

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?

While I was at TCC, I pulled data to determine what schools would benefit from the partnerships that TCC could offer. I stumbled on a report from the Department of Education that noted that Amos P. Godby high school was 14% below the district average for enrolling graduates into a postsecondary institution. Education researchers Glennie, Lauff, and Ottem projected those who graduate with a high school diploma without postsecondary training will not attain middle-class status because of unemployment, underemployment, or low earnings. So, while the Leon County School District and Amos P. Godby leadership implemented efforts to expand dual enrollment opportunities as on-ramps to postsecondary attainment for its secondary students, Godby students still earn significantly fewer dual enrollment credits and demonstrate lower postsecondary enrollment rates than any other school in the Leon County public school district. So, I gathered members from the school district and various community stakeholders to partner with Tallahassee Community College to build out the Cougars RISE Program. The program features a concurrent dual enrollment course that introduced students to various career

opportunities through field trips, guest speaking, and blended curriculum while familiarizing students with various college processes and procedures. It was at that point when I decided that there needed to be better policy infrastructure to support these programs. Subsequently, I ran 4 years ago. I did not win, but I learned of several other issues that plagued our district. So, I am running again.

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

5 years as a high school teacher at Amos. P. Godby High School

7 years as an instructor and Associate Dean of Academic Partnership (oversaw the Dual Enrollment Program and other K-12 partnerships) at Tallahassee Community College

2 years as the Director of Operations and Administration at the FSU Alumni Association

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

Develop a comprehensive internship program at the District level to support schools

Develop a comprehensive exit interview at the school and district level to collect data of why teachers are leaving versus just the anecdotal evidence

Continue to work on pay increases –we are making progress, but we are not there yet

Equitable staffing plans based on several factors – I’m not sure how feasible this is, but it’s worth examining.

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.

__1__ School staff and teacher pay and the importance of stabilizing salary compression

__1__ Addressing overextended class sizes and implementing a caseload cap for service providers (SLP, ESE, OT, PT, ...)

__1__ Improving communication and transparency with all stakeholders

__1__ School Safety and Security

__1__ Finding a permanent solution to mitigate teacher and school support staff shortages

__1__ Expanding school choice options within traditional public schools.

Each of these items are important. It’s not about what’s more important. It’s about which issues are feasible to tackle now with the available resources, and which issues will the Board and District need to build an infrastructure to support.

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

Expand programming to help students overcome emotional and physical challenges and changes that they face.

This requires a comprehensive internship program that includes those students who want to become school social workers. Those students currently are not interning in schools. They intern at various agencies.

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

Charter schools siphon both students and funding from traditional public schools. The emergence of a new charter school usually engenders an exodus from traditional public schools. Subsequently, the district has to readjust its budget; the principals have to readjust their respective school budgets. Those school adjustments, sometimes, result in the elimination of arts programs or programs that offer hands-on learning opportunities. The ripple effect of welcoming a new charter school to the district has far-reaching consequences. Therefore, I am and will always be a champion for traditional public education.

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?

No. Curriculum should not be decided by those who are removed from the classroom/school district.

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

I plan to attend the SAC meetings of each of my schools (as I am invited), DAC meetings, and through school climate surveys. But, I live in this community, and I am very accessible. I have no problem with "good ole' fashion" coffee meetings either.

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?

The union is supposed to be a trusted source to advocate on behalf of its constituency. School board is a trusted source to advocate on behalf of its constituency. Subsequently, the school board and the union, since they serve the same constituency, should have amicable relationship.

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?

Student behavior was a serious problem as I taught at Godby. The problem is exacerbated when there is a mass exodus of beginning teachers (years 1-3) from the school system. While on paper, the District offers a comprehensive beginning teacher program; however, in practice, the program does not support teacher development. And the student's behavior becomes one of the primary reasons why teachers leave the classroom. So, there needs to be a better monitored program.

Student attendance may be a problem for other reasons. There are several confounding variables that contribute to student attendance issues. Many of those confounding variables are beyond the school's control.

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

Independent forensic audits are usually initiated when there are suspicions of fraud or other potentially illegal activity. If that is the impetus for suggesting such an audit, then there is context missing in this question. There are too many implications of impropriety assumed when forensic audits are introduced. So, I cannot support an independent forensic audit unless there are potential illegal implications.

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?

I'm not sure I understand the question. Other than how it's currently being implemented through Leon County Schools?

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