



# ECELC Candidate Survey: School Board Trustee

## Candidate Survey Response



**Candidate Name:** Julie Kusiek

**School Board:** Edmonton Public Schools

**Ward:** F

**Date:** September 23, 2021

The Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care (ECELC) has invited all registered candidates for Edmonton City Council to participate in the following survey. Survey results are made publicly available on the ECELC website to inform voters of each individual candidate's views for the upcoming 2021 election.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "All families who want it should have access to high-quality, affordable, accessible, and inclusive early learning and care."

Candidate answer: **Strongly agree**

Comments: **12 years ago when my eldest was born, our neighbourhood had few options available. Pregnant parents were so stressed about finding a spot, they would try to get their name on a waiting list before their child was born. Affordable, flexible options were often even harder to find. Universally accessible, affordable, high-quality care would have made such a difference for me. I'm hearing it would make a huge difference for others across Ward F, too.**

2. How important do you believe it is for the city of Edmonton to have a policy that supports the development of high quality, affordable, accessible, and inclusive early learning and care?

Candidate answer: **Very important**

Comments: **Policy is often the fundamental building block from which we can make changes happen. I absolutely support such a policy. This will then trickle down into things like planning application approvals within the city, and help inform how the City Plan is implemented for 15 minute communities. Not only that, but a policy that supports the development of early learning and care also supports Edmonton's recovery from the pandemic, gender equity, eliminating poverty and so much more.**

3. How important is it to include space for early learning and care centres in planning and zoning for neighbourhood development?

Candidate answer: **Very important**

Comments: **I've presented to Edmonton City Council countless times around planning issues and to advocate for neighbourhoods that work better for families. Efficiency**



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**of travel is really important for families, and that's why a planning approach for 15 minute community that priorities early learning and childcare spaces is so important.**

4. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "The city government has a responsibility to ensure culturally safe and appropriate early learning and care."

Candidate answer: **Strongly agree**

Comments:

5. In your role as a school board trustee, how likely will you be to advocate with your school system for improved early learning and care?

Candidate answer: **Very willing**

Comments: **I was the President on the board of a local preschool which operated out of an EPSB school. I know first hand how to build a strong relationship between school administration and non-profit early learning. As a Trustee, I'll work towards ensuring space is available for early learning and childcare within our schools, and that school administration knows they will be supported in doing their part to build that relationship with early learning and childcare operators.**

6. In your role as a school board trustee, how likely will you be to advocate to the city government for improved early learning and care?

Candidate answer: **Very willing**

Comments: **I have a 12 year track record of advocating to the City of Edmonton for improved public services that impact families. I have an existing relationship with key city administrators, am respected by several current and former member of city council, and am regarded as a well known community leader. Specific examples of my work includes: Thrive YEG (storytelling project during Edmonton's City budget), safer residential streets and all ages/abilities bike lanes, saving Scona Pool and piloting a new small scale model for location recreation in Edmonton.**

7. In your role as a school board trustee, how likely will you be to advocate to the provincial government for improved early learning and care?

Candidate answer: **Very willing**

Comments: **As a former employee with Alberta Health including support to a Deputy Minister's Taskforce, I'm familiar with the processes on how to move issues through the provincial bureaucratic system. Earlier in 2021, I also initiated and ran a letter writing campaign to the provincial government regarding their premature loosening of COVID restrictions.**



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8. In your role as a school board trustee, how likely will you be to advocate to the federal government for improved early learning and care?

Candidate answer: **Very willing**

Comments: **There's money on the table for the province right now. I'd love to see school boards, parents, and the City of Edmonton work together to help bring the province on board to accept the federal funding available for \$10/day childcare. As school board trustee, I can also keep advocating that the federal government not give up on Alberta!**

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? "Early learning and care should be considered a necessary public service, much like K-12 education, for families who want it."

Candidate answer: **Strongly agree**

Comments: **I believe it takes a village to raise a child. I also firmly believe in the important role public services can play in improving our everyday quality of life, which was highlighted through the Thrive YEG project I led in 2018. Viewing early learning and childcare as a necessary public service absolutely benefits all of us as a society. It also helps to build a supportive village around families. Yes! to the question above.**

10. Please describe what roles, if any, the school boards should have in early learning and care.

Candidate answer: **School boards have an important role to play in early learning and care. We already play a role when it comes to providing preventive support to early learners before kindergarten. We can continue advocacy to the provincial government for funding for this important program. As a board, we can do even more. We can direct school board staff to work in partnership with organizations like ECELC on data sharing, finding space within our schools for early learning and childcare, providing access to professional development and involving child care centres in school events like assemblies and sport days. At the end of the day, people don't care who the building belongs to. They just want to know that the public building in their community is available or community use. Partnering schools with early learning and child care space works really well.**

11. Please describe what you would do, if anything, to promote high-quality, affordable, accessible, and inclusive early learning and care in Edmonton in your capacity as an elected official.

Candidate answer: **This conversation reminds me of the Mayor's Task Force on Community Sustainability and the resulting Elevate report from 2012. It was all about working together as provincial, municipal, school board and wider community towards building more sustainable communities. Collaboration and partnership is a key priority of my campaign, and something I've discussed at an August Kusiek Chats event with guests Michael Phair and Dave Colburn. There are a lot of great opportunities I think we can work at together. As an elected official, I will work to reinvigorate the spirit of the Elevate report and work with partners like ECELC**



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towards an integrated system of high-quality, affordable, accessible and inclusive early learning and child care in Edmonton. Specifically, I would like to champion making sure space is available for low income and vulnerable families. I would also advocate for provincial funding for dedicated child care space in new school builds and renovations, and for collaboration with the City of Edmonton on planning those spaces as part of the 15 minute community in the City Plan. I also know first hand, how difficult it can be for administration in government organizations to make change happen. That's why during the Engage106-76 pilot I co-led, we made sure to partner community with city staff in a way that would ensure that city staff felt safe and supported by community members. In this way, they could be brave and try new things. It worked great! As an elected official, it will be my job to make sure that the Superintendent knows that he has my support and the support of the entire board in directing school board staff to work collaboratively and creatively with partners on the subject of early learning and childcare. If we want to make progress and make positive change happen, staff need to know they will be safe to try new things and they have the support of the elected officials they report to.

Do you have any additional or final comments?

**When I held my Kusiek Chats event in May about integrating childcare with schools, I remember another issue my guest brought up was that of transportation between their child care centre and the local school. That's another issue I'd like to look at if elected as Ward F Trustee for Edmonton Public Schools.**