

Delta School Trustee Candidate Responses

Name: Erica Beard

1. Why do you want to be a school trustee? What do you understand the role of a trustee to be?

I am seeking re-election because I care deeply about Delta, public education, and the students, families and staff who make our schools strong. I am a graduate of the Delta School District, a parent of two children attending Delta schools, and I have had the privilege of serving as a trustee for the past eight years. I still find this work meaningful, and I believe my experience and understanding of the district allow me to continue contributing without delay at a time when stability, thoughtful governance and strong advocacy matter. A trustee's role is one of governance, not day-to-day administration. Individually, trustees listen, learn, ask thoughtful questions and bring the perspectives of the community to the Board table. Collectively, the Board establishes strategic direction and policy, approves and oversees the budget, monitors district performance, employs and supports the Superintendent, and advocates for the resources students and staff need. Trustees must consider the needs of the entire district, work respectfully with one another and district leadership, and make decisions openly and responsibly within the authority provided by the School Act. After two terms, I understand that good governance is not about trying to personally manage every issue. It is about asking the right questions of the right people, understanding the long-term impact of decisions, holding the system accountable for results, and always keeping students at the centre of our work.

2. Delta staff are committed to including all children and families. How will you support Delta staff in creating inclusive school communities?

I will continue supporting the important work already underway through Delta's Justice, Equity and Action Plan and the many staff members who bring that work to life in our schools. Inclusion cannot simply be a statement of values. It must be reflected in district policies, resource allocation, professional learning, accessible facilities, classroom supports and the everyday experiences of students, families and employees. As a trustee, I would continue asking how Board decisions affect students who have historically experienced barriers or exclusion, including students with disabilities and diverse learning needs, Indigenous students, racialized students, 2SLGBTQ+ students, newcomers and families facing financial or social challenges. I would support meaningful engagement with these students, families and the employees who work most closely with them. Their experiences should help identify where policies or practices need to be updated. As both a trustee and a parent, I want every child to feel safe, welcomed and valued for who they are. I will support staff by ensuring inclusion

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remains a clear Board priority, advocating for the resources required to make it possible, and creating space for staff to learn, adapt and share concerns honestly.

3. Delta staff are learning about decolonization and reconciliation. How will you support Delta staff in our supportive role?

Reconciliation requires sustained action, humility and a willingness to keep learning. It cannot rest solely on Indigenous staff or be treated as a single lesson, event or annual acknowledgement. As trustees, we must model that learning ourselves and ensure staff have the time, resources, relationships and professional development necessary to carry it forward meaningfully. I would continue supporting strong, respectful relationships with the Tsawwassen First Nation, Musqueam, Metis, Inuit, Urban Indigenous and other Indigenous partners whose students and families we serve. Indigenous voices must help guide decisions that affect Indigenous students, and local histories, cultures and knowledge should be reflected respectfully throughout the district. This includes supporting Indigenous student success, reviewing policies and practices through a decolonizing lens, and being honest about disparities in student experiences and outcomes. My own learning has been strengthened through the incredible work of the district, as well as through my service on the Amelia Douglas Institute Board, where I have been involved in efforts to preserve and celebrate Métis arts, language and culture. I approach this work with an open heart and an understanding that I will always have more to learn. My commitment is to listen respectfully, support Indigenous leadership and ensure reconciliation remains embedded in the Board's decisions.

4. Due to underfunding in the system, violence has become more prevalent. How will you commit to providing a safe and healthy working and learning environment for students and staff?

Violence in schools is a serious concern, and no student or employee should show up to school with fear of being harmed. Although the causes of concerning behaviour are complex, insufficient staffing, limited specialist supports and unmet student needs can increase risk and place increased pressure on classrooms. My commitment is to treat safety as a core responsibility, not a competing priority. I would continue prioritizing resources for inclusive education, Education Assistants, specialist staff, early intervention, training and individualized supports. My background as a registered nurse has reinforced for me that behaviour must be addressed through a holistic, informed approach that considers a child's learning, communication, health, developmental and social-emotional needs. At the same time, compassion for a student's needs cannot

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mean minimizing the impact of violence on employees or other students. The Board must monitor reliable information about violent incidents, injuries, staffing pressures and the effectiveness of prevention measures; listen to employees who experience these conditions firsthand; and ensure incidents are reported, assessed and followed up consistently. I would support collaboration with unions, health and safety representatives, families and district staff to identify patterns and practical solutions. I would also continue advocating through our appropriate channels, for stable funding so districts are not forced to manage increasingly complex needs with insufficient resources.

5. How would you propose to alleviate the current EA staffing shortage and improve recruitment and retention?

EA staffing shortages is a complex issue. It requires both provincial advocacy and focused local action. I support the Board, district leadership, and unions to come together and review the complexity of the challenge. We have recently provided additional funds as a Board to Inclusive Education to assist in early staffing, and continue to evaluate and adjust as needed. Delta should continue building relationships with post-secondary EA programs, creating practicum-to-employment pathways and promoting opportunities to people who reflect the diversity of our community. Provincially, I would continue advocating for more training seats, affordable and accessible training, sustainable funding and compensation that recognizes both the skill required and the cost of living in Metro Vancouver. I would welcome a joint Board and CUPE approach because the shortage is not unique to Delta but Delta has our uniqueness. We want to maintain high expectations, high quality staff & have enough of them.

6. Given that funding is limited, what are your budget priorities for the Delta School District?

My first priority is protecting the classroom and the people who work most directly with students. That includes teachers, Education Assistants, clerical staff, custodians, maintenance employees, Indigenous education staff, counsellors and other specialists whose work contributes to safe, inclusive and effective schools. Within limited funding, I would continue to prioritize our goals outlined in Vision 2030 & our strategic plan including but not limited to: Supports for students with diverse and complex needs, including early intervention and adequate classroom support. Safe and healthy schools for students and employees, including preventative supports, training and well-maintained facilities. Literacy, numeracy, student well-being and successful transitions

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between grades, schools and graduation. Recruitment and retention of qualified employees. Indigenous student success, reconciliation and the removal of inequities in student outcomes. Long-term financial and capital planning that protects services from avoidable instability. At the Board table, we are always aware that approximately 90 percent of Delta's operating budget relates to staffing, so budget decisions cannot be described as simple efficiencies when they affect the people delivering services to students. I would continue to expect the high quality work from our finance department to continue. Their diligence, creativity, care and measured approach has served our district exceptionally well with the funds we receive. I would continue to encourage and empower them to thrive in their roles. I will also encourage that we continue to align spending with our strategic priorities, examine evidence about what is working, invite meaningful public and employee input, and explain difficult choices clearly. At the same time, responsible budgeting cannot substitute for adequate funding. I will continue advocating for a funding model that is sufficient, equitable, predictable and flexible enough to reflect the actual needs of Delta students.

7. Currently, in Delta, decisions are made by trustees prior to the public Board meeting. Do you feel an obligation to make your decision-making process more transparent to the public and what steps will you take to ensure this?

I agree that the public must be able to understand how and why the Board reaches its decisions. I would, however, distinguish between trustees receiving information or asking questions before a meeting and the Board making a decision. Trustees need adequate information to make responsible choices, but debate should not be predetermined and Board decisions must be made by resolution at a properly constituted meeting, except for the limited matters the School Act permits to be considered in closed session. I have spent many hours in meetings both private and public. I can honestly attest to the decisions being made in public, are as you see it, in public. If there are concerns that decisions are being made without transparency, I would encourage questions to the Board through the outlined processes. We're always happy to chat!