

# 13 QUESTIONS FROM **SPECTRUM NEWS**

## Meet the Candidate: Janie Ruddy

1. Why are you running? If elected, what would be your top goals as school board member?

I am running for School Board because after Ms. Conklin and Ms. Massaro departs, no other school board incumbent nor current candidate has any k12 education experience. We are facing big hills and I have the education skills, business leadership experience, and problem solving skills to make an impact.

My top goals are:

1. Enhance career and college readiness by ensuring our students graduate with a Diploma PLUS. Industry trades certifications, pre-apprenticeship experience or college credits.
2. Ensure that all students in all classrooms across all campuses receive best in class instructional strategies and services moving Flagler County to an A rated district.
3. Reverse the staff shortage trend by creating programs that attract top talent and lowering the costs of benefits which can take up to a third of salaries in premiums.

2. In what school district or community activities/organizations have you been involved?

- Teacher 13 years
- Lead Teacher 3 years
- Teacher of the Year 2017
- FCAT Science Assessment Question Reviewer
- National Board Certified Educator
- Future Problem Solvers Coach
- Science Olympiad Coach
- Math and Science Academic Coach
- School Accreditation Committee

- School Improvement Plan Committee
- Science Pacing Guide Development for Flagler Schools
- Girl Scout Troop Leader
- Treasurer, Flagler Council of Teachers of Math

3. What is the top issue you believe the district needs to address?

The top issue is teacher retention. 45% of the staff this year have been in Flagler Schools less than 3 years. We are spending millions on the same training programs and initiatives that are not completed due to turnover. Administrators are spending significant time acquiring and hiring new teachers to replace those leaving. Our district then has difficulty reaching the goals of long term initiatives and skilled faculty who know how to improve learning outcomes for the children who struggle the most. Teacher turnover is occurring not only due to low pay but the cost of medical premiums and lack of respect for the profession.

4. What can be done to ensure everyone who graduates is either ready for college or a vocation?

We need to work with our guidance team members and develop a middle school intake process informing every parent and child about the paths available in high school and how to set themselves up for success in middle school. An exit session should also occur at the end of 8th grade to reassess the track the student has chosen to assist in high school course selections. The Bright Future Scholarship program should be a part of this discussion and make clear tuition for trade schools as well as higher education tuition may be covered.

Each student and parent should be informed about the following:

- Military service / ROTC
- Pre-Apprenticeship programs with graduating with an industry certification in a trade
- Dual Enrollment
- Advanced Placement Courses
- Advanced International Certificate of Education
- International Baccalaureate

5. How should the district address underperforming schools?

An important role of the School Board is to provide accountability and support instruction through curriculum and professional development. An analysis of the data pinpointing the areas where the school needs support is step one. Next is to hear from the educational staff and uncover what areas of support they most need. Those needs should be prioritized and met. District Curriculum members should then provide high impact lessons on the standards with the lowest scores. Professional development should then be provided to faculty focusing on appropriately challenging students and studying learning science. Early progress indicators should be reviewed so that an entire year does not need to pass before we determine if the initiatives are working.

6. Local and state initiatives have been launched to address the need for more teachers in our classrooms. What more do you think needs to be done to recruit and retain teachers in your District?

In Flagler County the medical premium benefits will cost a staff member over \$17,000 if they choose to cover themselves and one child. Our small county needs to work with other small counties to create a consortium to secure better benefit programs. Second, our Governor has increased STARTING pay now for the second time but has not addressed that educators are not receiving even a 1% salary raise from year to year. The cost of living in Flagler is exceeding the ability of an educator to remain in the profession. Our community businesses can help stem the tide by providing discounts similar to those offered to police and service members, special mortgage programs, and large swaths of land owned by the school district can be used to provide lower cost rent options with manufactured homes. Finally no one, no matter how much they are paid, is going to remain in a toxic work environment. Building a positive culture based upon mutual respect and assumption of positive intent is something I wish to build between parents, students and teachers.

7. What is your stance on the state's current school choice program?

I have no issues with the choice to choose a different school and support the funding providing

families transportation funds up to \$750 per year to attend another public school when equitable programs or performance is not being made available in the student's zoned school. What I do not support is the funding of \$8000 per child, a rate close to the amount the state provides schools to educate the student for the year, for parents to home school their children or to pay for private schooling no matter what the family income level is. There is no requirement of the parent to show competency in the content and the proof of student learning can be a portfolio of work chosen by the parent. Recently, the Flagler School board discovered that the amount of money being diverted to home school children was \$10,000,000 and had not been disclosed to the community as other expenditures are.

8. Does school testing really give an accurate portrayal of the education quality/experience of a School?

Assessments created by trained writers and a full review of the alignment to the educational outcomes is a fair representation of the quality and experience of a school if based upon growth. A research study, The Pernicious Predictability of State-Mandated Tests of Academic Achievement in the United States, shows that the life experiences students have directly correlate with reading comprehension scores which in turn correlate to state-mandated test scores. It is a fact that higher income families can offer their children access to travel, pay to go to museums, or to participate in sport activities. Therefore the growth indicator from the start of the year to the end of the year is a better measure.

Also, what is challenging, the test and ways the final score is being calculated has changed many times over the last 15 years. FCAT to FSA and FSA to FAST makes year-over-year analysis difficult if not impossible.

While not perfect our children need to be able to exhibit competency in a test format because it is how they will be evaluated to enter College, pass a Trade Certification, options they have in the Military, Realtors, Beauticians the list goes on.

9. Issues surrounding gender, sexuality and race have created controversy between school boards and parents. How much say should parents have in deciding what is and is not included

in the public school curriculum?

Florida standards have always been open to public review any time those standards are updated. Teacher lesson plans have always been open upon request. As a former educator I have asked, if not begged for parent volunteers. Recently, there has been this impression that teachers are making white students hate being white, even with the majority of teachers in Flagler being white. That teachers are convincing students to be gay when only trying to make sure all students feel welcome. Parents have always been able to choose for their individual child to be removed from a lesson. This in fact happened in my class when delivering the standard curriculum at the time around the origin of our universe. Caring parents have been wrongly informed about the content of lessons in Flagler County. When a few parents control the curriculum for the majority, blocking the study of history from multiple perspectives or proven science is just wrong. We can come together to create transparency and allow for those parents, as we do to allow parents to restrict access to books, to opt out of particular lessons so long as the educator can be made exempt from that student(s') state assessment scores.

10. What is your rubric for deciding whether a book should be banned?

Graphic descriptions of sex, violence, denigrating a religion or race not related to historical events.

11. What is your position on the new law that implements new rules for teacher unions?

There should be no minimum membership levels in any union and it seems that the exemption on law enforcement, firefighters and correctional officers shows this is to target teachers. Additionally, in this day and age most of us can't recall the last time we wrote a check, unions are now not allowed to have dues auto deducted from checks. If a union can operate under the membership they have they should be allowed to do so. The only reason is to ensure any changes to salary, professional requirements, or to make it easier the ability to fire staff without cause is not blocked and Florida would no longer have to abide by the Florida Public Relations act of 1974 which requires state and local governments to negotiate with unions in good faith.

12. Do you feel students are safe at school? Or does more need to be done to protect school Campuses?

With a daughter in K12 school now and as a former teacher, having been through active lock downs we always need to be vigilant in protecting schools. I commend the Governor for funding this year the panic response system and providing funds to Sheriff's offices for Rapid Response Centers. These panic response systems are similar to what a bank teller might use. Our School Resource Officer program needs to remain intact.

I feel we need to do more to protect our entrances with better security cameras, doors and windows with tougher materials. I do not favor arming teachers. Have had teachers tell me that will cause them to leave the classroom but I have not had teachers tell me they would leave if staff, beyond the SRO are armed. I cannot imagine the anxiety and intimidation a student will feel wondering if a teacher is armed. When we allow guns beyond the perimeter of our schools we give those who wish to do harm additional ammunition. Strengthening perimeters and ability to use wands to scan those who enter and innovative security technology will be less dangerous and more cost effective.

13. Do you feel any changes are needed to your district's budget? Is money being spent in the right places?

As previously mentioned I feel it is irresponsible to pay \$8000 for children to be removed from the schools without accountability for the investment of that money, but that is a state level law. I felt the firing of the district lawyer last year was not a financially responsible decision.