

DPAC Questions

1. Why are you running for school trustee?

I believe that schools are critical to the future of our youth, to the future of our community and to the future of our country. I want to make a contribution to that future by assisting in the development of a healthy, vibrant and effective school system in Northern BC.

2. What is your position on choice of school and programming in School District 57?

I believe that students and their parents should have some choice regarding the school they go to within some guidelines. There is a concern that some schools will become overcrowded because they are seen as 'better'. As a school district we need to be aware of that and work to make sure that all of our schools provide quality education in a quality environment. We also need to ensure that the public are aware of that quality. As to programming, we need choice and flexibility in what programs are offered. We also need good information regarding what those choices are and what led to the creation or promotion of specific programs.

3. How will you ensure that parents and other education partners are involved in decision making?

First and foremost I will listen. I want people to know that, when I am elected, they will have someone they can call upon with their concerns or ideas. There is more to this than listening though. For many years we have lived with a system that does not encourage people to speak out. We need to actively reach out and engage people. We need to encourage greater participation in PACs. There is a role for the school board in working more collaboratively with all of our educational partners to ensure that people are heard and that ideas and concerns receive serious consideration.

PGDTA Questions

1. What specific actions would you take to ensure better classroom composition for the students of School District 57?

We need to consider classroom composition a critical issue. It is important to ensure that a classroom provides a good environment for the students and for the staff. For me that means involving staff in making decisions about how classrooms are populated and what services are provided within that classroom. We cannot effectively create a good learning environment if all we look at are numbers. We need to consider who is in the room and what their needs are. I believe that the people who do the work are best able to determine

those needs. One of the major problems is how special needs are determined and how resources are allocated. Many young people need extra services but do not meet the criteria to be designated special needs. We could work with teachers and school administration to identify needs and appropriate resources. This may require additional funding. I believe that part of a trustee's role should be to advocate for the needs of our schools and our students including lobbying for the funding changes that need to be secured.

2. How do you plan to advocate for District 57 students even if it means opposing government initiatives?

I will work collaboratively with community members and with our educational partners to lobby the government to meet the needs of our children. My loyalty is to the future of our children and our communities, not to partisan politics. If that means opposing government policy I am prepared to do what it takes. There are creative ways to raise awareness within the community and to raise awareness in the Legislature. I have experience in mobilizing for change through my community work over the past 15 years.

3. How will you ensure Teachers have input in the implementation of 21st Century learning initiatives?

I will ensure participation by being open and accessible and by reaching out to encourage people to share their ideas. Sometimes we need to do more than listen. We need to ask. I will listen to Teachers. When they have an issue they will have my full attention. Invite me to meetings. I will show up and I will take part. Ask me to raise an issue and I will do so. Send me an e-mail. I will respond. Part of my role is to respect those who have the knowledge and experience that comes with their calling. I believe we need to create an educational system that is transformative, that teaches young people how to make learning a lifelong process and how to think critically and creatively. We need to look at the opportunity we have in education to create healthy, creative, innovative people who have the ability to adapt to a changing world and to develop along with a global culture and a global economy.

Some things you did not ask.

I am Andrew Burton. I have lived and worked in Prince George since 1995. I have a Bachelors degree in Social Work and A Masters Degree in Education. I have worked as a youth counselor and as the Drug Prevention Coordinator for Northern Health. I was a presence at the Youth Around Prince Resource Centre for many years where I am known for founding the award winning Street Spirits Theatre program, engaging young people in performance designed to raise awareness of social problems. I have conducted youth groups in a number of our schools over the years and have led performances and workshops on a range of topics including bullying, family violence, substance use and racism. I believe that I have a contribution to make to our schools. I would like your support to make that contribution.