

Meet the Candidates seeking election to the Battle River School Division Board of Trustees

Elected by Acclamation

Beaver County East

Lyle Albrecht (no photo available)

Flagstaff County West

Jeffrey Kimball (no photo available)



Camrose County South

Kendall Severson (left)

Flagstaff County East

Laurie Skori (right)



Beaver County West



Ruth Baerg



Neil Hardy

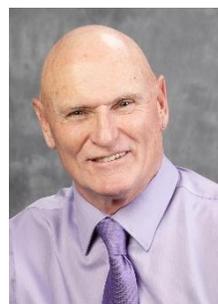


Zsuzsanna Hemperger

Camrose County North



Karen Belich



John Girvan



Penny Martin

City of Camrose



Norm Erickson



Natalie Severson



Valerie Sims

Learn more about the candidates on the next pages . . .

Beaver County West Candidates	Question: What do you think are the most significant changes ahead for student learning?
Ruth Baerg	It has always been a challenge to take concepts learned and turn them into practical life skills that will help our children make good decisions in life. Educators will be continually challenged to adapt their teaching methods and technology tools to better engage and prepare students for their future careers. Helping students to keep current with new technologies, but also providing the skills needed to couple knowledge with practical life skills is something I see as very important.
Neil Hardy	<p>Things have changed in the world drastically when it comes to learning with the advancement of technology. To the point which google seems to be a wealth of information and can be a distraction. Guess which one my kids like? You got it distraction! Hopefully a learning methodology will be able to keep up or take advantage of “thirst for distraction” our kids have; for furthering their education.</p> <p>Taking technology and integrating it to show applications of the information being learned. Visualizations with the appropriate basis of fundamental math, science, English, social skills; preparing children for the working world. That is how I see the future of learning. (Computer models and simulations aiding in the process for the educators to firmly base the basics within reality). It should just be too much fun to learn. Keeping up with how our kids are being conditioned by video games and technology is going to be the future of education.</p>
Zsuzsanna Hemperger	One of the most important changes that needs to be made is to restore the "basics" to the curriculum. We need to make sure that children once again possess basic literacy and numeracy skills, such as knowing their times tables, because without those original building blocks of learning it will be more difficult for them to be successful in the future.
Camrose County North Candidates	
Karen Belich	I believe that some of the most significant changes ahead for student learning include: curriculum development, the launch of consultations regarding potential amendments to the <i>School Act</i> , transportation, and technology. We live in an ever changing and fast-paced world, where there is a continual shift toward globalization and inclusion of all people. This is a time in which we have a chance to be part of discussions, working groups, and provide input toward what our children, grandchildren, and children in our communities receive educationally in order to help them succeed. As interested stakeholders, we need to have a strong voice and provide input. I want to have the chance to represent the unique needs and interests of rural Albertans in these discussions as we go forward.
John Girvan	<p>I feel the most significant changes ahead in student learning are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased use and access to technology in the classroom [MOOCs, apps and virtual educational devices (3D)]; → Configuration of the classroom ✓ flexible seating arrangements, autonomy for the student to choose where they do sit or stand (at workstations or a standing desk); ✓ Flexible curriculum and assignments to accommodate multiple learning styles; (demonstration of the skills needed to complete assignments)

Camrose County North Candidates (continued)	Question: What do you think are the most significant changes ahead for student learning?
Penny Martin	I believe the most significant changes ahead for student learning will be the curriculum changes along with the new resources, initiatives and programs accompanying them. A complete overhaul of Alberta's K- 12 curriculum is currently underway. With new curriculum come new resources (student and teacher), new technology, and other programs to help deliver and establish the changes. The new curriculum will have a larger focus on technology than ever before. Even now, before the curriculum changes, technology in the classroom is ever evolving. The new curriculum will focus on critical thinking skills and evaluation on higher levels which will change not only what students learn, but also how they learn.
City of Camrose Candidates	
Norm Erickson	I believe the presentation of learner outcomes is continually changing. Students are presented information in so many different ways. From traditional instruction in classrooms, to media presentations with an interactive instructor, or simply registering for an online course, our students are completing their education in different ways. We need to continue to find effective ways to make any of these choices a positive and successful experience for our students.
Natalie Severson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mental health and being able to stay centred and keep up with the demands of a quickly changing world. ✓ Technology. Our schools are starting children as early as kindergarten, I do feel that it's a good change being jobs today are no longer pen and paper based. I do see that it seems to be moving along quite well but have also heard that maybe a but more help in the classroom with slower learners and or children who are not able to access some of the technology's used in schools at home. ✓ Including programs to help parents understand the changing curriculum and giving them opportunities to learn more about the changes so they can help more from home.
Valerie Sims	<p>Technology has, and will continue to change the classroom and teaching methods in the future. Through virtual reality, for example, children will have access to so many more experiences. The possibilities will be endless.</p> <p>There is so much more research being done on how the brain works, and that will determine how we teach children. One example to do this would be to give short stretch breaks every 20 minutes or so, as this is per recent studies, the best way the brain learns and retains information.</p>
	Question: What positive, student-centred ideas do you have for moving Battle River School Division forward in its vision of student success over the next four years?
Beaver County West Candidates	
Ruth Baerg	I look forward to engaging with the schools and the parents to learn from them what's been working well and what's not been working well as they have experienced it. Often great ideas are born from brainstorming and collaborative discussion. I want to listen to the concerns, recommendations and successes of those involved, and then I feel we will be able to offer ideas and solutions.

Beaver County West Candidates (continued)	Question: What positive, student-centred ideas do you have for moving Battle River School Division forward in its vision of student success over the next four years?
Neil Hardy	<p>Socially children learn from their environment. It is so important to teach them morals and standards at home and have those ethics reinforced at school. Primarily as per the Alberta Bill of Rights Section 1 (g) the right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children (Please read the entire Enactment). But the point is clear. Being responsible to parents and guardians using open communication. Also for parents and guardians to know what is happening and how legislation is being actuated and why. So parents and guardians can be active with opinion in a positive and productive way to help elected Trustee's to make informed decisions. As Public Trustees are accountable.</p>
Zsuzsanna Hemperger	<p>I believe that it would greatly benefit our students to once again teach them the basic literacy and numeracy skills that they will need to be successful, not only in school but later on in their lives. We also need to find ways to enable kids to address important topics from multiple perspectives and with that increase the students' curiosity and engagement in course content. Students should be given more opportunities to explore their own interests and work at their own pace, while building transferrable skills or those that will be useful in the classroom and the outside world as well.</p>
Camrose County North Candidates	
Karen Belich	<p>I love to see people of all ages succeed and be excited about the learning process. As we become a more global society, we are seeing many technological advances and are now able to reach all Albertans- without even having to travel! If elected, I want to see students within the division interacting with one another even more, as well as globally; sharing ideas, resources, and strengths in order to support and promote BRSD as a whole. I believe that quality education for all is essential, and if we pool resources, share strengths, and work together in a positive relationship, the students will benefit.</p>
John Girvan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assist students acquire the skills to manage their own learning. ✓ Adoption of learning styles theory and the tools to determine an individual student's learning style as early as is possible. ✓ Develop a learning environment to foster the student's interest in and positive attitudes towards the subjects they learn. ✓ Encourage more access and openness for parents to be involved. Recognition that learning is a partnership with the student at the center (parents, teacher and administration).

Camrose County North Candidates (continued)	<i>Question: What positive, student-centred ideas do you have for moving Battle River School Division forward in its vision of student success over the next four years?</i>
Penny Martin	<p>Over the next four years I would like to focus on and support the vision of BRSD 'Every Student, Every Day, A Success.' To me, this means meeting the needs of students in a variety of ways. It is important for schools to provide safe, inclusive, welcoming and respectful learning environments. I am committed to maintaining educational excellence and continued growth through a collaborative approach and will help develop and support policies that ensure success for all students. I believe we can help students achieve greater success through emphasis on early learning and intervention. Ideally this would include smaller class sizes in division 1 (K-3) which will help to ensure that students have a strong foundation. It is also important to continue focusing on student inclusion, which does not only include funding but also what is best for each student. This entails exploring best practice, as well as focusing on the strengths and diversity of individual students. With focusing on student success, it remains important to meet the emotional needs of students. The demand for mental health supports, such as Family School Liaison Workers (FSLW) is becoming more prevalent and I would support and encourage initiatives that help meet student's emotional and mental health needs. I would also like to examine the possibility of providing greater opportunities for students in our rural areas, this includes course options and Career and Technology Studies (CTS) for junior and senior high students. Review of budgeting strategies and allocation of funds in rural schools could help ensure students have more equal opportunities.</p>
City of Camrose Candidates	
Norm Erickson	<p>In the next four years I would like to see the students in BRSD benefit from the various ways learning happens. We need technological supports for those students who are choosing this avenue as well as continued support for the hands on education in our labs and shops in Battle River. Every student needs to be given the tools needed for success.</p>
Natalie Severson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Smaller class sizes or more help in the classroom. ✓ More mental health programming. ✓ Making sure that our students have the proper tools and encouragement to move forward and achieve every goal with a feeling of success!
Valerie Sims	<p>We know children learn differently so to accommodate for learning styles there should be student-centered projects. Assignments can be flexible. Some students can be given more time to complete assignments. Maybe there could be standing desks for those who cannot sit. Or accommodation for those who need more movement. Students can chose their own projects as long as they meet the curriculum objectives. Students need to be accountable for their own learning.</p>

	Question: <i>What do you feel are the most important qualities you would bring to the role of trustee?</i>
Beaver County West Candidates	
Ruth Baerg	I believe I bring a wealth of life experience and life skills to the role of trustee. Not having been involved in this side of education prior to this, I believe I offer a fresh perspective and will be able to objectively listen and participate as a problem solver. Having been in direct sales for more than 20 years, I have excellent communication and people skills. Integrity, honesty, compassion and transparency would be four key words to describe what I would bring to the role.
Neil Hardy	As Public Trustee I will listen to the public, taxpayer, and the Education Ministry. To take all aspects of opinion and suggestion into account upon current issues. To ensure policy and procedure is written and reviewed to be accurate to our area and within the legislation of Alberta. Legislation such as Alberta Bill of Rights, Education Act, and the Alberta Human Rights act. Along with any other legislation that needs to be considered within context of specific issues. Please read the legislation to arm yourself with knowledge to understand the issues to form opinion.
Zsuzsanna Hemperger	I will ensure that I am able to listen to the public and carry their opinions to the board while keeping the welfare of the students at the forefront of my mind. I hope that my many years of hard work and dedication to the school community have proven that I am deeply committed to serving our students and am fully willing to do whatever it takes to ensure that their needs are met.
Camrose County North Candidates	
Karen Belich	I believe in rural education and the importance of strong community relationships in order to prepare our children for adulthood. As such, I want to see the great schools in our school division continue to work together, be supported and grow. We have three children who attend Round Hill School in Grades 3, 6 & 8. I appreciate the opportunities and challenges that rural schools face and enjoy working with others to promote and/or find solutions. I have been an active member of the school council for the past nine years and this has created opportunities to have many discussions with parents, community members, teachers, Battle River administrators and other leaders within the education system. I feel that I have a strong understanding of the education system and rural communities in Alberta.

Camrose County North Candidates (continued)	Question: <i>What do you feel are the most important qualities you would bring to the role of trustee?</i>
John Girvan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I use WAIT? (Why am I talking?) ✓ I am a good listener. ✓ Leadership and good governance. ✓ Life experience and a personal commitment to life-long learning. ✓ Systems approach to problem solving, issue management and decision making.
Penny Martin	<p>In addition to being community-minded, I believe the most important qualities I would bring to the role of trustee are my passion, knowledge, and experience in education. Being a former teacher of ten years, and only resigning three years ago, I have specific knowledge and experience with current education practices. I have gained invaluable leadership and interpersonal skills through both my teaching career and volunteering activities, which has allowed me to become an effective communicator and work well in a collaborative environment. As a parent and former educator I am aware of the challenges students face today and will be able to represent my communities while putting the needs of students first.</p>
City of Camrose Candidates	
Norm Erickson	<p>I spent 33 years in the classroom which helps me understand strategies that will be effective for both students, and school operations. The last four years as a trustee I have learned many valued lessons on governance as well as the direction Battle River is continuing to take. Battle River is a very diverse school region which makes communication and collaboration an important asset.</p>
Natalie Severson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I am honest and compassionate. ✓ I am a team player and always do my best. ✓ I am a life learner and driven to succeed myself. ✓ I want to build new relationships with in the BRSD and my community. ✓ I am a mother with kids in the BRSD and I like to stay informed as well as learn and grow along with the education system.
Valerie Sims	<p>I feel, teaching for 31 years for the Battle River School Division, this gives me a lot of experience to add to the School Board table. Our children went through the school system and this gives me valuable experience as well. Now our grandchildren are just starting to go to school and so that keeps my experience current.</p>

	Question: What other information do you want people to know about you?
Beaver County West Candidates	
Ruth Baerg	<p>I have spent my life in this community. When my children were growing up I was busy raising them, working, and serving in many ways in the schools they attended. During that time I appreciated the role that the school board trustee filled on my behalf. Now perhaps I can fill that gap for other parents who are doing what I did then. I feel that being a trustee is not about achieving a personal agenda. It's not about taking sides or getting my 'way'; we will not achieve anything if we take that approach. I see my role as a sounding board for parents and community, and most importantly to be an advocate for the children involved in our educational system. The children deserve an excellent education, and I am certain that even though we may differ on issues or methods, as parents/grandparents, educators and community, we want the same thing. With that goal in mind, we will find a way to co-operate and work reasonably together to get through issues and move forward in a positive way for the benefit of all the children. If I can contribute to this process, I will consider my term successful!</p>
Neil Hardy	<p>Legislation, Policy and Procedure has been all I lived and breathed at work for the past 24 years. I have worked in transportation as an Airline Transport pilot, Railroad conductor, and Ultrasound technician testing welds on pipeline. These highly regulated industries have given me the ability to read and exercise policy and procedure based on legislation. The knowledge and experience I have acquired during my life along with my persistence and empathy; will enable me to become a great public Trustee.</p>
Zsuzsanna Hemperger	<p>I am a longtime resident of Beaver County and have been married for 22 years. I have three amazing daughters, all of whom are currently enrolled at Tofield School. Thanks to my children, I have been very active in the Tofield school community over the past 11 years, and would now like to take this a step further by representing my region as a School Board Trustee.</p>
Camrose County North Candidates	
Karen Belich	<p>I am a positive, open person who enjoys building relationships with people. My belief in rural education was shaped by my own experience growing up on a farm north of Camrose, where I attended Round Hill School from Kindergarten to Grade 9, and the Camrose Composite for High School. I attained a Bachelor of Arts in Recreation Administration from the UofA and worked with both young people and senior citizens in both Calgary and Camrose. After balancing the working mom schedule for a period of time, I chose to stay home with our kids and take on a more active role on our mixed family farm. This decision has also allowed me to be more hands-on volunteering in various capacities in the Round Hill, Kingman and Camrose areas.</p>

Camrose County North Candidates (continued)	Question: What other information do you want people to know about you?
John Girvan	I believe that education is the cornerstone of social and economic advancement. That poverty and homelessness can be mitigated through education and the opportunities it creates for the individual.
Penny Martin	I value education and truly believe it is a public priority. As a parent of school-aged children, I also have a vested interest in the education system. My teaching experience gives me a clear perspective on the needs of the students, staff, and schools. As a committed member of my community, I am in touch and connected to its members and am not afraid to get involved in community initiatives and programs. I have served on different boards (playschool, parent run kindergarten, Hay Lakes Municipal Library) and am active in my children’s school community. I am confident in my skill set to govern responsibly and serve my community for the success of all students.
City of Camrose Candidates	
Norm Erickson	I come from rural Alberta. I understand the importance of community and what a school offers to that community. I have always believed an education must be complete; it must include knowledge as well as outcomes which allow an individual to understand their world and their role in that world.
Natalie Severson	I am new to the system and am willing to take on challenges. I think being new is an advantage for my community and the BRSD in the sense that I have an open mind and will be able to listen without judgment. I can then research and form my own opinion based on my findings.
Valerie Sims	I feel strongly about education and would very much like to be a small cog in the well oiled machine that is Battle River School District. I have served on many boards and committees, which has given me a wealth of experience and knowledge as well as the ability to collaborate with others in a positive fashion.

The election is Monday, October 16. Please vote!