

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 *

senator535@gmail.com

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

As an SMS parent and concerned taxpayer, I've seen changes at SMS. Less communication, less focus on academics, less parental partnerships. I'd reorganize the agenda and the Board's priorities; focus needs to move to the budget, students and supporting teachers.

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

Right now, SMS faces many tough challenges but I will outline three. First, the COVID crisis response is dominating parent concerns but that is not mirrored by the Board. The Board needs to define how they will move out of crisis response - how they will support teachers and students with those changes. Second, the SMS building needs work. The Board will play a key role in defining what the physical structure looks like for the next 30 years. Third, academics need to be enforced. Learning gaps are creating challenges for teachers and parents. Kids with lots of potential are not being pushed. Kids who need extra help are facing teachers stretched thin.

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

School budgets need to be student focused. Making sure a budget is efficient doesn't mean cutting teachers and decreasing opportunities for students. Instead, budgets need to look at overhead and administrative costs. What worked last year and what didn't? What was budgeted too high? How many administrators are needed? SMS budget has had large surpluses in recent years - that money should be going through proper budget process and really examined before increasing during the next budget year.

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

SAU16 needs to respond to Covid with data-driven research. Covid response goes beyond masks. Currently, kids cannot eat in our cafeteria at SMS. Parents cannot help in classrooms or the library or attend performances. Kids cannot face each other as they eat; they must sit at small tables and face away. Kids are being denied important developmental opportunities. NH is no longer publishing a COVID dashboard. SMS School Board needs to immediately define how they evaluate their crisis response. And Covid response needs to be on every meeting agenda as a top priority.

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

Because of the crisis response to COVID, meetings have been fraught. Parents have been seen as interfering instead of advocating. Refocusing the Board meetings and recognizing the importance of parents and all taxpayers is incredibly important. Administrators need to be transparent with how they prioritize budgets and how they communicate that to taxpayers.

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

Reducing the achievement gap has to be a top priority. When you have kids in first grade fluently reading and some who can't, teaching that disparity is pretty challenging. We also need to look at mental health referrals, which are skyrocketing. Finally, SAU16 needs to reduce the number of students who leave SMS and don't move on to CMS. Less kids at CMS means parents and students feel their needs will not be met and that is a problem for the entire SAU.

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? *

Parents are advocates for their children and not adversaries to the Board. Currently, visitors at Board meetings only speak at the end of the very long agenda, often not until almost 9:00 pm. If elected, I'd rearrange the agenda and put visitors back up front of the agenda, just like they were pre-covid. I'd also welcome parent email and calls and respond promptly. Communication between the Board, administrators and parents has been non-existent. All parties need to understand the stresses the school and our students are feeling so they can be remedied.

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? *

As an SMS parent 3X over, I love the possibilities of SMS. I'm invested in SMS. I volunteer, I listen, I attend. The Board currently does not have a budget expert. Both at work and in my volunteer work, I analyze budgets and can give the board the budget expertise they currently lack.

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