

## **School Board Member Candidate Survey: 2023**

Additional comments provided by: **David Brown**

***Question 1: The legislature is considering state funding for private school vouchers. As a school board member, would you agree or disagree with the idea of using public funds for private school vouchers?***

1. Not only are there no statistically significant test results showing private school voucher work, but it has failed when used at other states over a period of time. If public tax dollars are used, chances are that 80% of the money would go to religious schools and to students already enrolled in those schools. In addition, public funds for this purpose would be in direct conflict with the separation of church and state and take money away from public schools where the money is needed.

***Question 2: The PA Senate is now considering legislation (HB 1422 that has passed through the House) that would modernize Pennsylvania's charter school law to ensure transparency, accountability and fiscal responsibility. As a school board member, would you agree or disagree with this approach to regulating charter schools?***

2. Regarding HB1422- It is time that Charter Schools be held accountable for their results and publish where their finances are spent. Pennsylvanians deserve to see assessments of these institutions including evaluations, annual reports, and fund balances. Charter schools should be held to the same standards we expect of anyone who receives public funds, including transparency, ethical standards and greater oversight of spending

***Question 3: Do you agree or disagree that working with teachers unions is necessary to address the teacher shortage crisis in our state?***

3. It is my belief that the only way to truly understand and work in the best interest of the school district is to meet with those that live it day-to-day. Engaging with teachers to see and address the benefits and joys of teaching along with its challenges is the best way to go about appreciating and improving upon the education and experience of the students. In so doing, we can work to address why educators are leaving the profession as well as how we can encourage the young students enrolling in colleges and universities to see teaching as profession to be lauded.

***Question 4: Meeting the mental health and social/emotional needs of our students is paramount to their academic and lifetime success. This requires funds from the school budget, such as hiring school psychologists and social workers. Do you agree or disagree that school district funds should be among the funds used to address students' mental health needs?***

4. In my first term, we expanded on staff in these areas. ESSER funds assisted in this process; however, there is an understanding that they will continue so that students are offered the support they need to be successful in the classroom. Ignoring these critical needs would be irresponsible and not in line with my values. Each student comes to us with different and varying challenges. Working with each student without recognition of those challenges and differences would be a disservice. Physical, emotional, and social issues are real and affect everyone in different ways. Providing services to assist students in breaking down those challenges, thereby allowing them to learn in the best way possible is, in my opinion, our responsibility in conjunction with parental support. Employing qualified staff is important to ensure an inclusive school culture that promotes the academic, social, and emotional well-being of students. Since the hiring of our new Superintendent, the district has focused on these issues and has the support of the majority of the Board. We have passed policies that address this very issue and we are determined to have it influence all areas of the district's educational plan.

***Question 5: Spending school district funds on career and technical education (CTE) benefits all students as they determine their post-graduation plans. As a school board member, would you agree or disagree with putting more funds toward career related learning?***

5. Career and technical education (CTE) is a critical piece of education for students in today's society. Increasing access to CTE means training a new generation of workers. A failure to adequately fund CTE is a failure to support our workforce and our economy more broadly. Students enrolled in CTE in Pennsylvania develop technical, academic and employability skills and engage in work-based experiences with industry partners. While federal support is there, these dollars do not address the ongoing, systemic funding issue we face in Pennsylvania. Public school districts at the local level pay approximately 90% of the costs to send students to CTCs. To increase access and lessen the local burden, the state must increase its share by investing more in the career and technical education subsidy line in the annual state budget. With that said, I support CTE and utilizing funds to accomplish its success is important.

***Question 6: The most important job of a school board member is to make sure students are meeting state academic standards in schools where they are safe and nurtured. Do you agree or disagree that this is the most important focus of your position on the school board?***

6. There are many “jobs” or roles that a school board member needs to focus on. Ensuring students are meeting and/or exceeding standards in a safe environment is at the top of the list. Nurturing students by being inclusive and providing equitable opportunities to succeed is critical to that end. Addressing academics without addressing those areas misses the mark. It is a very complex process and it requires collaboration with all stakeholders. When we provide a robust and rigorous education while addressing those areas it provides opportunities for academic achievement, social and emotional development, and civic engagement. Success in those areas has proven to show gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, verbal skill, motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork.

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