

LEON COUNTY SCHOOLS

2022 School Board Candidate Questionnaire

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Local School Board

Local school board members have been under increased scrutiny. The decision made by these individuals are critical to the future of our students, public schools, and the community.

Why have you decided to run for school board and what do you hope to achieve?

As a current Leon County educator, I personally see the daily challenges facing our educational communities, yet I am extremely optimistic that there are workable solutions if we have involved leadership. Strong community schools are critical to attracting families and businesses to Leon County. It is important that taxpayer investment is directed to classrooms, student outcomes, and learning spaces that match our community needs and learning gaps.

What is your background and experience with schools, and public education?

As lifelong residents of Leon County, my wife and I have attended our schools, worked in our schools, and our two boys attend our schools. With over 22 years of educator experience, I have a unique perspective and valuable insight into

our educational community. During my career I have been able to successfully implement new programs that support student achievement thru strong partnerships and positive relationships within ALL our local schools. As a Classroom Teacher, Dean of Students, Athletic/Activites Director, and Assistant Principal I know firsthand the challenges our schools are facing.

What is your plan to address the teacher and staff shortages in our district?

We will not be able to meet the needs of our school communities if we are unable to attract and retain, highly qualified instructional and support staff to work with our students in our schools. In the short term, "outside the box" solutions may be most effective. I would support school administrators and district staff, many of which hold educator certifications, return to the classroom for a portion of their workday to help fill our needs. In the long-term, we must have plan that addresses teacher and staff compensation, planning/prep time, and staff/teacher morale.

Please rank the issues below by level of importance to the district and students with 1 being the most important and 6 being the least important.

- 2- School staff and teacher pay and the importance of stabilizing salary compression
- 5- Addressing overextended class sizes and implementing a caseload cap for service providers (SLP, ESE, OT, PT, ...)
- 4- Improving communication and transparency with all stakeholders
- 1- School Safety and Security
- 3- Finding a permanent solution to mitigate teacher and school support staff shortages
- 6- Expanding school choice options within traditional public schools.

Please identify any other needs within the district. How would you address those concerns, include funding?

This list could be long, all of which have funding constraints. School ESE Inclusion programs without resources is one of my biggest concerns. I think most agree, all students have a right to learn among their peers. We must ensure that school resources and educational needs are not compromised while working toward this goal. I have experience building one of the largest public/private partnerships in our schools and plan to leverage my skills to identify and develop "win/win" partnerships within our community that can support and fund our schools and resource gaps.

Please share your position on school choice, including charter schools and private schools that receive taxpayer dollars to fund student scholarships.

The increase in charter and private school funding is accelerating at a pace that is going to leave our community schools with less and less resources if the trajectory is not changed. I believe we must develop programs at schools (fine arts, athletics, clubs, after school activities) that attract families to our classrooms, provide a level of service that cultivates trust and communication, and share our successes so that families do not feel the need to search for other options.

While state legislators have an important role in deciding statewide education standards that guide instruction, do you believe these same elected officials should be directly involved in influencing what school district curriculum, material and instructional resources are used in schools locally, or should this decision be made by the Superintendent and school board?

After the development of statewide standards by the state legislature, and with input from all local stakeholders, local elected officials should hold the authority to decide district curriculum, material and instructional resources that are used in our schools. Input from educators, parents, and the community is vital to ensuring our community needs are addressed.

Please share your plan to collect input from and work with parents and employees in making decisions that affect our schools and community.

When elected, I will foster positive school culture through continuous dialog with staff, parents, and administrators by being an active and frequent presence at each school. Working at our schools daily I understand the importance of a strong parent/teacher/school relationship and the positive impact it has on our community. Our schools need an experienced perspective, fresh ideas, and a new voice.

Education unions have an important role in supporting school employees. What do you believe the proper role of the union should be in working with the school board? As a school board member, how would you work with the union?

School board members must develop strong relationships with formal and informal teacher leaders within the school community. When elected, I will foster relationships with union leaders year-round. It is important that union advocacy, member concerns, and teacher priorities are understood by elected officials so that resources can be allocated towards improving learning.

Student behavior and attendance has become a serious problem for educators. What ideas do you have to support administration and teachers to address these issues, while maintaining safe schools?

In my experience working with parents directly is the most effective way to increase participation in the educational journey. As our world becomes harder to navigate, strong school communities can provide clarity for families. Consistent

messaging, community partnerships, and counseling/mental health resources all support parents and students. Creating learning environments, before and after school, that are engaging and supportive can increase student attendance.

Would you be in favor of an independent forensic audit to better understand the fiscal practices of Leon County Schools?

Absolutely! I am dedicated to ethical and transparent representation for our community.

What are your views on how to best provide FAPE, a free appropriate public education, for ESE students (or students with disabilities) within Leon County Schools?

Inclusion, with appropriate resources, is beneficial to ALL students in our classrooms. Guaranteeing teachers and students have the resources (paras, co-teaching, adaptive equipment, classroom design, planning time, etc.) is critical to increasing student learning and outcomes. Advocacy at the state level to increase funding levels should also be a priority. Legislators need to understand the value of educated communities and how funding our local public schools appropriately will ensure a stronger community.

Is there any additional information you wish to share with us when making endorsement decisions?

My wife Katie and I are proud parents of two boys, 9 and 6, who have just begun their educational journey in our local schools. I look forward to using my leadership skills to improve our local educational community. Katie, an elementary first grade teacher, is also a lifelong resident of Tallahassee and a graduate LCS. This is personal to me. When school board members work closely with school/district leadership and teachers, they can ensure policies, procedures, and budget priorities are aligned to support the needs of our classrooms. Let's build something together we can all be proud of!
