



SD 61 TRUSTEE CANDIDATE SURVEY 2011 Municipal Elections

CANDIDATE NAME:
Richard Stern

1. Do you support a fully funded budget that meets the needs of all students? (a 'needs' budget)

YES

2. Will you vote to submit only a fully funded 'needs' budget to the Minister of Education?

YES

3. How will you vote when the Superintendent's Report on Class Size and Composition is in violation of Bill 33?

REJECT

4. Some districts send the Superintendent back to use surplus funds to improve class size and composition. Will you vote to send the Superintendent back to produce a revised report that uses surplus funds to improve class size and composition?

YES

5. What is your position on Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA) testing?

REJECT - While I recognize the value of assessment in terms of resource allocation, there is clear evidence that standardized testing is detrimental to students' intrinsic motivation. I do not believe the former overrides the latter.

6. How will you engage and improve parental and citizen participation in public education issues?

I would like to restructure the political hierarchy so that all key stakeholders have a voice, and the authority to back it. I also believe the education system is fraught with unnecessary antagonism and I would like to work to bring us back to a place in-which our unified goal, the students' wellbeing, leads us to negotiate as friends and allies.

7. Will you accept invitations to go visit a classroom regarding specific problems?

YES

8. If you are an incumbent trustee have you ever been invited to visit a classroom regarding specific problems?

N/A

9. Do you think that special education is adequately funded?

NO

If "NO", what should change?

I do not believe any domain of our education system is adequately funded. There should never be an opportunity cost decision between providing support for one student or another, one class or another. If smaller class sizes are good for students, we should do it. If special education training for all teachers helps meet the needs of student with special needs, we should make that training better and more accessible.

10. What should be done with the current District Strategic Facilities Plan? (Stantec Report)

I will not make an off-hand decision without direct consultation with key stakeholders.

11. How many hours per month will you commit to the role of Trustee including meetings?

31+ hours per month

I think it would be silly to try to tackle such an important role, and put in less than one hour per day.

12. What are your thoughts and comment's on user fees that parents pay for, such as academies, sports equipment, math workbooks, technical equipment, planners?

I believe it is a violation of our rights to free education, and a sad divider that makes good education less accessible to people who may already lack effective educational resources at home. I do, however, understand the practicality of an education that is starved of funding. Clearly the schools cannot afford to provide the basic resources students need in order to learn in a safe, enriching environment. More funding is clearly necessary.

13. What is your experience in parliamentary procedure and committee work?

Some limited experience with student government at McGill and the University of Victoria. I am less of a career politician, and more of an engineer and scientist with a willingness to set aside my personal career aspirations in order to fight a perceived injustice.

14. Do you live in the SD 61 boundaries?

YES

15. If you have children, what type of schools do they or have they attended?

PUBLIC
PRIVATE
HOME-SCHOOLED

I do not have children. When I do, my wife and I will explore our options.

16. What methods would you use to provide accountability & transparency?

Third party review boards with unlimited access, and criminal charges for abuses of power that cause harm. People need only fear an accountable system if they cannot justify their decisions.

17. Would vote for a motion to have all votes recorded and published annually?

YES

18. How else would you inform the public about your positions and actions on issues?

My actions should be overtly published and recorded on a school board website, accessible to virtually everyone. My positions should be readily apparent from my votes, and my actions, but I will not balk at any reasonable and respectful query about my personal beliefs or intentions.

19. Do you support Kindergarten/Grade 1 split classes?

This is a decision that requires study. I cannot answer until I have delved into the research.

20. What are your thoughts on the involvement of private corporations in the public education system?

I am not a large supporter of our system of free enterprise which I believe provides incentives for greed and selfishness. As such, private corporations tend to be focused on profitability which does not often align

with what is best for a community or its young learners. That said, I do not believe it is ever wise to make a fear-based decision. Each situation should be evaluated on its own merits, and potential risks, and should be revisited as often as necessary to confirm that our students' wellbeing is not being compromised.

21. Please tell us anything else you think may be important or relevant to your candidacy for School Trustee in SD 61.

I believe your questions have been very thorough, and I have included enough detail to give readers insight into my beliefs and perspective.

I have only one more thing to add: please vote, even if it is not for me. While I have my own reservations about our pseudo-democratic system, the underlying truth is that special interests take advantage of voter apathy. Popularity should not be the driving force behind our electoral process.