

League of Women Voters 2020 Questionnaire

Position/philosophy statement

All children can and want to learn, so we must meet them where they are and use appropriate teaching strategies and resources to make that a reality.

What experience and qualities do you feel you bring to this office?

I am an Industrial Engineer from Va. Tech and a self-employed Safety Consultant. I am a substitute teacher. I volunteer in the community: PTA (local units, district Council, NCPTA), Communities In Schools, Azalea Festival Youth Art & High Writing Contests, and recruit volunteers for local races. My primary volunteer focus is NHCS. I currently serve on the Title IX, Crisis Management, School Health Advisory, and All Hands on Deck Committees. I have served on many other school and community committees: Strategic Plan 2006-10, the work group that created/rolled out our Career and Technical High School SEA-Tech, Eliminating the Achievement Gap Committee, Blue Ribbon Commission for the Prevention of Youth Violence Committee (now Voyage)'s Education Action Team, and Wilmington Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Education Action Committee.

I am uniquely qualified for this role because I am a demonstrated leader, a Sleeve-Roller-Upper and a Do-er. I have earned accolades for my work, but am most proud of how I have put my words and ideas, in partnership with those of students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members, into action over the years. I am a Search and Re-Apply kind of girl, always looking for best practices and innovative, yet manageable strategies to bring into our classrooms and into daily operations of the school system. I am a passionate advocate for engaging parents/community to contribute their time, talent and voice to improve our schools.

What do you think is the most important responsibility of a school board member?

There are several equally important responsibilities of School Board members. First, they must commit to showing up on time to and staying to the end of meetings and to actively participating on committees and in school system events. They must treat each other and all education stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators, counselors/social workers, support and ancillary employees, and community members) with respect. They must work as a unified and cohesive team, recognizing, valuing, and utilizing each other's individual skill sets.

School Board members hire a competent Superintendent and then ensure that he has what he needs to run an exemplary school system that delivers high quality education to all its students via high quality and appropriately trained education professionals and support and ancillary

staff, in clean, safe, and well-maintained facilities and athlete venues. This involves proactively asking questions and learning about each department and its role.

School Board members create and adopt clear and thorough policies and then provide oversight on consistent compliance with those policies and supporting standard operating procedures and guidelines. They approve and monitor the annual budget and seek and solidify local, regional, state, and federal partnerships and grants to enhance the budget.

Finally, School Board members must regularly seek input from all education stakeholders and be willing to try new things even if they are hard.

What are the critical state funding needs for this county's schools and how would you address those needs?

1. Covid compliance - There are so many layers of Covid-related safety precautions that are required by the CDC and state and local Health and Human Services departments in order to reopen safely schools, not only for PPE and cleaning supplies, but also for transportation restrictions and HVAC operation and maintenance.

2. More mental health support staff - Most schools in NC do not have the recommended ratio of counselors, social workers, and psychologists to students, that enables schools to provide services in real time. This is concerning as stress rampantly permeates all of our lives. Partnerships with Dept. of Public Health for school nurses, Dept. of Health and Human Services for mental health personnel, Coastal Horizons (via WHAT clinics) professionals, and Communities In Schools for Student Support Specialists, among others) have already been established but we still need more human resources in our buildings for relationship building and to provide ongoing social-emotional training and support for staff and students.

3. Reduced class sizes

4. Technology and Internet Access for students

How to get funding/resources? Reach out regularly to State Legislators and County Commissioners (who provide ~30% of NHCS budget income) and other local resources, such as City of Wilmington, in-kind business partnerships, endowments, and grants, for targeted financial and human resource support. Explore forming an educational foundation and asking for a bond referendum.

How would you assess teacher satisfaction in the county and how would you promote professional development?

Teacher satisfaction can be gauged formally and informally in a number of ways. Brief periodic surveys can be done at the school level, within departments (math, arts, EC, etc) and across the district. Results should be shared with the surveyed group and higher with the intent to celebrate the positive trends and to create action plans that address any negative trends. School Improvement Teams and teacher organizations are excellent survey hosts.

Direct dialogue should also be used to take the pulse of teacher satisfaction. The Board of Education should host regularly scheduled “Town Hall” type meetings with teachers/educators to listen to their concerns personally and encourage the Superintendent to do the same. BoE members should visit schools and have casual conversations with teachers, staff, and administrators and observe them in action.

Ongoing professional development is key to maintaining a thriving workforce. I want to learn more about how NHCS selects and tracks mandatory professional development for its teachers and other employees. Understanding there is not much wiggle room with school calendars, I would like to see them created to allow for more professional development opportunities (use half days?). Topics can include additional multi-cultural sensitivity, implicit bias, and trauma-informed communities training as well as teaching best practices for virtual instruction and face2face instruction (Action Based Learning) and for working with parents.

Importance of Pre-K (very important)

Starting school at an early age increases a child's chance of succeeding in school since most brain development occurs prior to the age of 5. Prekindergarten can help decrease the educational gap between low-income and minority students and their higher income and non-minority counterparts. It provides children with a foundation for number and letter recognition, reading, and problem-solving using structured and unstructured play that makes learning fun. It provides a framework for developing other important skills for school such as peer interaction and socialization, paying attention, and following rules and directions. But most importantly, prekindergarten sets children on the path to becoming lifetime learners.

What are the issues in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers?

I see several issues as very important in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers: (1) assuring teachers that someone is researching and lobbying for avenues towards higher pay for entry level and veteran teachers (e.g., supplements, stipends, bonus pay for a Master's degree), for more professional development, and for additional intrinsic benefits; (2) ensuring teachers have a safe, healthy, and positive working environment; and (3) making an intentional effort to direct minority students towards the teaching profession and then recruiting minority teachers and teacher interns into the school system.

Teachers are more likely to stay if they are:

- valued and recognized for their tireless work in and out of the classroom, perhaps even rewarded somehow when their work increases student academic performance and enhances overall school climate
- given meaningful opportunities to provide input on school level and school system level issues and then empowered to take action, where possible, on those issues
- provided with adequate and timely coaching and professional development at all levels in their teaching career, but especially in their first three years of teaching
- working in a school and school system where policies and procedures, systems, equipment, and support resources are in place to provide a safe, healthy, and positive school environment (physically, socially, and emotionally) for all students, teachers, and staff