

Star News Questionnaire BoE Election 2020

BIO INFO

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Date of birth: February 13, 1962

Education: BS Industrial Engineering with minors in Safety Engineering and Psychology from Virginia Tech

Profession: Safety Consultant and “Professional” Volunteer and Education Activist

Political affiliation/experience: Republican

1. How would you ensure New Hanover [County Schools] is adequately prepared for a school-year shutdown due to COVID-19 or other infectious disease?

One person on the Board of Education cannot take action steps alone, so my priority will be to work with other Board members and the Superintendent to reach consensus on the important issues and action steps, prioritize them, and then expect the Superintendent to bring them to fruition in a timely manner.

I do not believe that people should be forced to choose between their safety and their jobs. My professional industry, that of Occupational Safety and Health, gained traction when OSHA was formed so that workers would not have to make this choice. Safety should be an automatic, a given, an expectation, so we are compelled to evaluate all possible return-to-school options for feasibility and sustainability and put them in place. NHCS is using money received from the CARES Act to pay for the many new layers of safety precautions that are required by the CDC and state and local Health and Human Services departments in order to reopen schools safely.

The NHCS Crisis Management Team, an interagency team led by the Director of Safety (*I have been an active member since 2000*), created a comprehensive Pandemic Plan years ago when the H1N1 pandemic was imminent, and recently reviewed that plan as part of its annual review of the entire Emergency Management Plan in the fall of 2019. The Covid-19 pandemic has its own unique characteristics that require some major revisions to the Pandemic Plan. Preventive maintenance and daily operation systems have also been modified, especially those for air handling systems and cleaning schedules.

I do not think that NHCS should or will have to experience an entire “school-year shutdown” if physical and behavior safety procedures are followed in all NHCS

facilities by students, teachers / substitute teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents / volunteers (when allowed). In the mean time during remote learning, NHCS has some very flexible and creative teachers to deliver best-in-class instruction and caring, empathetic school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and other mental health partner professionals to provide emotional support and services. They just need to do it!

- 2. Do you support reforming the school curriculum to incorporate the 1898 Wilmington Coup, the history of Confederate statues in Wilmington and the achievements of Black, indigenous and other people of color? Why, or why not?**

Yes, I support incorporating local history as well as current events into the school curriculum at all grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school) but would want lesson plans, resource materials, and field trips to be reviewed and approved by professional educators, school counselors, and historians and political scientists for accuracy, non-partisan bias, age appropriateness, and impact on children's psyche so that well-intended but perhaps misguided lessons are not used.

- 3. Currently, buses will take students to school for the federal school lunch program. Will you seek funding for a delivery option?**

Yes, if I were on the Board of Education right now, I would have sought funding and done all that I could to get food into the hands and stomachs of our school children. Luckily, NHCS was able to use money from the CARES Act to open more feeding sites when schools had to transition from the Summer Feeding Program to the National School Lunch program.

- 4. Remote learning due to COVID-19 poses challenges to lower income students, who[se parents] are less likely to afford childcare or have a parent in the home and may have broadband connectivity issues. What steps would you take to ensure students complete online learning?**

NHCS and its Board of Education are going to have to try new things, *even if they are hard*, to deliver the high-quality education and support services that parents expect for their children while it is using remote online learning instruction in Plan C, Plan B, and on remote learning days when we finally get to Plan A.

Access, or rather lack of access, to technology and the internet is a huge barrier. I hope by now that NHCS has achieved a 1:1 student to technology match. If not, then that effort needs to be a primary focus until it is achieved. One device per household will not suffice if there is more than child in the household. If cameras on devices are needed for full classroom participation, then devices with cameras should be issued.

NHCS has worked diligently with local internet providers to attain hotspots for students that need them. The City of Wilmington and New Hanover County Government have also provided free Wifi hotspots around our community. Parents need to get frequent reminders about how to access community hot spots, and get those reminders through multiple sources, including through teachers and counselors. Online updates are not helpful to the families who need the internet get the information. NHCS and businesses are working in partnership with local child care, public housing, and community centers, churches and faith-based organizations, and other businesses that can provide education-related services to provide internet connectivity and academic support to children all across the county. The NHC Public Library is expanding its "Class Project" program to include five free tutoring sessions per week for children.

Any NHCS Virtual Teaching Advisory team, workgroup, committee, or council, both at the district level and school level, needs cross-department and cross-grade level teacher representation to ensure that the school system front-line workers, its teachers, are getting what they need to be prepared for and to do their jobs in the manner to which students and parents have become accustomed. We wouldn't send our employees to work without the appropriate PPE and training to use it properly, so why should we send our teachers to work without adequate training to teach remotely and online. Teachers are very intelligent and pride themselves on their ability to reach their vast array of students to instill a love of life-long learning, but they still need professional development on how to be effective and engaging online/remote learning teachers.

Parents and community helpers providing child care and remote learning labs need more training on how to use the platforms on which their children are learning and receiving instruction, and they need a reliable contingency plan with directions upfront as to what to do if these platforms crash or are not available for whatever reasons.

NHCS is working in partnership with organizations like Communities In Schools that place more caring adults in the school building and on support teams to ensure academic achievement and success and the NHRMC Resiliency Task Force that trains NHCS employees and other community members on how resiliency and trauma-informed, family-focused systems can improve early childhood as well as academic, health, and social outcomes in our community.

In a nod to a Total Quality approach, the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle would suggest that regular "check-in" surveys be sent to students, parents, teachers, and administrators while NHCS is in remote / online learning mode to keep a pulse on instruction and other support system delivery and that NHCS be ready to make adjustments immediately as it moves from Plan C to Plan B to Plan A.

Finally, the New Hanover County Council of PTAs (*I am the current Vice President and Outreach Chair*) is working with NHCS' Media Specialists and New Hanover

County Public Libraries to establish a book mobile so that all children have access to books while in remote learning. Today's Readers are Tomorrow's Leaders!

5. Many school boards across the country are at least considering doing away with School Resource Officers. Should New Hanover? Why, or why not?

I support having School Resource Officers (SROs) in NHCS schools. They add another set of eyes and ears on school campuses and another layer of caring adult role models in our schools. Well-trained school resource officers can operate more like counselors, educators, and mentors working with students to defuse peer conflict and address issues such as drug and alcohol use. Their presence in the schools also demonstrates that law enforcement officers are more than just people who patrol our streets, highways, and communities to "catch the bad guys." SROs should not be used at schools as disciplinarians, however. That task falls to teachers and school administrators.

A lieutenant from the School Resource Officer program actively participates on the NHCS Crisis Management Team, providing invaluable input and key insight needed to developing emergency plans for NHCS and drills to practice those plans. I have been an active member of this team since 2000.

The New Hanover County Sheriff's Office works in conjunction with the school system when it receives tips from crisis hotlines and responds in real time to intervene in potentially dangerous situations before regrettable behavior occurs. An SRO is oftentimes the responding officer.

I would like to reiterate that one person on the Board of Education cannot take action steps alone, so my priority will be to work with other Board members and the Superintendent to reach consensus on the important issues and action steps, prioritize them, and expect the Superintendent to bring them to fruition.