

2026 School District Trustee Candidate Questionnaire

Core Responsibilities

- **Set Strategic Direction:** Create multi-year strategic plans and policies that guide student learning and district priorities.
- **Manage Finances:** Approve annual operating budgets and capital plans to ensure public funds support student success.
- **Hire Leadership:** Appoint and evaluate the school district superintendent (or chief executive officer).
- **Represent the Community:** Listen to local families, taxpayers, and Indigenous communities, bringing their concerns to the board table.

Questions:

1. What are your 3 main reasons for running for School Trustee?
 - a. I'm currently a School Trustee and Chair of the Board and I am completing my first term and my reasons for running for School Trustee are:
 - My unique perspective. I'm an Early Childhood Educator who has professionally worked with children from birth to age 12 for over 20 years. Supporting children and families and ensuring that decisions are made with children at the forefront are embedded in my work. I am empathetic and compassionate to the complexities facing families today and I listen to understand. I see firsthand the incredible work this district is doing and I value how important governance is to strong public education.
 - Advocacy and Accountability. I have seen the impact of strong advocacy and collective voice. Trustees are part of the BC School Trustees Association and this school district, along with the Thompson Okanagan Branch of Trustees have brought forward resolutions in support of:
 - increased funding for students
 - A provincial plan to achieve CleanBC goals
 - Expanded internet connectivity in all areas of BC
 - Continued support of the Student and Family Affordability Fund
 - Explicit instruction in critical thinking principles for K-12 curriculum and adequate resources and training
 - Adequate funding for costs in Child Care
 - Increased funding for Annual Facilities Grant to address deferred maintenance
 - Strategic Leadership and Stewardship. During my first term, I helped lead a Strategic Plan Refresh informed by many community consultations. I participated in the hiring of a new Superintendent, and I supported our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation through the Equity in Action Agreement for Truth and Reconciliation 2025-2030. I'm running again because I believe that strong governance, thoughtful planning, and responsible decision making creates the foundation for student success both today, and in the future.
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2. Do you support the replacement of RMS? Many new schools have been built and others renovated to accommodate more students while Rutland Middle School, that is now over 70 years old, has only been renovated. What efforts would you make as a Trustee to have Rutland Middle School replaced rather than 'renovated'? If so, how is this going to be achieved?

- a. Rutland Middle School is one of the most important topics that families often bring forward to Trustees. I really like talking about this topic because I see it as an opportunity to share what I've learned over the years and support a deeper understanding of this complex situation.

It's important to understand that each year, the Board reviews the Long Range Facilities Plan and the Major Capital Plan. We have four categories on the Major Capital Plan: New Schools, School Additions, Site Acquisitions, and School Replacement Program. What I learned when I joined the Board is that when we have schools listed as a replacement priority, the province typically doesn't fund capital improvements to that school. It makes sense when you think about it. If a Board is requesting that a school be torn down and replaced, why would the province approve improvements to the building? So when I joined the Board, we had Rutland Middle School on the Replacement list. We also have 60 school districts with competing aging infrastructure and in some rural and remote districts, there are major issues to their schools. On the coast, the province is focusing heavily on seismic upgrades to schools at risk during an earthquake. The current Board took a hard look at RMS and with a thorough provincial assessment realized that Rutland Middle has good "bones" (for lack of a better term). It has flex spaces that are not found in new schools, the building is strong, and being an "old" building is not necessarily reason enough to replace a school. So for those reasons and with a better understanding of provincial priorities, RMS is now on the School Additions list. An addition would absolutely include accessibility upgrades as we know that all of our schools should be accessible for all students and it would maintain the diversity of spaces that Rutland students deserve in order to be successful.

I hear the frustrations surrounding RMS and I feel those frustrations too. Part of my learning is understanding that previous Boards made decisions based on the information they had at the time and when we receive new information, it's important to reassess and adjust the direction. The current Board has RMS at the top of the School Additions list and I feel confident that we'll see improvements in the near future. Also important to note is that anytime we have a Minister or provincial representative in Kelowna, we ensure that we take them to RMS for a visit to advocate for what we know is a necessary investment. This important work and advocacy will continue. And we encourage families to support our advocacy as many voices have great impact.

3. Are you in favour of better administration of the rules around EV bikes and scooters?

- a. The school district follows the provincial legislation and guidelines regarding e-bikes and e-scooters and it is the responsibility of the Superintendent and school administrators to implement and enforce those requirements within our schools. As a trustee, my role is not to direct operational enforcement, but to ensure the district

has appropriate policies, expectations, and supports in place to promote student safety. We know that e-bikes and e-scooters are becoming increasingly common among students, and with that comes a need for ongoing education and collaboration with families around safe and responsible use. When there are concerns, I would expect the district to continue working within provincial regulations. Trustees provide oversight and accountability, while the details of administration and enforcement appropriately remain with district staff.

4. Are you aware of the traffic jams on Rutland road as a result of uncontrolled crossing at RMS? If so what are your plans to alleviate the jams?
 - a. While I understand there are concerns about traffic congestion near Rutland Middle School, traffic management and road safety enforcement on municipal roads are the responsibility of the City of Kelowna. As a Trustee, my role is not to direct operational solutions but to provide governance oversight and ensure the district collaborates with the appropriate agencies when student safety concerns arise. Any specific measures to address traffic flow would be developed by school district administration in partnership with the City.

5. We understand that bullying has become a major issue within School District #23 (Central Okanagan) resulting in some parents removing their child(ren) from one school and placing them in another or even resorting to homeschooling. What would you do to help ensure that the 0 Tolerance Policy is enforced throughout the school district and that victims are heard and not punished for standing up for themselves?
 - a. Every school in Central Okanagan Public Schools has a Student Code of Conduct that outlines expectations for student behaviour and identifies bullying as a major or serious offence with consequences. Students have the right to learn in a safe, caring, and inclusive environment and I believe concerns related to bullying should always be taken seriously. As a Trustee, my role is not to investigate incidents or determine consequences. Instead, Trustees ensure the district has clear policies that support Student Safety and the Superintendent has a responsibility to ensure that there are current Administrative Procedures regarding Student Safety and Discipline.
As a Trustee, I also believe that it's incredibly important to share with families the steps to take when they disagree with a significant decision affecting their child's education, health, or safety. The district's appeal process exists to provide an additional level of review and accountability when concerns cannot be resolved at the school or administrative level.

6. Too often we hear that students with exceptional needs are not being allowed on school field trips because the support is not there. What efforts would you make as a Trustee to ensure that all students are able to participate equally?
- a. Every student deserves the opportunity to participate in school activities, including field trips, to the greatest extent possible. When there are barriers, I would expect the district to work with families, school staff, and support teams to consider reasonable accommodations and inclusion strategies.
- As a Trustee, my role is not to make decisions about individual students, staffing assignments, or field trip arrangements. Those responsibilities belong to school staff and district administration. My responsibility is to provide governance oversight, ensure district policies support inclusive learning environments, and hold the system accountable for serving all students.
- If families have concerns about decisions affecting their child, there are established processes to raise those concerns through teachers, principals, assistant Superintendents, and ultimately the Superintendent. The Board has a formal appeal process for significant decisions affecting a student's education, health, or safety. My priority as a Trustee would be to support inclusive practices, ensure policies reflect our commitment to student success and belonging, and monitor district-wide outcomes so that all students have meaningful opportunities to participate in all school activities.

Thanks for the opportunity to answer these questions and I look forward to many more questions and conversations in the future!

Val Johnson