variety of areas by staff and teachers who do amazing work, but don't have the tools or support to cover the workload. As of September 10, District 33's job vacancies are twice the rate of Abbotsford, Langley, Fraser Cascade and Maple Ridge. It is the school board's role to assure that the district is operating smoothly, so as a Trustee, I would make it a top priority to investigate why we're struggling to attract and keep top talent in Chilliwack, and how to fix it. The only way to understand these issues deeply is to talk with teachers and support staff to find out what we're missing, and ensure that teachers have influence in the budgeting process to ensure that we're allocating resources in the right direction. We should also be fostering relationships with various levels of government to innovate on this problem, as it impacts us all. I believe a strong focus on Recruitment and Retention needs to become a priority for the District.

**D Swankey:** I see it as both the role of a trustee and a board of education to advocate on these and other issues. Over the past term I have focussed on supporting the work of the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA) where I hold several positions; their advocacy is directly to the Ministry of Education and Child Care and other ministries as necessary. The BCSTA's advocacy focuses on many areas, including but not limited to improved capital funding, adequate and predictable operational funding, and better support for training and retaining public school staff in our province. I intend on continuing that work through this next term, should I be re-elected. Looking forward, I hope to work with a board better able to lend voice on these issues and speaking directly to how they impact the Chilliwack School District. That requires a board with both the confidence of their community and the ability to work with their provincial partners. I believe advocating by motion of the board and by meeting with local MLAs and members sitting in government will be important in successfully advocating for Chilliwack.

**B VanGarderen:** I believe that as a board and as an individual trustee it is extremely important to be the voice advocating for the needs of the district and its students. It is important that we keep track of the data that will help support and represent the issues and struggles in our school system and as a trustee try to become a part of the larger association to make sure the local voice is being heard on a larger scale.

**T Westerby:** I look to the higher levels of government that are responsible for the funding and advocate for the district for increased funding. This can be done through letters from the board, working with the BCSTA and attending their meetings.

*The purpose of education is to make the choices clear to people, not to make the choices for people.  
Peter McWilliams*