

Questions for school board candidates

- 1. What is your history with the school system/school board? Former student? Teacher/staff member? Parent of current or former student?**

I have a very unique history with the Georgetown County system. I have been a parent of both a former and current student of the Georgetown County Schools. My family chose Georgetown County schools 5 years ago as our school of choice for our children. We were zoned for another county and made the conscious decision to move districts for a few important reasons, including small class sizes, caring teachers, and more intimate educational opportunities. I also have served on the Superintendent's Advisory Council as a parent representative so I have a perspective of what the current pulse is within the district.

In my professional role, I serve as the Director of the Center for Excellence, Academic Advising, and Student Services which includes internships/practicum placements within the Spadoni College of Education at Coastal Carolina University. This role has allowed me, along with the Center team, to build stronger partnerships with the Georgetown County School District and provide more opportunities for teachers to have interns/practicums in their classrooms. Over the past 3 years the number of placements in Georgetown County have more than quadrupled simply due to the fact that our Center has worked very hard with the district office team to increase these opportunities. The teachers and students win from this partnership as it gives "more hands in the classroom" which, in turn, gives more resources to the teachers. This is a win, win for all and my goal is to continue expanding these partnerships moving forward.

The role of the school board is to work with, and on behalf of, the local community to provide oversight to improve student achievement and provide the opportunities and resources necessary for success. I have no ties to any Georgetown County employee and can therefore remain unbiased in my decision making. My motivation for serving on the Georgetown County School Board is simple; I want to bring a "New

Voice and a New Vision." I want all students, parents, and employees to be proud of the fact that ALL students are treated fairly, receive a top-notch education, and are encouraged to pursue their passions!

2. Are you familiar with the curriculum at each level? If so, what will you do to improve student progress and performance, graduation rate, college/career readiness? Does the curriculum address the technological needs for students to survive in a constantly changing world?

Yes, I am familiar with curriculum at each level. However, I do not believe it is the role of the school board to work on curriculum. The district has highly qualified personnel in these roles that do an excellent job and have content area expertise. I believe the role of school board members is to ensure teachers and administrators have the resources necessary to effectively deliver the curriculum, to research new and innovative ways to promote success of all students, and to provide community oversight through a system of checks and balances.

To better prepare our students to be both college and career ready, I would propose each high school have a college and career readiness center, by redirecting district office resources to the points of contact for students and community. Centers will facilitate student opportunities and readiness for college and/or career alternatives through community partnerships, internships, and placements. The center will facilitate specialized training in ever changing and contemporary areas such as technology, military, communication, and interpersonal skills.

There are many pathways to success; if a student is to discover a passion and career path, he or she must have the opportunity to explore options outside traditional curricular umbrellas. Does the curriculum include offerings in non-traditional or auxiliary areas such as military, dance, sports medicine, allied health, or other areas of interest for the students in Georgetown County Schools?

3. Teachers and students are, for the most part, still dependent on textbooks whether in hard copy or online. How and by whom are district textbooks selected? Teachers? Supervisors? Parents? How often are textbooks for each discipline adopted?

The current model for textbooks is that the State Department of Education presents the textbooks and the teachers review and then vote on the adoption. The popularity vote from the teachers determine the textbook(s). The course level and description is then presented to the School Board as simply information (FYI). Textbooks for discipline are adopted generally every 5 years and is based on funding from the State Department of Education.

Textbooks should go through an adoption process. It must begin with the classroom teachers. Teachers are on the front lines every day, they know the standards they must teach better than anyone else, and they know the needs of the students. Committees of teachers from each school should have the opportunity to review samples of different textbooks and supplemental material. Once a consensus has been reached the recommended texts should move into a committee including teachers, administrators, AND parents. All stakeholders should have a voice in the adoption process, which should occur at least every 5 years in order to have up-to-date materials.

4. Other than attending school board meetings, how active will you be in the education process? Attend school functions? Will you tour schools in order to detect facility needs? Talk with teachers? Students? Parents?

I do not believe in making empty promises by saying I am going to do things I know I won't be able to deliver. So, I will be very honest, and share that my goal is to be as active as possible. My first priority would be to tour the schools and talk to people that work in those environments in order to identify their needs, and discuss how the board can help them be more successful in their roles. It is crucial to listen to all stakeholders, which includes parents and students as well as teachers, school personnel, and the community. I think attending

school functions is important as a school board member; I want everyone from students and parents to teachers and support staff to know that I support them and am working tirelessly on their behalf. I want to be a part of the productive struggle, as well celebrate success. As a school board member, it is my duty to represent ALL students and provide my talents, presence, and service to them and help them to find their “why” which will then become their passion for success upon graduation!

5. Other than COVID-19, what is the most important issue facing our district and how will you address it?

Complacency and Status Quo. Our district is becoming less competitive because it is not forward thinking in some areas. Resources are not directed to the elements that will make our students more competitive in a changing world. Georgetown County has some amazing programs, but there are also some areas that need to be either tweaked or completely revamped. One specific example is the opportunity for ALL students to find their Why! My husband and I made the tough decision to allow our daughter to leave Waccamaw High School her junior and senior year to pursue her passion at the South Carolina Governor’s School for the Arts and Humanities. Dance was her “why,” but our school district could not meet her needs. I think all students deserve such opportunities right here in Georgetown County. Not all students should, or even need, to attend college. By not offering other pathways to success, we are only offering some of our students a path to failure. I have not hidden my stance on this but I also think we, as a district, need to provide them more opportunities to become career ready. The early college high school track is a missing link, as well as, opportunities for all students to attend trade schools. I want to meet with all students in my district who are sophomores and juniors and find out what they want to pursue and what we, as a district, can do to provide resources to help them pursue their passion.

6. What is your understanding of school Choice and do you support it?

I believe in school choice for parents and families. But with the caveat that those students and families who are unable to choose do not get left behind and become less competitive. Our district needs to work like we want to be a district of choice. If we work like a business trying to develop a superior product (in order to survive) for more consumers, our students will benefit. Too often, we work to be “good enough” because there is no threat to our business, as we will be in business no matter how mediocre our product (tax supported). We need more accountable outcomes and the power to put elements of our district out of business if it is mediocre or status quo. I believe parents, if they see opportunities for their children, should embrace the choice to make their children more competitive. Parents need to push the schools and district to behave like a choice district rather than one that is good enough to meet minimal standards.

We need to ensure that no matter what school in the district you attend, you have the teachers, resources and opportunities that are second to none! Parents should not have to move, and students should not have to leave their “home schools” because ALL Georgetown County Schools should be stellar. I will work hard to ensure equity and rigor across the district.

7. What is your understanding of School Funding?

School districts are primarily funded through property taxes. This is the main reason why we have inequity issues with the education students receive. The old cliché “the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer” stands true with regard to equitable education. If you happen to live in an affluent district where there is industry and expensive housing, then the tax dollars funding education will be substantial. This is significant regarding the quality of education one receives because a wealthy district can attract and retain more highly qualified educators by providing a higher salary and benefits. The adverse is

true for poorer districts that have very little industry and inexpensive housing where the tax dollar contribution will be less. If by chance I'm born into poverty, I receive a lower quality education and education is the essential variable for me to work my way out of poverty. Hence, the cycle of poverty.

The federal funding only amounts to about 8 to 10 % of the total funding formula, and because our Constitution relegates education as a primary responsibility of individual states, the federal dollars are typically earmarked for specific student populations, i.e., high needs, special needs, etc.. State funding is usually based on a particular formula that varies from state to state and usually comprises about 50% of any districts' funding source beyond property taxes. However, in these state-formulas a high need district would be targeted to receive more funding support to make up the difference of minimal property taxes. To better establish equitable education school funding, formulas need to rely less on property taxes, identify extra funding sources for high need school districts, and have education become a more substantial part of any state's fiscal budget.

8. Would you support teaching the Constitution? Why or Why not

Students need to adopt a value system and an appreciation for the freedoms and opportunities offered by our country. This appreciation will encourage participation in what our country offers, such as the political system, the educational system, home ownership, and equal opportunities to advance. I would definitely support teaching the Constitution. We live in a republic where democratic participation is guided by the Constitution. If the purpose of education is to prepare citizens who can successfully participate in a democratic society, then they need to understand the rules and processes that facilitate democratic decision-making and problem solving.

