

Trustee Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for putting your name forward to do the important work of School Board Trustee. The members of the Nelson and District Teachers Association appreciate you taking the time to complete the following questionnaire.

Your Name

David Feldman

Area you are seeking election

North Shore, East Shore, Crawford Bay

What motivates you to become a school board member?

I have spent my recent career in educational leadership in the West Kootenay and I believe I can make a difference in SD8

What is your view of the purpose of public education?

Public education is a great equalizer in our society. It allows all students, regardless of their backgrounds, access to ideas and knowledge that otherwise might only be accessible to the privileged. Teachers are what make this social good work and are thus real heroes in our society.

How can you and the Board support the recommendations and calls to action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission?

The first responsibility of the Board would be to educate ourselves about the recommendations and calls to actions of the TRC as they apply to K-12. As a College administrator, I reviewed the recommendations from the perspective of Post-Secondary education and I would do the same as a Board member. Having done that initial work, the next step would be to work with the Superintendent to consult with Indigenous students, staff and community partners to develop some strategic goals towards achieving the calls to action of the TRC and a plan to implement them.

What are the critical issues facing our local schools right now?

I believe that there is a great opportunity for SD8 to work on being an "employer of choice". Recruitment and retention of great teachers is vital to our students' success and that requires great and compassionate management. I had some experience of this both as a Union leader and later as a Dean (management role) at Selkirk College. I believe I could be an effective advocate for a managerial style that supports and values teachers and other staff for the hard work they do.

What role do you see trustees playing in speaking up for public education in BC?

In general, Board members should be advocates for public education. This role is fairly straightforward when the Board's advocacy message is in alignment with the Provincial government's goals. Were the Board to see issues for the district where they felt the need to try to influence the Provincial government's goals, there would be avenues to approach this. Typically, a Board wanting to influence Provincial policy would work with the Superintendent to communicate its issues and concerns to BCPSEA. I can imagine that in certain extraordinary circumstances, a Board could decide to take an issue public if advocacy through BCPSEA was ineffective, but also that such actions would have to be undertaken very judiciously as the Board's relationship with the government is a resource which is vital to the Board's effectiveness.

Describe an action, initiated by you, that resulted in a positive change for your community.

As an administrator at Selkirk, I had the opportunity to contribute to Selkirk's success in a number of ways. I tend to be as much an enabler of good ideas from staff as an initiator, so I will talk about a specific case where I played a supporting role. While I was the Chair of the School of University Arts and Science, the faculty had responded to some cutbacks in second-year Arts and Science offerings by proposing a Rural Pre-Med Program. While the idea was not mine, I was able to be a promoter, advocate and supporter of the idea and through the hard work of many of the faculty, principally Dr. Elizabeth Lund, we were able to successfully launch the program which has now graduated health care professionals who work in our community.

What specific action(s) have you taken in the past to show your support for Kootenay teachers?

As an instructor of mathematics at Selkirk College, I often had the opportunity to collaborate with local teachers on projects in my discipline. This included presentations to K-12 students both at Selkirk and in teachers' classrooms and organizing an opportunity for math teachers in K-12 to come talk shop with Selkirk instructors in hopes of building a community of experts to support each other with teaching ideas. In my administrative role at Selkirk I worked with teachers and councillors to help provide opportunities for students to visit Selkirk classes. As a union leader, I communicated with my membership about the importance of supporting teachers during contract negotiations and/or job action.

The NDTA and KLTF would like to have more regular communication with trustees. How would you improve the connection between trustees and the NDTA? Will you commit to meeting with the NDTA, in order to discuss issues of importance and share information?

Developing and maintaining good relations with employee groups like the NDTA and the KLTF is fundamental to good management of an organization. While labour's interests are not always aligned with those of management, there are huge areas of common interest - chiefly having the district be successful and a great place to teach and learn. Finding an opportunity for the NDTA and KLTF to meet with the trustees is certainly an area I would commit to addressing and to

looking at what the obstacles to communication are and how to remove them. My experience with labour relations is that many and most issues can be resolved through discussion and communication.

Explain the importance of class size and composition from your perspective.

Having been a teacher in post-secondary for many years, I can only imagine the challenges of trying to educate students in a crowded classroom and how that would impact teacher workload and effectiveness. Obviously there are contractual and cost issues that must be respected and worked with, but I do understand that teachers want to be effective and would certainly be an advocate of making that possible within the limits set by our contract and budgets.

How do you plan to ensure that you remain current with what is happening in schools and in classrooms?

As a Board member, I would consider it my fiduciary duty to make sure that I had accurate and complete information about the state of the schools in order to carry out my responsibilities and make decisions in the interest of the district. The Board supervises the Superintendent and must hold the Superintendent and her administration accountable to provide complete and accurate information about the state of the district. I would also advocate for the creation of a way for teachers and other staff to communicate concerns with the Board.

If elected, what are your top three priorities?

My first priority is being a district where great teaching and learning happens. I believe that this can not happen without being an employer of choice - a place where teachers and other staff are excited about working and where positions are highly sought after. So that is my second priority - being an employer of choice. My third priority would be for the district to be smart with its resources. I have a great deal of experience with management of financial resources. The district must focus those resources on the classroom where they can make a difference for our students.

Anything else you would like to share with the members of the NDTA?

I appreciate this opportunity to communicate with your members. You do important and challenging work and I hope for the chance to support that work as a member of the SD8 School Board.