

School Board Candidate Survey

After soliciting feedback from the community over the past several months, we have created a questionnaire that we hope all school board candidates will complete, to better help ExeterPACT and our community understand where candidates stand on these important issues

Email *

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What are your reasons for running for school board this year? *

I want to create measurable goals for the school and district, and hold administrators accountable for reaching those goals. The most important goal I would like to set is improving academics, measured by a marked increase in student proficiency in math and reading (especially math). I especially care about our elementary students, our little ones, who were critically impacted by the ineffective response to the pandemic that resulted in poor learning outcomes.

I have significant concerns about the administration's judgement. Their actions remove accountability, lack bi-directional dialog with the community, disengage parents from their children's learning, and are focused on the wrong things. For everything we spend resources on, we're making choices to NOT do other things; it's all about opportunity cost.

We can have the highest rated schools in the state! We have smart, well-paid teachers, caring paraprofessionals & staff, loving parents and guardians who want to engage, and a very supportive community with high expectations. There's no reason why SMS and our district can't be THE place everyone in the Seacoast wishes they could send their kids to. I know this, because that's how it used to be, and not that long ago. But it's going to take new oversight and an emphasis on accountability. That's why I'm running.

What do you see as the main challenges facing the school district and what do you want to change? *

Making up for lost ground during the pandemic where we've seen academics slipping as measured by proficiency scores and independent rankings. We need to carefully evaluate every initiative, spending request, or resource allocation that doesn't align with improving academics.

The School District Budget is always heavily discussed and debated. What changes are necessary to the budget and the budget process if any? *

I only have a cursory understanding of the budget process, based largely on what is presented during school board meetings. This is an area that I want to become more educated on, and intend to do so.

What is your opinion regarding the SAU16 policy responses to Covid and what, if anything, would you change? *

I support in-person learning as foundational to positive academic and developmental outcomes. Without re-litigating past decisions, my inclination is to empower parents but also hold them accountable. I believe parents should be able to volunteer in the school if they wish. I believe parents should have the choice to mask their children or not. At the same time, parents must act responsibly to keep sick kids home and use good judgement about preventing the spread of any infectious disease. Many ineffectual measures were put in place and maintained, even after the data indicated otherwise. My approach to oversight would be to consider these measures with critical thinking skills and simple cost-benefit analysis, using the best data available at the time, being open-minded but willing to make hard decisions.

Why do you believe animosity has increased during in interactions between the school board, the administration, and the public, and how can the current climate be improved? *

I believe it's a failure to communicate properly. The community longs for dialog, a true conversation. Not one-way communication. And that's the situation today, people on all sides talking AT each other versus WITH each other.

This creates a vicious cycle: the public speaks during public comment or sends email to their board member representatives or administration, but there is no acknowledgement of their grievances, no desire to debate the merits of their concerns, no effort to persuade those that disagree, no collaborative sessions or round-table discussions from folks representing opposing viewpoints. As such, the public goes back into their social media echo chambers to reinforce their own biases and vent frustration. Ultimately, those that are dissatisfied believe that removing the board and administrators is their only redress.

I would advocate for long-form conversation, round-tables, transparency, and meaningfully responding to all messages I receive from my constituents - basically, acting in good faith!

What would you use as a model to gauge academic success? *

Objective measures, preferably the State's standardized testing and proficiency scoring.

And I would position my goal to the administration in the format of, from "x" to "y" by "when," removing any ambiguity - i.e., increase the percentage of SMS students proficient in math from 41% to 69% by the next testing cycle. And, increase the percentage of SMS students proficient in reading from 66% to 78% by the next testing cycle. (Note: that's a goal that would simply get us back to the pre-pandemic proficiency scores of 2018-2019)

Would you support the addition of more teachers and para positions? *

Yes

No

Do you believe our SAU has the appropriate number of administrators? *

Yes

No

If elected, what approach will you take in responding to parents' questions and concerns as it relates to their children's educational experiences inside the classroom? *

I intend to personally provide a meaningful response to every email message or letter sent to me by a constituent.

I would like to create long-form public conversations (more than the 3 minutes of one-way public comment) between stakeholders holding opposing viewpoints, or their representatives. I think of stakeholders as including parents & guardians, teachers, staff & administrators, board members, tax payers, and concerned community members.

Do you see yourself primarily as a representative of the community or as a representative of the school system? *

Representative of the community

Representative of the school system

Are you committed to a yearly survey of families, students, community residents, and school staff about what they see as major strengths and shortcomings of the district and its schools? Are you committed to publicly sharing the results? *

- Yes I am committed to a yearly survey and yes I am committed to publicly sharing the results
- Yes I am committed to a yearly survey but I believe the surveys are information for the school board and administrators
- No I am not committed to a yearly survey
- Undecided

What makes you the most qualified person for the school board? *

I have real skin in the game. My lovely daughters are SMS students who have been impacted by the pandemic. I want more than anything to give my kids the best education I can give, to make up for lost ground, and give them every advantage as young adults when they go out into the world to compete.

I also love my community, and more specifically, the town of Stratham. I believe it is a special place and the schools have always been one of the most attractive things about living here. My wife went to SMS, loved it, and we wanted to share that wonderful experience with our children. It was always our goal to move to Stratham to send our kids to school here. When we moved here 8 years ago, SMS was one of the best elementary schools in the Seacoast and state. That's not the case today, but we can have that again.

My love for the town has moved me to volunteer as much as I am able, whether that is coaching Stratham Rec sports, serving on the Zoning Board of Adjustment, or running for School Board.

In my career I've been responsible for budgets, forecasts, and managing people and projects. I have previous board experience and know how to think critically, set achievable goals, create a culture of accountability, and challenge others while maintaining collegiality.

Lastly, I am a property owner and tax payer, living in our "forever home" (hopefully!), and always mindful of getting the most value for our tax dollars.

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