Surrey District #36
Parents' Advisory Council (Surrey DPAC)
*Strengthening PACs & Empowering parents*

## Surrey District #36 Parents' Advisory Council

# 2026 School Trustee Candidate Questionnaire

## Candidate Responses

Surrey District #36 Parents' Advisory Council invited all candidates seeking election as school trustees for Surrey School District #36 in the 2026 Surrey municipal election to participate in our candidate questionnaire. All candidates were asked to respond to questions about public education, student supports, inclusion and the issues facing Surrey schools. Sixteen candidates submitted responses by the October 8 deadline. All candidates are included in this publication, with non-responses clearly identified.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help Surrey and White Rock parents, caregivers and voters learn more about each candidate's priorities, perspectives and understanding of the role of a school trustee.

### A note on neutrality

Surrey DPAC is a non-partisan organization. This candidate questionnaire is provided as an informational resource for Surrey and White Rock parents, caregivers and voters.

Surrey DPAC does not rank, endorse or promote individual candidates through this questionnaire, nor does publication of a candidate's response indicate support for that candidate or their views.

Responses represent the views and opinions of the individual candidates and do not necessarily reflect the views of Surrey DPAC.

Candidates' responses will be presented consistently and without evaluation. Families and voters are encouraged to review candidates' complete responses and other publicly available information before making their own decisions.

# The Questions

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

What do you believe should be the three highest priorities for Surrey Schools over the next four years, and why?

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

Surrey Schools continues to face significant pressures related to funding, staffing, school capacity and student supports. What would you do differently as a trustee to ensure Surrey students receive the resources and supports they need?

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

Families of students with disabilities and diverse learning needs continue to raise concerns about access to supports, appropriate staffing, meaningful inclusion and consistency in how accommodations and IEPs are implemented. What actions would you support as a trustee to strengthen inclusive education and accountability for these students?

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

What role should the Board of Education play in ensuring that schools are safe, welcoming and inclusive for all students, including LGBTQ+ students, Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds? Please include your position on SOGI 123 and Indigenous education initiatives such as land acknowledgements.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

How will you meaningfully engage with parents/caregivers and students — including those whose experiences or perspectives may differ from your own — and ensure their voices inform Board decisions?

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

What is your understanding of the role of an individual school trustee and the Board as a whole, particularly the distinction between governance and policy and the day-to-day operation of schools?

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

Do you currently have, or have you previously had, children attending Surrey public schools? Please describe any other involvement you have had with Surrey Schools or the public education system.

# Candidates

Candidates are listed alphabetically by last name, with Surrey and White Rock candidates shown separately.

## Surrey (24)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Terry Allen | Surrey First Education | Responded |
| John Banovich | Surrey NOW | No Response Received |
| Harjit Bhullar | Independent | Responded |
| Amrit Birring | Independent | Responded |
| Michelle Ceniza | Surrey NOW | No Response Received |
| Gurleen K. Chahal | Independent | Responded |
| Noor Cheema | Independent | Responded |
| Rohit D'Silva | Surrey NOW | No Response Received |
| Vanessa Gilera | Surrey NOW | No Response Received |
| Gary B. Hee | Independent | Responded |
| Bob Holmes | Surrey First Education | Responded |
| Kyle Jones | Our Surrey | Responded |
| Vick Karan | Our Surrey | Responded |
| Meena Kochher | Independent | Responded |
| Laurie Larsen | Surrey First Education | Responded |
| Dean McGee | Our Surrey | Responded |
| Ghulam Mujtaba | Independent | No Response Received |
| Afzalur Rahman | Independent | No Response Received |
| Garry Thind | Surrey First Education | No Response Received |
| Vincent Tighe | Surrey NOW | No Response Received |
| Gary Tymoschuk | Surrey First Education | Responded |
| Venson Wang | Surrey NOW | No Response Received |
| Anne Whitmore | Our Surrey | Responded |
| Shawn Wilson | Surrey First Education | Responded |

White Rock (3)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Laura Lattanzio | Independent | Responded |
| Dee Reiter | Independent | Responded |
| Phillip Warner | Independent | Responded |

# Terry Allen

Surrey First Education · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

Funding, classroom space, safe schools. Funding is the most critical issue facing the board

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

I would continue to do what we are doing. I believe that this is the best strategy going forward.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

The need for funding clearly the answer to these issues. Government has to provide the necessary funding at present we spend over 40 million more than we receive.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

I support SOGI 123 and all Indigenous initiatives I also believe that the board does a good job in providing safe and inclusive schools.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

I think we have to return to area meetings where we can hear from all our partner groups

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

Governance is the number one job of the board.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

All three of my daughters attended the Surrey Schools.

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# Harjit Bhullar

Independent · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

My three priorities for the next 4 years: Safer, Vape-Free Schools • Better Education • More Space & Better Facilities. Our children deserve safe schools, quality education, and the resources they need to succeed.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

I would put students at the centre of every budget decision. I would prioritize classroom staffing and student supports, use data to identify where resources are most needed, and aggressively advocate for the school spaces Surrey's growing communities require. Funding is limited, so every dollar needs to be connected to a clear student need and measurable outcome.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

Listen to the families and students.Advocate staffing based on the students needs.Make the IEP a real accountability tool. inclusion cannot just mean putting a student in the classroom. Inclusion means making sure the student has the people, accommodations, resources and support necessary to participate and learn.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

I believe the school board's responsibility is to make sure every student can learn in a school that is safe, respectful and welcoming, including LGBTQ+ students, Indigenous students and students with disabilities. B.C.'s Human Rights Code protects students from discrimination based on factors including Indigenous identity, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Any kind of education provided on the sogi should be age appropriate. I also believe parents should have clear, understandable information about what their children are learning. For Indigenous students, the Board should work meaningfully with Indigenous communities and its Indigenous Education Council, and make sure Indigenous perspectives, histories and knowledge are represented appropriately in education

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

I will engage with parents and students through regular school visits, parent meetings, town halls, surveys and direct conversations. I will create opportunities for students and families to share their concerns directly with me, including those who may face language, accessibility or

other barriers. I will listen respectfully even when their views are different from mine, ask questions to understand their perspective, and bring the feedback forward when Board policies, budgets and decisions are being discussed. Most importantly, I will follow up and let families know what action was taken.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

As a trustee, my role is to set policy, priorities and budgets, listen to families and students, and hold the system accountable. The superintendent and staff handle the day-to-day operations. Trustees govern ,staff operate.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

Yes, I have children attending school, and I'm actively involved in their education and school community. I've participated as a parent volunteer and PAC member, which has given me the opportunity to hear directly from parents, students and educators about the challenges they face. That experience motivates me to bring those voices to the Board and work for better outcomes for all students.

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# Amrit Birring

Independent · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

1. Raise academic standards

2. Stop SOGI 123 and other indoctrinations

3. Zero tolerance for vaping and drugs

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

Students need books to study as I did and ended up doing an Electrical Engineering degree and a Computer Science degree.

Students need motivation and will power more than anything else.

Students learn by themselves with some support.

We can't do work for students, they need to do work in order to develop their capabilities.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

Children belong to parents not to government. With this principle, government should not be raising children, parents should. Government's job is to lower taxes so parents are freed up to take care of their own children and their needs.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

Students don't discriminate untill they are given ideas. Other than normal bullying handling, we don't need SOGI 123 and land acknowledgements.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

Parents and student voices should be heard and accommodated as much as practical. I know that Parents and Students voices are not being heard on SOGI 123.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

School trustee is a bridge between parents and school staff. Education should reflect the parents will and what's best for the students to be able to compete internationally.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

Yes, I had children who have graduated since. I attended a few PAC meetings as well as one DPAC meeting.

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# Gurleen K. Chahal

Independent · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

Increase the number of school counselors and education assistants to give students the direct support they need.

Fix our school infrastructure by reducing portables, acquiring new land, and building accessible playgrounds.

Expand academic programs and anti-bullying initiatives so children can think critically and learn in a safe environment.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

The funding pressure on our school board means we must prioritize our most urgent problems and spend money where it benefits students the most. Right now, funding shortages have caused severe staffing gaps, overcrowded schools, and an ongoing portable crisis. As a trustee, I will ensure we budget strategically and focus our five year capital plan on building permanent schools so we can completely remove portables and give children a proper learning environment.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

I have been very clear on the need for education assistants. Right now, having only one assistant for every five to six neurodivergent children raises serious safety concerns and limits their ability to learn. Increasing the number of assistants and lowering these ratios will ensure greater safety and accountability for the children who need that extra support. We must provide meaningful inclusion and accessible resources so that every student gets the proper care they deserve.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

Every school should be a safe space for the children that parents entrust to our care. This means supporting children with disabilities who require education assistants, and enhancing anti bullying programs that teach the importance of respect and care for one another. It is also good to acknowledge the land our schools are built on as a meaningful way of showing respect. My take on SOGI 123 is that without parental consent, we should not introduce complex or sensitive topics at an early age when children are not yet ready to determine what is right or wrong for

themselves. Instead, we need to focus on anti-bullying education and ensure that families are fully supported and consulted on sensitive matters.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

As a youth candidate myself, I believe it is very important to learn from the experiences that more experienced politicians have to offer. At the end of the day, a school board must work together and listen to everyone to fix problems the best that we can. Sometimes you have to think for the collective good rather than yourself, which means setting aside personal perspectives and considering everyone's values so we can make fair and balanced decisions together.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

An individual school trustee has no independent power, and all decisions must be made collectively as a whole board. The board’s job is governance, which means working together to pass policies that set the standards for how things should be done. As a collective board, you do not manage day to day operations or activities in the schools. Instead, you create the broad rules and structures to deliver the curriculum set by the BC Ministry of Education. This ensures that every child can meet provincial requirements and achieve their highest learning potential.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

I am a recent graduate from a Surrey school myself and have a siblings and cousins attending.

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# Noor Cheema

Independent · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

I believe the three highest priorities for Surrey Schools over the next four years should be student safety, school capacity, and responsible budgeting.

1. Student Safety: Every student deserves a safe learning environment. We must address bullying, vaping, drugs, and violence through prevention programs, stronger community partnerships, and better support for students.

2. School Capacity: Surrey is growing, and our schools must keep up. I would advocate for new schools, expanded facilities, and permanent learning spaces to reduce overcrowding and reliance on portables.

3. Responsible Budgeting: Every dollar should benefit students. We need transparent spending, responsible financial decisions, and greater accountability while prioritizing classroom resources, special needs support, and teachers.

Having worked within the Surrey School District for four years, I understand firsthand the challenges students and staff face. I will advocate for practical solutions that put students first and give every child the opportunity to succeed.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

From a educator perspective, students need adequate resources, manageable class sizes, and sufficient support staff to succeed. As a trustee, I would advocate for increased provincial funding while ensuring existing resources are used effectively.

I believe the district's budget must be balanced, with greater scrutiny of spending to identify potential mismanagement, overspending, and inefficiencies. Every dollar should be accounted for and directed toward student success rather than unnecessary expenses.

I would prioritize hiring teachers and education assistants, strengthening support for students with special needs, and addressing overcrowded classrooms. I would also advocate for new schools and permanent classroom spaces to keep pace with Surrey's growth.

Most importantly, I would listen to teachers and school staff, who understand classroom challenges firsthand. Through transparent budgeting, responsible financial decisions, and

stronger accountability, we can make better use of available funding and ensure students receive the resources and support they deserve.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

As an Education Assistant (EA) myself, I understand the importance of providing students with disabilities and diverse learning needs the support they deserve. Inclusive education requires adequate staffing, proper resources, and consistent implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

As a trustee, I would advocate for more EAs, better classroom resources, and stronger collaboration between teachers, support staff, and families. I would also push for greater accountability to ensure accommodations are consistently followed and students receive the support outlined in their IEPs.

Parents deserve to be heard, and their concerns must be taken seriously. I would work to strengthen communication between families and the district while advocating for practical solutions to staffing shortages.

Inclusion is more than having a student in the classroom. It means ensuring every child has the support, dignity, and opportunity to learn and thrive.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

The Board of Education must ensure every student feels safe, respected, and supported, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities. As an EA, I believe every child deserves equal opportunities to learn in an environment free from bullying, discrimination, and harassment.

I support age-appropriate education, respectful treatment of LGBTQ+ students, and meaningful parental involvement in their children's education. Regarding SOGI 123, I believe parents should have a meaningful voice in how sensitive topics are communicated and discussed, while ensuring every student is treated with dignity and respect.

Indigenous education is also essential. I support teaching students about Indigenous history, cultures, residential schools, and the lasting impacts of colonization. Land acknowledgements can be meaningful when accompanied by genuine learning, understanding, and action.

As a trustee, I would promote open communication, cultural understanding, and accountability to ensure our schools are welcoming places where every student feels valued and has the opportunity to succeed.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

I believe parents, caregivers, and students must have a meaningful voice in decisions that affect their education. As a trustee, I would create opportunities for open dialogue through community meetings, school visits, surveys, and direct communication with families.

I would make an effort to listen to families from diverse cultural backgrounds and those whose perspectives differ from my own. Listening should not mean agreeing on everything, but ensuring everyone feels heard and respected.

I would also advocate for students to have opportunities to share their experiences and concerns in a safe, welcoming environment. Feedback from parents, teachers, and Education Assistants should be brought forward during Board discussions and considered when developing policies and setting priorities.

My goal would be to make the Board more accessible, transparent, and accountable to the community it serves. Decisions should be informed by the real experiences of students and families, not made without their input.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

An individual school trustee's role is to represent the interests of students, parents, and the wider community while making decisions that support student success. The Board as a whole is responsible for setting policies, establishing priorities, approving budgets, and holding district leadership accountable for results.

I believe trustees must understand the distinction between governance and day-to-day operations. Trustees should focus on long-term planning, responsible spending, student safety, and ensuring schools have the resources they need. The superintendent and district administration are responsible for managing daily operations and implementing the Board's policies.

As a trustee, I would listen to parents, teachers, and Education Assistants, bring their concerns to the Board, and ask meaningful questions about how decisions affect students. I would also advocate for transparency, accountability, and responsible financial management.

Effective governance means setting clear priorities, respecting professional roles, and ensuring every decision puts students first.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

I was born and raised in Surrey and now I work in the Surrey school district, I been through the system and I work in the system, I know what challenges our staff and parents face. There is a huge communication gap between the district and schools.

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# Gary B. Hee

Independent · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

Optimization of assets included fixed and real property during non-teaching days in the summer months which normally are closed down for 2.5 months. Capitalization of assets and real property during these same time to capitalized on revenue generating opportunities on unused parking lots and field for future prosperity, Implementation of an Education Endowment Saving Fund to finance expansion cost.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

Analyze and re-align existing portable classroom structures to maximum efficiency of these assets to include a common patio design hub with extended length for students to gather into a central area, included a covered roof construction, wider safe stairs, and ramp, plus clean washroom facilities.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

Relocate automobile parking space to outer school perimeter without landscaping for added new structures with special training facilities used by special needs and support assistance coming from existing student body during non-class times for example speech practicums or credit development times.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

These subjects are sensitive issues to both pro and against group. I do not have a perfect answer. But I know that a slow quiet approach with a minor suggestion is better received by a listener rather than a loud aggressive insulting technique which creates dislike or disagreements. As for land acknowledgement , I think the provincial park ministry should convince the municipal parks department to permit more land use by native organization and leave animal parks to them since animal parks are become abundant and increasing in size.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

I would expect open forums already available and schedules by the School Board in each

district. If there are no open forums. It would prudent to active an action group.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

The School Board Trustees are lacking the necessary power to get the necessary workable budget because the stakeholders are get larger funding from the provincial government than School Board receives.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

Yes. My Grandchildren are sharing education options.

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# Bob Holmes

Surrey First Education · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

- Continue to advocate for increased funding from the provincial government.
- Continue to improve graduation rates and student outcomes.
- Continue providing a safe environment for ALL students.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to this, with our funding depending on the provincial government, education not being a top priority for government, the media, or the public, and with government under substantial financial pressure. This makes advocacy very important, so I will continue advocating to MLAs and Ministers and making the case for more funding known to the media and public, to empower them to advocate as well. This is a dual role for me, both at the board level in our district, and provincially with the BCSTA board. With all that said, it's incumbent upon us to make the most of the funding we receive, so I will ensure we remain a provincial leader in terms of a very high % of money spent in the classroom, and a very low % of money spent on administration.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

Currently, our district spends approximately 40% more on diverse learners than we receive funding for, while the number of designated students grows much faster than the overall student population, which puts enormous pressure on our budget. While that's resulted in some difficult decisions, we're still been able to increase staffing recently.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

I'm very supportive of both SOGI 123 and Indigenous education initiatives. While inclusiveness of all is very important to me, as the proud father of two queer children (now adults), inclusiveness of LGBTQ+ students is especially close to my heart. I'm also very proud of the progress towards our goal of increasing indigenous graduation rates, and the work we've been able to do in our provincial organization. I still have much more learning to do, but am more than willing to continue with it.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

I would continue with the many ways we interact with parents/caregivers and students currently - forums, online engagement, meetings with education partners and rightsholders, surveys, and more. I've been quite happy to see that we are getting responses from diverse members of the community, and hope to continue growing those numbers.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

A school trustee's job is to improve student outcomes. They do this through setting stratgeic goals, creating and upholding policies focused on governance rather than operations, and passing a balanced budget. They should make decisions with students at the centre, informed by engagement with educational partners, rightsholders, students, families, and the community at large. Day-to-day operations should be left to the educational experts.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

While I've moved 2.5 miles across the border into Langley this term, my connections to Surrey remain strong, having lived there for almost 30 years. Our children both graduated from Earl Marriott Secondary in the last 10 years, and previous to that, attended South Meridian Elementary. I attended Surrey public schools for 13 years (K-12), and graduated from Semiahmoo Senior Secondary, back when it was located in White Rock. When our oldest daughter started in kindergarten, I joined the PAC as Treasurer, which started 10 years of involvement in PACs and DPAC, including the last few years as Co-President and then President of DPAC. I've been a school trustee for the last 12 years, and 5 years ago was elected to the board of the BC School Trustees Association, of which I am now Vice-President.

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# Kyle Jones

Our Surrey · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

Three of the highest priorities should be reviewing support staffing levels in our district's classrooms, ensuring we have enough space for students to learn and grow comfortably, and improving communication and engagement between the Board, stakeholder groups, and the public.

These areas are important because they have fallen behind. We have seen support staff ratios rise to among the highest in the province, and I have seen schools where spaces such as music rooms have had to be converted into classrooms. I have also participated in multiple Board meetings and heard concerns from CUPE, the Surrey Teachers' Association, and Anne Whitmore, who is currently on leave from DPAC, about limited communication from the Board.

These issues may not all be resolved within the next four years, but meaningful change has to start somewhere.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

We need to not only review how funds are being used on a more in-depth level, but we need the board to potentially challenge the budget to ensure that funds are being diverted to where they are genuinely needed. When looking at any line-item in a budget the question should always be asked "How does this benefit the students of the school district?"

I also believe we need to see better advocacy from the board to the province instead of through staff members and in collaboration with other districts across the province. We need to see change in how our province funds our districts.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

As an Education Assistant this is very near and dear to my heart as I firmly believe all students should get the support they need so that they can participate at school in whatever capacity that looks like for them. I would support any action that would see more inclusion students getting the support they need. I hear over and over again about how students are losing the support that they need to function in a school setting due to reductions in staffing or inadequate staffing for incoming students.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

It is the Board's responsibility to set the policies, priorities and resources that create safe and

inclusive schools, and then hold the administration accountable for putting those policies into practice. Every student has the right to feel safe, respected and able to get the education they deserve no matter their situation.

This means the district needs to have strong anti-discrimination policies and ensure they are listening to students and parents, Indigenous communities and stakeholder groups to ensure that the supports are appropriate and relevant.

I firmly believe that SOGI 123 is a resource that is important for developing cultural understanding of different types of family units and each person's individual identity. This also lends true when it comes to Indigenous education as it is important to ensure we not only acknowledge those that cared for the land time immemorial, but also to understand the importance of their culture. It is only through these learning opportunities that we will be able to grow together as a community.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

I intend to advocate for increased meeting opportunities with groups like DPAC and student voices and to return the public questioning period back into a proper dialogue opportunity for the public and stake-holder groups of the district. It is important to engage with those who have different experiences and perspectives as they can lend understanding that may not have been there before on an issue or topic. It is only through collaboration that we will see our district grow and thrive as a community.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

The role of the trustee is to be a voting member of the school board who as a group is to handle governance issues and broader decisions for the district as a whole. This includes establishing and reviewing policies. Advocacy on behalf of the needs of the district and its students when dealing with the provincial government especially when it comes to funding, legislation and resources. Trustees are to ensure that budgets and funds are handled and distributed to reflect the needs and priorities of the district. Furthermore, it’s the trustee’s responsibility to plan multi-year directives for the district in collaboration with stakeholder groups. The board is also mandated to have two employees that they directly hold accountable. The Superintendent and the Secretary – Treasurer. These two roles are intended to handle all day-to-day operation of the school district itself. Trustees are meant to ensure lines of communication with stakeholder groups such as the Surrey Teachers Association (STA), CUPE, District Parents Advisory Committee (DPAC) and the public are open for dialogue to ensure informed decision making, transparency and accountability.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

I do not have any children, but I hope to and want to have the confidence to be able to put them into the Surrey School District.

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# Vick Karan

Our Surrey · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

Enough Space - I believe students should be in all proper classrooms and have the Health and safety act to be followed as portables are temporary solutions.

Enough Support - I believe all staff and students and families should have support at all levels

Enough Trust - I believe trust has been broken and we need to bring that back for staff, students, families and the communities.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

I would take a proactive, transparent, and student approach to growth, funding, and resources. Surrey is one of the fastest-growing communities in British Columbia, and our schools must keep pace with the needs of our students. Students should not have to wait for the resources, classroom space, or support they need to succeed. I would Advocate for fair and adequate funding. Prioritize school capacity and enrolment growth and Recruit and retain staff.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

I believe inclusive education must be more than a policy on paper; it must be a reality in every Surrey classroom. Every student, regardless of ability or learning needs, deserves to feel safe, valued, included and supported to reach their full potential. Families should not have to fight repeatedly to secure the supports their children need.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

I believe the Board has a responsibility to ensure that every student feels safe, respected, welcomed, and able to learn without fear of discrimination, bullying, or exclusion. Surrey is a diverse community and our schools should reflect the principle that every child belongs regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, Indigenous identity, disability, cultural background, or religious beliefs. The land we are all on as history and we should all be taught about it and the real truth, it is a great way for students, staff and communities to learn.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

I believe meaningful engagement means more than holding occasional meetings or asking families to complete surveys. It means listening with an open mind, making it easier for people to be heard and demonstrating how their input influences decisions.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

My understanding is that a school trustee's role is to provide strong governance, set strategic direction, establish policy, approve budgets, and hold district leadership accountable for student outcomes. The Board of Education is responsible for making decisions in the best interests of all students, staff and families across Surrey, while respecting the professional responsibilities of district staff for Day-to-day operations.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

My wife and I do not have kids yet, working on a family. I am a life long resident who attended Bridgeview Elementary , Cedar Hills Elementary and L.A. Matheson Secondary. I understand Surrey schools and the community.

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# Meena Kochher

Independent · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

Hiring more education assistants, New schools, and more funding in resources for kids with special needs

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

I would advocate for more funding, some of the extra spending by management needs to be cut and that funding needs to be rerouted towards teachers and students. My goal is only to work hard for next line of generation so they get better support than what we have seen in last few years.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

I would advocate for more funding and more education assistants to be hired. On purpose, school board has decreased hours, I would work with PAC, and other advisory council to see what resources I can advocate for on their behalf.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

I believe the role of a School Trustee is to provide leadership, accountability, and long-term direction for public education while representing the interests of students, parents, and the community.

The Board of Education collectively establishes policies, approves budgets, sets strategic priorities, monitors student achievement, and ensures public resources are managed responsibly. Individual trustees contribute by listening to community concerns, asking informed questions, and participating in collective Board decisions.

Day-to-day school operations, including staffing, classroom management, scheduling, and program delivery, are the responsibility of the Superintendent, principals, and educators, not individual trustees.

As a trustee, I would focus on transparency, responsible financial oversight, student success, and addressing Surrey's growing educational needs. I believe effective governance means listening to families, respecting professional expertise, and ensuring Board decisions create safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments where every student has an equal opportunity to succeed.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

I believe meaningful engagement begins with listening, being accessible and treating every parent, caregiver and student with respect, even when their experiences or opinions differ from my own.

As a School Trustee, I would support regular opportunities for families and students to share their concerns, ideas and experiences through community meetings, school Parent Advisory Councils (PACs), student representatives, surveys and direct communication.

I also believe students should have a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their education, school safety, mental health and learning environment. Their experiences provide valuable insight into what is working and where improvements are needed.

Most importantly, engagement must lead to action. I would encourage the Board to consider community feedback when developing policies, setting priorities and allocating resources, and to communicate how that input influenced decisions.

My commitment is to listen without judgment, remain open to different perspectives and ensure that parents and students are not simply heard, but meaningfully included in the decision-making process.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

I believe a School Trustee's role is to represent students, parents, and the community while ensuring accountability, transparency, and responsible leadership in public education.

The Board of Education collectively establishes policies, approves budgets, sets strategic priorities, monitors student achievement, and ensures resources are used effectively. Individual trustees contribute by listening to community concerns, asking questions, and participating in collective decisions, rather than acting independently.

Day-to-day operations, including staffing, classroom management, scheduling, and program delivery, are the responsibility of the Superintendent, principals, and educators. Trustees must respect these professional responsibilities while providing effective oversight.

As a trustee, my focus would be on student success, safe and inclusive schools, responsible financial management, and addressing Surrey's growing educational needs. I believe strong governance requires collaboration, community engagement, and ensuring every decision supports students' learning, well-being, and future opportunities while maintaining public trust in our education system.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

My kids have studies in surrey public school and now my grandkids. I fear for same concerns that other parents have for their kids. My goal is to help improving internal factors as much as I can so the resources reach the right places.

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# Laurie Larsen

Surrey First Education · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

Clear expectations and consistent enforcement. Students and staff need to know that violence , threats intimidation, and serious disruptions are not acceptable. Policies must be applied consistently and fairly fairly across the district .

Increase indigenous grads rates. This has been a personal mandate of mine and so much more needs to be done to ensure our indigenous youth receive the care they need .Continue to lobby for Surrey”s fair share of funding. Surrey has been consistently underfunded for so many years and it needs to be corrected

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

As stated earlier the only way we will receive adequate funding is put more pressure on the government and the Ministry.We need to work together to send this message out.With elections happening and maybe a new party in control may give us a opportunity to start lobbying and present new ideas to new MLA”s.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

We again need to pressure the Ministry to fund the students who are not adequately funded and to try and help these students have access to be designated much earlier on.Support for early intervention and have appropriate counselling , Some ares such as Behavioural supports; supports,Mental health and wellness resources, conflict resolution, Indigenous and culturally responsive approaches, and other interventions, so that issues can be addressed before they escalate .

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

Ensuring accountability through regular reporting on school safety, including trends, emerging concerns, supports available through schools and review if existing policies are achieving their desire outcomes.Listen to those closest to the issue.Teachers, support staff,students and parents have valuable perspective on what is happening in out schools.Every student and employee in Surrey Schools has the right to learn and work in an environment that is safe, welcoming and free from harassment and discrimination.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

We need to protect the rights of every student to belong.We must treat all students and families with dignity and respect , including when there are differences of opinion or feelings on delicate matters.I have sat on the Student Voice committee for many years and have heard directly from hundreds of students. Student voice allows students to talk openly and honestly about what is bothering them and how to improve their schools.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

Trustees usually are not directly involved in the day to day running off the District. There are a vast number of staff specifically trained in most areas. We are directly involved with the governance and policies of the District such as Specialty course selections. Boundary changes, budget and finance concerns, interviews of staff ,graduation rates, policy changes, some HR issues, and literacy and numeracy to name just a very few .

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

Myself, my children and my grandchildren have all attended Surrey schools.I was PAC chair of Enver Creek for 4 years and on the PTA ( when that existed) for over 10 years as my children went through the school system. I volunteered at the many schools my children and grandchildren went to , serving hot lunch, field trips, fundraising, sports day and driving students to events to name a few.

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# Dean McGee

Our Surrey · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

More Space; More Supports; and More Trust. The issue of space has been Surrey's issue for decades, even when districts like Vancouver lost students, Surrey kept growing, kept needing more spaces. Support is an issue around the province: students with Special Needs, as well English Language Learners, and others need to be supported in their classrooms, by IESWs (Education Assistants), classroom teachers, and specialized staff and teachers. More Trust because parents, students, and staff feel like they don't know what's going on in Surrey School District, and don't feel like they're being heard.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

I have been talking to provincial politicians for many years now. Always talking about Surrey Schools. Ultimately, the district only has money that it gets from the province because you can't build a new school building by holding bake sales. Funding for special needs support, funding for facilities, all come from the provincial government, so lobbying and talking to the province is key.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

During my time on the DPAC Inclusion Committee, we would hear about issues where IEPs were not updated, not followed, or adequate support simply wasn't there. Part of our communication has to be to make it clear to parents and students what to expect when IEPs are done, when they should be done, and remind everyone to go back and read the IEP.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

Every student needs to be welcome and every student needs the school to be a safe place.

Every student deserves respect and dignity at school.

And every parent deserves to be heard, as a partner in education.

People in the district need to be included, respected, protected, and heard, and no one can be discriminated against.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

The board and the district need to have more opportunities for stakeholders to meet and be heard. Step one will be to actually receive questions during board meetings, give feedback live when possible, and ensure prompt responses when a quick answer is not sufficient. Step two would be more communication from the district on the website, mailing list, and in the media. Step three would be more in person consultations, not to just talk to parents, students, and staff, but to listen to them.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

Trustees are supposed to set policies, and ensure that students are supported. They also make sure the buildings are in good condition. They are responsible for hiring a superintendent, who then sets much of the direction for the district, and they need to communicate with stakeholders.

While passing a balanced budget is a requirement, it is important to keep asking the province for enough funding to achieve the Board's goals.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

My mother was first hired by SD36 in 1964, and returned as a teacher and principal, teaching part time after her retirement as a principal, staying on until 2017.

I went to elementary school in Surrey, and high school in Delta; my wife graduated from high school in Surrey.

Our 3 kids went to school from K-12 in Surrey public schools, all graduating in recent years. During that time I joined the DPAC, where I was acting president, communication director, Inclusion Committee member, and Facilities Committee representative.

The Facilities Committee comprises parents from around the province, discussing school construction, school conditions and maintenance, and school grounds.

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# Gary Tymoschuk

Surrey First Education · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

1. Student achievement and well-being. Every student should have the opportunity to succeed academically and feel safe, supported and connected at school. We need to continue strengthening literacy, numeracy, mental-health supports and programs that help students successfully transition to graduation and beyond.

2. Classroom and school capacity. Surrey continues to grow. We must advocate strongly for the provincial funding needed to build permanent schools, add classrooms and complete seismic upgrades, while reducing reliance on portables and ensuring students have appropriate learning spaces and specialized supports.

3. Financial sustainability and accountability. Surrey Schools must continue to be responsible stewards of public funds, directing as many resources as possible toward student learning and support. We need thoughtful decision-making, careful management of resources and strong advocacy to ensure provincial funding keeps pace with Surrey's growth and the needs of our students.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

Surrey's growth requires us to be proactive in advocating for the resources our students need. As a trustee, I would continue pressing the Province for timely capital funding for new schools, additional classrooms and seismic upgrades, while advocating for operating funding that keeps pace with enrolment growth and the complexity of student needs. I would also push for better long-term workforce planning so staffing keeps pace with growth and specialized supports are available where they are needed most.

At the same time, we must ensure the resources we already have are used effectively. That means maintaining strong financial oversight and directing resources toward student learning and supports.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

Surrey Schools is committed to providing inclusive learning environments and supporting students with diverse abilities and learning needs. As a trustee, I would support building on that work by ensuring schools have the staffing, resources and specialized expertise needed to meet students' individual needs.

I would continue advocating to the Province for sustainable funding that reflects Surrey's growth and the increasing complexity of student needs. I would also support ongoing professional learning for educators and staff, so they have the tools and expertise to provide effective

accommodations and supports.

Strong partnerships with families are also essential. Parents and caregivers bring valuable knowledge about their children, and their perspectives should inform IEPs and the supports required.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

I support SOGI 123 as a set of resources available to educators to help create inclusive, respectful school environments. It is important to be clear that SOGI 123 is not itself a mandated curriculum. B.C.'s curriculum already includes learning about diversity, respectful relationships, human rights and responses to discrimination.

I also support meaningful Indigenous education and reconciliation initiatives, developed in partnership with Indigenous communities. Land acknowledgements can be one appropriate way of recognizing the history and ongoing connection Indigenous peoples have to the land, but they should be accompanied by meaningful learning and action. Indigenous perspectives and knowledge are embedded throughout B.C.'s curriculum.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

Surrey Schools already has many established avenues for this engagement. The Board meets annually with DPAC and employee groups, conducts an annual budget survey that receives thousands of responses, and has a trustee representative attend monthly DPAC meetings. DPAC and employee groups also meet monthly with the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent. Trustees are directly accessible to families and community members, and I have also had direct dialogue with DPAC leadership.

Not every Board decision requires consultation with every stakeholder, but every decision should be informed by appropriate input and evidence. As a trustee, I will continue to listen respectfully to differing perspectives, seek input when it can meaningfully inform a decision, and remain accountable for the decisions the Board is elected to make.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

Individual trustees have an important role in contributing to Board decisions, asking questions, listening to constituents and holding the Board and Superintendent accountable. However, trustees should act as a Board rather than directing staff or making operational decisions individually.

The Superintendent and district staff are responsible for implementing Board policy and managing the day-to-day operations of schools and the district. Maintaining this distinction allows trustees to focus on governance, accountability and student achievement while allowing professional staff to manage operations effectively.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

Our three children attended Surrey Schools for all of their public education (K-12).

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# Anne Whitmore

Our Surrey · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

My three highest priorities are enough space, enough support and enough trust.

Enough space. Surrey needs schools that keep pace with growth, but this goes beyond portables. Schools are community hubs and overcrowding affects access to gyms, libraries, learning spaces and playgrounds. We need better coordination among the district, City and province to plan schools alongside communities.

Enough support. Students need classrooms with the staffing, resources and expertise to support the students actually in them. Inclusion requires the school to have capacity for students to learn, participate and belong.

Enough trust. Trust is earned through transparency, accountability and meaningful engagement. Students, families and staff should have opportunities to shape decisions, not simply hear about them afterward.

These priorities are interconnected. Surrey needs the space, people and resources to serve students well, and communities need confidence that their voices matter.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

Surrey cannot budget its way out of chronic underfunding. I would do something I have consistently asked the current Board to do: **make the gap visible and engage in public truth-telling.**

We cannot say we are committed to quality public education while minimizing the impact of overcrowding, staffing shortages, waitlists and insufficient supports. A balanced budget does not mean students have what they need.

I would push for transparent reporting of unmet needs and use that evidence to advocate publicly and consistently to the province for funding that reflects Surrey’s growth and student needs.

Within the funding the Board controls, I would ask whether spending decisions put resources as close to students and classrooms as possible.

Trustees must steward public funds responsibly, but they also have a responsibility to tell the public when available resources are insufficient and clearly show what that means for students and then push for fully funded education.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

Trustees should not manage individual IEPs or staffing assignments, but we are accountable for whether our system is delivering meaningful inclusion and student success.

I would expect clear reporting on students' access to education and outcomes, including exclusion from classrooms or school. For example, if an absent IST is not replaced for three days, trustees should understand the impact on the students who rely on that support. We must also examine whether current IE

SW allocation criteria recognize the range of student needs. Too many students fall into the gap between intensive support and independent participation.

Surrey must plan for the end of provincial Autism Funding in March 2027 and understand the impact of reclassifying autistic students as non-compositional. Both may change needs in our classrooms.

Inclusion is a verb. Integration alone is not inclusion. Trustees must ensure the capacity, resources and accountability for students with disabilities to learn, participate and belong.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

The Board has a responsibility to ensure every student's human rights are protected and that safety and belonging are foundational to student success.

I unequivocally support SOGI 123 and SOGI-inclusive schools. I have worked to help families understand that SOGI 123 is not sex education; it provides resources that help schools create environments where students and diverse families are represented, respected and safe.

That same commitment must extend to students with disabilities, Indigenous students, and students across cultures, faiths and identities. Inclusion cannot be selective.

Reconciliation also requires action. I developed a mini-lesson for PACs on using land acknowledgements meaningfully, because they should be more than words we recite at the beginning of meetings. They should invite us to understand whose lands we are on, our relationships and our responsibilities.

The Board's role is to set clear expectations, resource this work and hold the system accountable for whether students experience belonging in practice.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

Meaningful engagement starts with listening to understand, not listening to respond. My work with Surrey DPAC has brought me into conversations with families with experiences, perspectives and values different from my own. I do not need to agree with someone to believe

their voice matters.

Engagement must happen early enough to influence decisions. I would ask: Who have we heard from? Who is missing? What barriers made participation difficult? How did what we heard change the decision?

Students must be part of those conversations. The Board frequently engages students through SAIL, which provides valuable input, but student voice must reflect experiences across our district. We need accessible ways to hear from students who might never volunteer for a committee or speak at a Board meeting.

Finally, we must close the loop. People deserve to know what we heard, what we did with it and, when we chose differently, why.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

An individual trustee does not run the school district. The Board governs collectively, setting policy and strategic direction, approving budgets, overseeing the superintendent and holding the system accountable for student success.

Day-to-day operations belong to the superintendent and staff. Trustees should not direct principals, make individual staffing decisions or insert themselves into individual student matters.

But respecting that boundary does not mean trustees stop asking questions. If operational practices reveal patterns affecting student access, safety or success, the Board has a responsibility to understand those patterns and determine whether policy, resources or strategic direction need to change.

Individual trustees bring questions, perspectives and community concerns to the Board table, but authority rests with the Board as a whole.

For me, good governance means staying out of operational decisions while remaining deeply curious about their outcomes: setting clear expectations, asking difficult questions, measuring results and holding ourselves accountable for whether our decisions are working for students.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

Yes. I am the parent of children in Surrey public schools, including children with disabilities. Public education is not an abstract policy issue for me. It is where my kids learn, find community, experience challenges and discover who they are.

Like many parents, I started by getting involved where my children were. That grew into years of PAC and DPAC work and, eventually, serving as President of Surrey DPAC. I have spent countless hours listening to families, working with district leadership, collaborating with teachers and support staff, presenting to the Board, advocating provincially and trying to make systems work better for students.

I have also presented to educators, worked collaboratively with Surrey Teachers' Association and CUPE 728, and brought parent perspectives into conversations about inclusion, funding and student support.

My advocacy started with my own children, but they taught me to look beyond them. Public education belongs to all of us.

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# Shawn Wilson

Surrey First Education · Surrey candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

1. Capitol space for new schools and school additions

2. Early literacy and numeracy support

3. Equitable outcomes for priority populations (children with diverse needs, children in care & indigenous students).

These issues will lead to improved graduation rates.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

1. Find efficiencies in the district and direct those savings to the classroom

2. Lobby the Provincial Government for increased funding

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

1. More training for staff to meet student needs

2. Establish inclusive education support as a strategic priority to enhance accountability

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

Ensure all students are represented and included in all educational settings. I support SOGI123 and fully respect Land Acknowledgement

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

1. Activate broad public consultations on major Board decisions

2. Establish best practice for outreach to those populations that are hard to reach ( new immigrant families, families with technology challenges)

3. As a trustee, I have been and always will be available, open and ready to listen to parents issues

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

Trustees are responsible for goal setting, resourcing, accountability and policy development.

Staff are to carry out the strategic priorities of the Board and capacity building at our schools.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

I lived in Surrey for 45 years where all my three children attended and graduated from Surrey public schools. I have family in Surrey where my grandchildren currently attend elementary schools (Ray Shepherd)

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# Laura Lattanzio

Independent · White Rock candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

1. Academic Excellence

Strengthen outcomes in graduation rates, literacy, and numeracy while expanding opportunities in STEM, trades, music, the arts, athletics, innovation, and Indigenous education. Every student deserves strong foundations and access to diverse pathways that help them discover their strengths and prepare for the future.

2. Safe and Inclusive Schools

Ensure every student is safe, included, and supported to succeed. Student needs are increasingly complex and schools must have the resources, services, and learning environments necessary for every child to succeed and thrive.

3. Responsible Governance and Planning

Make sound forward-looking decisions that put students first. With expected enrolment growth and increasing student needs, the School Board must plan strategically, invest public funds responsibly, and advocate for the resources students and schools need to succeed.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

Students must be at the centre of every funding decision. Surrey and White Rock continue to face overcrowded schools and increasingly complex student needs, yet funding has not kept pace with demand.

As a trustee, I would make securing adequate provincial funding a top priority through sustained, coordinated advocacy with parents, employees, community partners, and government. Funding decisions must be informed by clear evidence of enrolment growth, capacity pressures, and student support needs.

At the Board table, I would support budgets that prioritize classrooms, student supports, and school capacity. Trustees have a responsibility to ensure public funds are used effectively, transparently, and in ways that directly benefit students today and into the future. That includes carefully scrutinizing administrative spending, evaluating the impact of budget decisions on students, and ensuring resources are directed where they are needed most. My focus would be on responsible financial stewardship, long-term planning, and protecting and restoring services that support student success whenever possible.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

Every student deserves the opportunity to learn, participate, and succeed at school. With more than 30 years of experience in disability management and inclusion, I understand that meaningful inclusion requires adequate staffing, appropriate supports, and accountability.

As a trustee, I would advocate for increased funding and resources to support students with disabilities and diverse learning needs, including specialist services, learning centres, and transportation for students who rely on it to access their education.

Trustees are responsible for setting priorities, allocating resources, and holding the system accountable. I would support transparent reporting on whether students are receiving the supports identified in their IEPs and whether resources are being directed where they are needed most. I would work to ensure students with disabilities and diverse learning needs remain a priority in budget and planning decisions, and that inclusion is matched with the resources required for students and staff to be successful.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

Every student deserves to be safe, included, respected, and supported at school.

I support SOGI 123 because every student should be treated with dignity and respect, and schools must be safe and inclusive for all learners. I also support Indigenous education initiatives, including land acknowledgements when they are meaningful and connected to learning about Indigenous history, cultures, and reconciliation.

As a trustee, I would focus on ensuring that inclusion is supported by appropriate resources, staffing, and accountability. I believe schools should foster respect, kindness, and understanding, while welcoming diverse perspectives and experiences. Every student, including LGBTQ+ students, Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, should know they belong and have the opportunity to thrive.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

Trustees must listen to the people they serve. Parents, caregivers, students, employees, and community members all bring valuable perspectives, and everyone deserves to be heard.

As a trustee, I would be accessible, approachable, and committed to ongoing engagement through school and community events, public meetings, and regular opportunities for feedback. I believe Board decisions are stronger when they are informed by the lived experiences of students and families.

I would support meaningful opportunities for people to engage directly with the Board and ensure that concerns, recommendations, and outcomes are reported transparently.

My commitment is to listen thoughtfully, communicate openly and transparently, and ensure the voices of stakeholders help shape Board priorities, policies, strategic planning, and decisions

affecting Surrey and White Rock schools.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

With more than 20 years of governance experience serving on boards, I understand the importance of respecting the distinct roles of trustees, senior leadership, and staff.

Trustees are responsible for setting the strategic priorities and long-term direction of the district, developing and approving policies, approving budgets, monitoring performance, risk, and results, advocating for students and the district's needs, governing collectively as a Board, and holding the administration accountable for delivering on results.

The Board's role is governance, oversight, and accountability. Day-to-day operations, including managing schools, supervising staff, implementing Board policies, and delivering educational programs, are the responsibility of the Superintendent and administration.

Effective trustees provide oversight and ensure the Superintendent and administration are effectively managing operational matters. They ask informed questions, review evidence, monitor outcomes, and make decisions in the best interests of students and the School District.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

Yes. I have had four children graduate from Semiahmoo Secondary School and was actively involved in the school community throughout their education. As a parent and volunteer, I gained first-hand experience with Surrey School District's public education system and the important role schools play in supporting student success, well-being, and development.

Beyond my involvement as a parent, I bring more than 20 years of governance experience serving on boards that provide supports to children and families in the community.  I also have more than two decades of senior leadership experience in disability management, inclusion, health and safety, and well-being. These experiences have provided me with expertise in a broad range of areas including: governance, strategic planning, policy development, accountability, budgeting, risk management, and stakeholder engagement.

Together, my experience as a parent, volunteer, governance professional, and senior leader has given me a strong understanding of both the opportunities and challenges facing Surrey and White Rock schools and a commitment to supporting student success.

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# Dee Reiter

Independent · White Rock candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

1. Student Success and opportunities to Thrive

- Every student deserves the best opportunities to succeed. This requires classrooms with adequate support staff that along with the teacher create inclusive learning environments for all, access to Learner Support teachers for Literacy and Numeracy,

Counselling to support mental health, Access to Fine arts programs, including grade seven band, as well as STEM, and successful transition to high school and beyond.

2. Classroom space, addition of new schools and seismic upgrades to older schools.

- Even though enrolment has declined the last couple of years, research shows that the overall trajectory is for increased growth. It is imperative that the school board plans for new schools, lobbies Provincial Government for increased funding to prepare for this growth. We must plan for the future needs ensuring that students have the best possible learning environments.

3. Responsible stewardship of Public funds.

- School budgets must be transparent and the Board must be accountable for all decision making, always keeping students at the centre of their decision making.

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

As someone who has worked in Surrey Schools as both a teacher and a Principal for 40 years, I know firsthand how supports for students has decreased over the years. Teachers and schools face the issues of having to do more with less. It is upsetting and frustrating for families when cuts to services for students are announced at the same time as high pay increases for our Superintendent. While it is important that our Superintendent be paid according to size of district and amount of responsibility, this should never happen if services to students are being cut.

It is imperative that the Board work collaboratively to proactively lobby the government for increased funding instead of trying to catch up after the fact. Trustees must lobby government for capital funding for the building of new schools.Trustees must advocate for operating funding that ensures that all classrooms are properly resourced, that the resources are keeping pace with increased enrollment and that school buildings are properly maintained.

Trustees must always be planning for the future needs while protecting current services for our students.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

To strengthen inclusive education there must be adequate supports. All students and staff deserve a welcoming, safe, inclusive supportive learning environment. It is in the best interest of all students that supports are there when necessary while independence is being fostered only when students are able and ready. I would support and strongly advocate for more Inclusive Educational Support Workers but also increased specific professional development ensuring that support staff have the skills necessary to meet the needs of the learners they are supporting. IEPs often include adaptive instruction and technology that must be provided for the students. I would advocate for teachers to be given adequate time to properly review the IEP with parents and other specialists to plan for meeting the individual needs of the student. Parents, Specialists, and the classroom teacher, must work together to provide the best possible learning environment for students. Teachers and parents need to be given the time to required to do this.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

I absolutely support SOGI 123. This is a resource that has been in Surrey schools for at least 12 years. It is part of anti bullying initiatives in order to create safe, welcoming, environments for all students and staff. Students must be free of harassment, and bullying, it is a basic human right. All students deserve respect and a learning environment where they feel they belong.SOGI 123 resources are age level appropriate for all students.

The trustees need to regularly review policy that ensures individual rights and freedoms are being protected. Trustees must ensure that classrooms have resources where all students see themselves equally represented and respected.

As part of Truth and Reconciliation and the 94 calls of action Land Acknowledgements and Indigenous Education are important. In the last four years we have seen an increase in Indigenous graduation rates and this is due to the integration of Indigenous education. As a Trustee I support the continued professional development of all staff in the school system to deepen the understanding of truth, reconciliation and the teaching of Indigenous education.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

In order to meaningfully engage with parents and caregivers Trustees must be accessible. It is important that Trustees regularly visit schools, take part in school and district wide events. Trustees must continue to be present at DPAC meetings and must be accessible to families and members of the community. As a trustee I will listen to parents, community members about their challenges and concerns and celebrate the successes.

As a trustee I look forward to hearing from students and creating time and space for students to be heard. As a Surrey Schools Principal for the last 17 years I created time for students to come together and have voice and choice in appropriate school decisions. When students are invested in these decisions they have greater success. As a school Principal I always took the

time to meet with parents, my office door was always open to all. I will create this same environment as a Trustee.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

The day to day running of schools and the implementation of Board policy is up to the Superintendent and District staff.

The individual Trustee asks question and contributes to Board discussions and decisions.

The Board of Trustees  work collaboratively as a group, and hold the Board and Superintendent accountable. Trustees must focus on governance, accountability and transparency. They keep student achievement at the forefront of all decision making.

My experience as a Principal running schools leads into this position naturally.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

I am a surrey student myself. I graduated from North Surrey Senior Secondary. My children attended Surrey schools graduating from Elgin Park. I worked in Surrey Schools for forty years as a teacher and a school Principal. I have loved my career in Surrey Schools and I want to bring this experience to the role of school Trustee. I am the only candidate with this level of experience and I believe it is time to have a voice at the Board table that fully understands what it is like to teach in a Surrey classroom and lead a Surrey school.

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# Phillip Warner

Independent · White Rock candidate

## 1. Priorities for Surrey

Strengthen literacy and core learning outcomes for every student

Expand mental health supports for students and families

Improve food security and physical activity programs in schools

## 2. Growth, Funding & Resources

Surrey's growth has outpaced the system's ability to keep up, and families feel it through portables, crowded classrooms, and stretched support staff. With an accounting background in government and corporate finance, I would start with transparency: publish budgets and spending in plain language so parents can see where every dollar goes and whether it reaches the classroom.

Next, I'd push for a close review of administrative and consulting costs, redirecting savings to frontline supports like literacy, mental health, and food and activity programs. I'd also press the Province for funding that matches Surrey's real enrolment growth, not last year's numbers.

Finally, I would measure results. Dollars matter less than whether students are reading, writing, and doing math at grade level. Resources should follow what works, and parents should be part of the conversation before decisions are made, not after.

## 3. Inclusive Education & Student Support

Inclusion only works when students get the supports to succeed, not just a seat in the classroom. As a parent who has seen several schools and specialized programs, I've watched families struggle to get consistent support, and I've seen classrooms stretched when staffing doesn't match need.

I would support:

IEP accountability: Track whether each plan's supports are delivered, and report results to parents and the board in plain language.

Staffing that matches need: Adequate education assistants and specialist support in classrooms, with transparent reporting on vacancies and caseloads.

Early identification: Screen early for reading and learning difficulties so students get help in the

early grades, not after they fall behind.

Skill-building alongside accommodations: Accommodations should open doors, with a clear plan to build the underlying skills, so every student can reach a higher ceiling.

Training and parent voice: Practical teacher training and a clear, fast path for parents to raise concerns.

## 4. Safe, Inclusive & Welcoming Schools

Every student deserves to feel safe at school, and learning only happens when they do. The Board's role is to set clear expectations, make sure they're followed, and report results to families. That means consistent anti-bullying policies, responsive staff, and a simple process for students and parents to raise concerns and get a timely answer.

That applies to all students: LGBTQ+ students, Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. I'd track outcomes such as attendance, graduation rates, and student surveys, so we know students are thriving, not just that a policy exists.

I support SOGI 123. It helps students feel safe and respected, and it reduces bullying.

I believe land acknowledgements are valid and meaningful, but they work best at significant events, not as a routine opening to every meeting. Reconciliation should show up in real results for Indigenous students, including strong land-based programs and better achievement and graduation outcomes.

## 5. Parent & Student Voice

Engagement only counts if it happens before decisions are made. I've seen government consult residents after the direction was already set, and I won't run a board that way. If elected, I'd bring major proposals to parents and students early, with plain-language summaries and enough time to respond.

I'd go to where families are, not just ask them to come to the board office. That means evening and weekend sessions, online options, and outreach through school communities. Parents and caregivers have different schedules, languages, and comfort levels with formal meetings, so access matters.

I would also seek out views that differ from mine. My perspective comes from my own children's experience in several schools and programs, and it isn't the only one. I'd listen to families of students with different needs, backgrounds, and beliefs, and include students themselves, especially older ones.

Finally, I'd close the loop. Parents should be able to see what was heard, what changed, and why, including when the answer is no.

## 6. Governance & the Trustee Role

A school board governs. It doesn't run schools. The Board sets direction and policy, approves the budget, and holds the superintendent and senior staff accountable for results. The superintendent and staff then carry that direction out, and principals run their schools day to day.

An individual trustee has no authority alone. Trustees have power only as a Board, through decisions made in public. A trustee shouldn't direct staff, step into hiring or classroom decisions, or push individual cases. When a parent brings a concern, my job is to help them find the right path, which usually starts with the teacher, then the principal, then district staff. I'd also watch for patterns in those concerns.

I see the role as asking good questions, reading the numbers, and making sure results reach parents. Good governance is about oversight and transparency, not management. I'd support staff when they're doing their jobs well, and hold them accountable when outcomes fall short.

## 7. Connection to Surrey Public Schools

Yes. I have two children in Surrey public schools, and they've attended three schools so far, including a land-based program with Indigenous connections. I've volunteered with school PACs and at school events, and I have several family members who work in education, so I've seen the system from both the parent side and the teaching side.

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