

2022 Polk County School Board Candidates

Each of the candidates were given the same four questions and responded between March 23rd and April 5th. All candidates responded independently.

SEAT 3	<b>Sarah Fortney</b>	<b>Richard E. Nolte</b>
What is your primary employment?	My only job is serving staff and students at Polk County Public Schools as the incumbent candidate for District 3 Polk County School Board.	Retired School Teacher (36yrs) Owner small local business (Nolte's Golf)
What are the MOST important factors that drive your decision-making process, background, upbringing, family, and/or community service involvement?	Key factors that drive my decision making starts with faith in my ability. I consider all possibilities working together with district leadership. I seek feedback from a variety of resources including stakeholders. I look at how the decision will impact our classrooms in the long-term and short-term. I seek to figure out what I do not know and what external factors exist that might be out of my control. I find listing the pros and cons helps tremendously. I weigh the costs and benefits for all board votes. I listen to understand without interjecting personal emotion. I will always believe people are good.	My Christian upbringing, and strong Family values. Strong desire to fight for Parents and Guardians rights.



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What podcasts or media do you listen to or follow regularly?	I listen to a variety of educational podcasts. Those that inform me on dominate issues facing our staff and students are a priority. I read all our local newspapers and subscribe to a multitude of professional newsletters. I observe national and local news outlets when possible. I also enjoy information from ESPN and SEC network.	Dr. Charles Stanley, and Local News.
Why should people support you and your campaign for this position over the other candidate(s) for school board?	Public education is the bedrock of our communities. Our board is representative of our community. I have had the privilege of collaborating with Superintendent Byrd and now Superintendent Heid. I have learned so much during my first term by working with so many diverse groups throughout our district and state. My 37 years of experience, my ability to build relationships and my positive interactions with all stakeholders makes me the most qualified candidate.	Experience in the classroom. Graduated from Fla. Southern(B.S.) Rollins College Masters Degree Administration/Supervision(Full Scholarship) my 2 Children graduated from Polk Public Schools.(Teacher and Nurse RN+) 4 soon to be 5 grand Kids in Polk Public Schools.
Website or social media where people can get more information	<a href="https://sites.google.com/view/thesarahfortneycampaign/home">https://sites.google.com/view/thesarahfortneycampaign/home</a>	<a href="https://ricknolteforpcsb.poliengine.com/">https://ricknolteforpcsb.poliengine.com/</a>



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SEAT 5	Terry Lee Clark	Kay Fields
What is your primary employment?	I am a worship pastor.	My primary employment entails balancing my day to day work at Girls Inc. of Lakeland and my work as a school board member. My work at Girls Inc. often overlaps with my work as a school board member.
What are the MOST important factors that drive your decision-making process, background, upbringing, family, and/or community service involvement?	There's only one, my faith. Although my wife & family are involved and supportive of me running because they see the need for change in our schools. I grew up in Bradenton and went to Southeast HS. I graduated USF with a degree in Elementary Education. My father was a functional alcoholic, but did teach me a good work ethic. My community involvement has basically been around the Faith Republican Club, and the food give giveaway from Feed Tampa Bay.	Growing up in a small rural town called McComb, Mississippi in the 50's and 60's exposed me to many experiences that has helped me be the person that I am today. I am the youngest of 6 siblings and a preacher's kid. My dad was an AME pastor and was given annual pastoral circuit assignments in Pike county and neighboring counties. It was not unusual for my dad to pastor two churches simultaneously - alternating Sunday services and Sunday School. My mother passed away when I was entering middle school from a lengthy illness and her death impacted my life in ways that changed the trajectory of my entire family's life. We were raised with high expectations and high values. We were raised to honor the golden rule 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. We were raised to be a blessing to others and to love one another. We were a closely knit family and that has continued from generation to generation. We were raised to give back to our community and reminded often by scripture that "To much is given much is required". The Lord has blessed our family immensely and what was instilled in me throughout my childhood has now been instilled in my children and my grandchildren. I was told that no one is going to give you anything and that you have to work hard for what you get. I have instilled this value in my children and hopefully my children will instill this value in their children. The love of the Lord; doing unto others as I would have them do unto me; hard work; being a blessing to others; loving my family and giving back to my community and to those less fortunate than me are the most important factors that drives my decision.



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What podcasts or media do you listen to or follow regularly?	WLKF, Fox News, Newsmax & OAN	Podcasts that I listen to on a regular basis are: The Leadership Podcast by Pastor Craig Groeschel; Les Brown; Pastor Tony Evans; John Maxwell; Positive University Podcast Jon Gordon. Media outlets that I follow on a regular basis are The Ledger, the Orlando Sentinel, and the Washington Post.
Why should people support you and your campaign for this position over the other candidate(s) for school board?	First of all, I believe every Conservative candidate that's running would be a super School Board member. We presently, don't have one Conservative board member that has the backbone to stand up for what is best for our children, therefore we need to elect 4 Conservative candidates this year. If there are not 4 Board members that will stand together, we will accomplish nothing! The people of Polk County should support me over a 20 year incumbent, because after 20 years of allowing indoctrination to become prevalent in our school system, as well as having students that are way below average in the basics of reading and math, with little or no civics, and finally not dealing successfully with the behavior issues in the classroom, I will lead out in each of these areas to bring about change. These changes will not be overnight, but I plan to focus on academics over things like CRT (which are in our schools) and gender identity, which should only be talked about in the home. I plan on encouraging parents in my district to become more involved in knowing what's in their child's curriculum and library.	I have served on the school board for 19 plus years and have the historical knowledge and experience needed to be an effective board member for our students, employees, and families. My work at Girls Inc. has provided me the opportunity to see first-hand the needs of many of our students and families and has allowed me to the opportunity to advocate for their needs along with the needs of the students and families in our school district. I have been intimately involved in our community for over 40 years serving on numerous boards and committees and have established relationships that can help me better understand the needs of our community and how we can best work together for the betterment of our school district and community.
Website or social media where people can get more information	<a href="https://www.TerryClark4pcsb.com">https://www.TerryClark4pcsb.com</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/KayFieldsDistrict5/">https://www.facebook.com/KayFieldsDistrict5/</a>



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SEAT 6	Sara Jones	Justin Sharpless
What is your primary employment?	I am an attorney. I own Sara Jones Law, P.A.	I am a professor in the Agricultural Studies Department at Warner University. I have devoted my life to the field of education and the agriculture industry. Before pursuing my PhD, I taught in local middle and high school classrooms. I am proud that some of my graduates are now teaching in Polk's middle and high school classrooms.
What are the MOST important factors that drive your decision-making process, background, upbringing, family, and/or community service involvement?	The most important factor in my decision-making is doing what's right. I was raised on the principle that you must do everything with integrity. That guiding principle has been with me my whole life. It is quickly followed by justice. Each of us has our own gifts and our own journey. I believe in everyone's right to follow their own path (so long as it doesn't hinder others). I've been an advocate for community, economic, and educational justice for most of my adult life because I believe in the capacity of people to improve our world.	The most important factor that drives my personal decision making is my faith. Being a Christian and upholding Christian values and character is central to my identity. Another important factor for me in decision-making is ensuring the protection of liberties provided for citizens by the US Constitution and Bill of Rights. Finally, when it comes to school board matters, it is the interests of children and ensuring their voice is heard and needs are considered first before anything or anyone else.
What podcasts or media do you listen to or follow regularly?	I'm not really a podcast person, but when I do listen, they are primarily about professional development. For example, I listen to some episodes of the Crushing Chaos and Wealthy Woman Lawyer Podcasts. In terms of other media, I tend to seek sources of wisdom and mindset growth such as YouTube videos from various wise people like Simon Senek, Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Oprah, and others. I also really enjoy reading.	I try not to live in a personal echo chamber, and I have students from all walks of life. In an effort to reach them and be more relatable, I consume media from a variety of perspectives. I maintain a healthy balance of conservative, moderate and liberal news sources, from Fox News and the Wall Street Journal, to the Associated Press and Reuters, to the New York Times and CNN.



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<p>Why should people support you and your campaign for this position over the other candidate(s) for school board?</p>	<p>I have a proven record of advocacy for our community and our children, and I love them. Alice Walker once said, "All great teachers love us. That is essentially what makes them great." That is true of every profession. My love for children and educators, particularly in Polk County, is what drove my decision to run for School Board, despite my not wanting to be a political candidate. That love, combined with my ability to analyze complex issues and my advocacy skills, places me in a prime position to be a strong voice for Polk County students and staff.</p>	<p>Two reasons: first, I am the most qualified and second, I stand with the conservative, pro-student and pro-taxpayer voters of Polk County. I was born and raised in Polk County, graduated from Polk County Public Schools (PCPS) and taught in them as well - which means I can be trusted to have the deepest knowledge base as a native, former employee and customer of our education system. As a former PCPS and LWCS educator, I am aware of the challenges local teachers face in the classroom and would provide them representation. In addition, I have been involved in PCPS by serving on the Attendance Boundary Committee, Superintendent Search Screening Committee and watching or attending virtually every school board meeting for the last 18+ months, so I have a head start in understanding school board business. I am a law-abiding citizen who prioritizes child safety, and respects the law enforcement officers who keep Polk’s children and school staff safe. Finally, I will be a voice for Polk’s business community—advocating for fiscally wise budgeting and stronger accountability for student outcomes and meeting local workforce needs. While preparing college graduates for entry into the agricultural industry, I have built relationships with business partners who communicate their hiring needs. I understand and take seriously the school district’s role in preparing talent for local businesses of all sizes and industries. I also understand the importance of financial responsibility and ensuring the district makes prudent budget and spending decisions, so we can keep debt service costs low, pay our employees competitively and direct as many dollars to the classroom as possible, all without having to ask taxpayers to shoulder any more of the burden.</p> <p>Help me make my “MARK” on PCPS through my student-centered priorities of: Meaningful diplomas, Access for all, Recruit &amp; retain staff, and Kindergarten readiness! Thank you for considering the #SharpieForStudents campaign.</p>
<p>Website or social media where people can get more information</p>	<p><a href="https://sarajonesforpolk.com/">https://sarajonesforpolk.com/</a></p>	<p><a href="https://sharpieforstudents.com/">https://sharpieforstudents.com/</a></p>



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SEAT 7	<b>Lisa Miller</b>	<b>Dell Quarry</b>	<b>Jill Sessions</b>
<p>What is your primary employment?</p>	<p align="center">Polk County School Board Member District, 7</p>	<p>I recently retired after working at the district-level in Polk Schools for over two decades. Now, I am focusing my time and energy on transforming education as the District 7 representative on the school board. I will not have a learning curve to navigate the complexities of the school system because of my organizational knowledge and experience. I will be able to drill down by asking the right questions of staff that will allow for assurance of taxpayer money spent wisely and efficiently.</p>	<p align="center">Director of Solid Waste for the City of Plant City Secondary employment: Adjunct Professor of Economics for Southern New Hampshire University (on line, part time)</p>
<p>What are the MOST important factors that drive your decision-making process, background, upbringing, family, and/or community service involvement?</p>	<p>I have worked in disability advocacy for two decades, building advocacy networks to support families, teachers, and community leaders. My work has been to assure every child has access to supports and educational services no matter their level or ability. I am the mother of two children. My son Michael was born with significant disabilities. I left my work in advertising to become a classroom teacher. While teaching I saw the needs of teachers supporting students of varying abilities and the needs of parents working to navigate a system that can be complicated. My husband and I own a real estate brokerage and we understand to break the circle of poverty in our county it takes education and meaningful opportunities for employment or entrance to a college/university. I received my bachelor's degree in mass communications/public relations from the University of South Florida and my masters in Public Administration from Barry University. I have chaired the Polk County ESE Advisory Committee and represented Polk County as a member of Florida's State Advisory Committee on Exceptional Student Education with the Florida Department of Education. I was appointed to chair the Family Care Council for Area 14 in 2012 by Gov. Rick Scott. My most recent gubernatorial appointment was to the Florida Developmental Disability Council in 2018. Locally, I worked with the City of Lakeland to form the Alliance on Accessibility and hire its first full-time ADA coordinator. I am a member of the Polk Transportation Planning Organization, Polk Vision Operating Board, Polk Education Foundation, and Lakeland Kiwanis. I believe in creating access for all students by building learning communities and encouraging community partnerships.</p>	<p>There are several key factors that drives my decision making, including actively listening. However, I consider integrity to be the most important factor. Integrity and its importance in leadership promotes trust, respect, accountability for decisions made, and results for ALL. The aforementioned factors are/were key to my professional and community leadership success as highlighted in a few of the entities below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) State Advisory Council, Revised Gifted Rule Implementation</li> <li>- Polk County Council of Parent Teacher Associations, former two-term President</li> <li>- Florida Grant Development Network, K-12 (FG DNK-12), former President, Executive Board member and Charter member of my professional organization             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Honorary life member of Florida PTA</li> <li>- City of Lakeland History and Culture Center Advisory Committee, Member</li> </ul> </li> <li>- United Way of Central Florida Community Impact Cabinet</li> </ul> <p>My collaborative experience will allow me to work effectively with other board members in support of Polk County Public Schools' organizational direction of the Superintendent</p>	<p align="center">My faith in God, my love for my family, my love for people, and my reputation.</p> <p>I have a passion for helping people learn to improve the quality of their lives through education and personal development. I do this daily at my jobs.</p> <p>I also have a passion to help people with mental illness and chemical addictions. I lead a group at Celebrate Recovery.</p>



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<p>What podcasts or media do you listen to or follow regularly?</p>	<p>I don't have time to listen to many podcasts. I occasionally listen to leadership podcasts. My daily media is locally focused</p>	<p>Polk County Public Schools (PCPS) podcasts and media that I follow or listen to for the purposes of educational data, students' information, and students' achievement are listed below. I also reference this media for additional information regarding students' preparation for global competitiveness that is supported by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PCPS programming on demand by way of YouTube channel [<a href="https://www.youtube.com/polkcountypublicschools">https://www.youtube.com/polkcountypublicschools</a>],</li> <li>- PCPS News and Events Media [<a href="https://polkschoolsfl.com/news/">https://polkschoolsfl.com/news/</a>],</li> <li>- PCPS Podcasts [<a href="https://polkschoolsfl.com/podcasts/">https://polkschoolsfl.com/podcasts/</a>]</li> <li>- Polk County Public Schools Twitter [<a href="https://twitter.com/polkschoolsnews">https://twitter.com/polkschoolsnews</a>]</li> <li>- Polk County Public Schools Facebook [<a href="https://www.facebook.com/polkcountypublicschools/">https://www.facebook.com/polkcountypublicschools/</a>]</li> <li>- Florida Department of Education [<a href="https://www.fldoe.org">https://www.fldoe.org</a>]</li> <li>- U. S. Department of Education [<a href="http://www.ed.gov">www.ed.gov</a>]</li> </ul>	<p>None regularly. I don't watch television or listen to the radio. I check headlines at a variety of sources via email, social media, group chats, and prayer chains. If something looks worth reading, I access the source. I read academic sources when available.</p>



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<p>Why should people support you and your campaign for this position over the other candidate(s) for school board?</p>	<p>I have been dedicated to the students and staff of Polk county schools. I was a volunteer advocate asking questions and working to bring systemic change long before I was elected. I have the experience and knowledge to continue the growth for all students.</p>	<p>Support for Dell Quarry for School Board is support for a Quality Education for ALL. I want to continue service to the public in pursuit of the District 7 seat to be a voice for students and to move the district forward for ALL stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I have keen insight of Polk's educational system as a parent, school volunteer and a district employee in various positions. I am uniquely qualified for this position.</li> <li>- I have over two decades of district-level experience, I understand policies and procedures, programs, plans, and organizational relationships of numerous departments within the school system; and,</li> <li>- I have worked on numerous boards, committees, and professional associations through which I have developed the types of relationships that are critical to expanding learning opportunities for students.</li> </ul> <p>I have worked in the field of education in several leadership roles, including Polk County Public Schools' Title I Parent Liaison, FLDOE Supplemental Educational Services (SES) Executive Director/ Approved Provider for Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics, Academic Advisor at Polk State College (PCC), and Polk County Public Schools Technology Grant &amp; E-rate office where I collaborated with external and internal stakeholders to get education and classroom technology tools funding for students, teachers and district staff, e.g. Enhancing Education Through Technology (E2T2), Earmark for Assistive Technology(AT), E-rate Program, etc.</p> <p>We have critical challenges facing our district as we continue to bounce back from a once in a century global pandemic. Challenges such as: to ensure that our students are making progress and are prepared for college, trade school, or the job market, retain our talented educators and give them the tools to succeed, and to make sure that we spend taxpayer money wisely and efficiently.</p> <p>In conclusion, I am an honorary life member of the Florida PTA because of distinguished service to students. I was deeply involved in my children's education, as I believe every parent should be, and I know the impact that parent involvement can have in educational outcomes. I will work to increase parent participation as a school board member.</p>	<p>I have a high level of college education and many years of experience in upper management. I have: taught students on campus and on line at the college level in math and writing; managed multi-million dollar contracts; wrote procurement bid specifications and evaluated bid responses; supervised Solid Waste Code Enforcement; managed large construction projects for Hillsborough County Schools during the housing boom that preceded the Great Recession (a situation now faced by Polk County School); directed a diverse staff of 35 employees from a failing environment to one of success (had to fire several people and rebuild the workforce); led contractors and employees through hurricane clean-up responses several times; implemented a major change in business operation (manual to automated trash collection) during a pandemic; and lowered the rates of Plant City Solid Waste when most municipalities were raising theirs (by increasing operational efficiency and successful budget management).</p> <p>I possess a strong ability to negotiate positive outcomes even under stressful circumstances and the courage to speak out respectfully when I disagree with something or someone.</p>
<p>Website or social media where people can get more information</p>	<p><a href="http://www.Miller4Polk.com">http://www.Miller4Polk.com</a></p>	<p><a href="https://votewellwithdell.org/">https://votewellwithdell.org/</a></p>	<p><a href="https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100079939021733">https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100079939021733</a></p>

