

Trustee candidate answers from Craig Stahlke

1. **It is acknowledged that poverty has a serious impact on student learning outcomes. As a Trustee, please list some of the ways in which you would advocate for the Division to support students in need on this issue?**

Students who live in poverty should be treated with the same respect as students who do not live in poverty. Schools should have the same expectations of success for students who live in poverty as they do for all students while, at the same time, being sensitive to the difficulties that the students in poverty face. Students living in poverty should have the same access to educational experiences that all students receive and should not be denied those opportunities simply because they are living in poverty. Board Policy JQ provides that schools will assist students who would be excluded from a variety of activities or opportunities due to financial hardship. I support this Policy and similar efforts to ensure that all of our students receive the same programming and opportunities. Poverty should not be a barrier.

2. **In previous years, the Division has experienced a shortage of Substitute Teachers and as a result, positions have gone unfilled during a teacher absence. Which ideas do you have to address this problem?**

If the Division is experiencing a shortage of substitute teachers, we would want to know the cause and extent of the shortage. For example, is the shortage of substitute the result of only a specific type of substitute teacher (for example, French Immersion math teachers) or is any shortage occurring at a particular time of the year when there is greater COMPETITION among school divisions for substitute teachers. Is any shortage of substitute teachers experienced only by Pembina Trails or all school divisions experiencing similar shortages. Are any shortages of substitute teachers applicable to certain schools or throughout all Division schools. Once these and other questions are probed to get at the root cause of any shortage of substitute teachers, then a solution to address the shortage can be pursued.

3. **What are some practical ways in which you as a Trustee will foster and build relationships between the Division and the Teaching Staff?**

The way in which Trustees build relationships with the teaching (or any category of staff) is through communication. As you know, the PTTA has representation at all Board meetings and is free to ask pertinent questions during Question Period. Where trustees are engaged with schools on various matters, frequently there is contact and communication between the Trustees and the teachers/school administration. I would support and encourage continued discussion and communication between trustees and the PTTA on matters of mutual interest where appropriate.

4. **The Manitoba government has released its Education review which raised issues around Division amalgamation, public education funding and improving learning outcomes. What are your concerns with the Education review? What is your hope?**

My hope is that the retention of the local school boards can rejuvenate local interest in the schools and local public education generally. This was put in jeopardy with the former Bill 64. Pembina Trails must be committed to the success of all of our students and focus on achieving our Expectations for Student Learning and expand those expectations where appropriate.

5. **First Nations students are amongst the most vulnerable learners in the Division. What steps will you take as a Trustee to strengthen supports for First Nation Students? How will you advance and implement the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Calls to Action 62 and 63?**

Actions 62 and 63 are addressed primarily to the Province or other levels of government senior to school divisions. It is critical that our resources be focussed effectively to address the needs of all of our students, including but not limited to First Nations students in Pembina Trails. Many First Nations students are in need of various supports and resources to help them succeed. The Division needs to know which groups of students are succeeding and which groups are in need of different types of support to succeed. The Division needs to continue to measure the progress of all students, develop and execute strategies to address those students who are not experiencing educational success. This will be an ongoing effort as long as public education exists.

6. **Some school divisions have chosen to deal with inadequate funding levels from government by increasing class sizes, cutting access to clinicians and intervention specialists, etc. These decisions impact student learning. How will you ensure services are preserved? What will you do as a Trustee to ensure education funding levels are stable, predictable, and adequate?**

Manitoba is undergoing an evolution with respect to funding. Until just recently, Boards of Trustees had the authority to increase funding through increases in local property taxation. I can tell you that, in Pembina Trails, trustees were judicious when it came to determining the amount of property tax to raise and balanced the financial requirements of the Division with the burden that it placed on the local taxpayer. Now, as is the case in other provinces, school divisions in Manitoba have lost that authority. The Province will determine the level of funding which each school division will receive. Any ancillary revenue which a school division can generate will be relatively minor. School divisions are moving into a time where the shift of focus is not on generating more tax revenue to meet the needs of the Division but on how best to allocate the resources which we will have to meet the educational, support and other needs of the school division. I foresee the Pembina Trails Board of Trustees, and others, needing to focus its resources where it will do the greatest educational good and, at the same time, be good financial stewards of its resources.

7. **Recent shifts in social attitudes have led to conversations about systemic biases and racism. As a Trustee, how would you help ensure that the Division explores potential systemic biases within the Division? In your view, how should plans for examining and rectifying such matters be developed?**

During my more than 43 years as secretary-treasurer in Pembina Trails/Fort Garry, where I have worked with many Boards of Trustees, senior administrators, principals and a wide range of others, I have not found a core of racism in the Division. The Division has always been an open and inviting place for students and staff of all races, creeds and cultures. That does not mean that isolated incidents of racism have not manifested themselves, but they are the exception rather than the rule. The Board and senior administration need to be vigilant to ensure that its policies or practices are not, inadvertently, racially biased or discriminatory in nature to the detriment of any group. This should be a factor whenever a new policy or significant practice is being considered.

8. **How will you ensure that the Division studies closely the idea of full-day kindergarten and other programs related to early childhood education to ensure a successful start for early learners?**

Full day kindergarten is or has been quite limited in Pembina Trails. Whenever a major initiative is being considered which requires a material number of resources to achieve, the Board and senior administration will need to consider where our students would best benefit from the application of resources. Given the limitations that I expect we will see on financial support going forward, a full day kindergarten initiative may require a curtailment of other worthwhile educational programs in order to fund full day kindergarten.