

Meeting the candidate: Vincent Sullivan

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

- I am running for School Board because I want to give back to the community that has given me my most valuable tool – education. Education is the foundational building block upon which a person builds their life. By providing our students a high-quality education, we position them for success in the future. My top goals are 1) Return Flagler Schools to an “A” rated school district; 2) Support and promote Parental Rights in our children’s education; 3) Increase safety.

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

- I am and have been involved with the following organizations:
- Flagler Tiger Bay Club;
- Flagler County Education Foundation;
Governance Committee Chair;
Mentor with the Mentor/Mentee Program
- Flagler County Young Professionals;
- St. Johns County Legal Aid;
- St. Augustine American Inns of Court;
- Flagler County Bar Association;
- St. Johns County Bar Association

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

- The top issue the District needs to address is retention and attraction of quality educators and staff personnel. By starting with quality personnel and educators, the District can build a lasting group of individuals who are highly trained. This will translate into a more efficient and effective organization that will elevate the District back to an “A” rating and allow the District to ensure spending is focused on students.

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

- Our Superintendent has highlighted the key to success in this area. She calls it her Diploma Plus initiative. We need our students to be graduating high school with their diploma, plus some type of certification. Whether our students are ready to take the State fire exam or graduate with an their Certified Veterinary Assistant Certificate from the State of Florida, it is programs like these that will provide our students with key skills that prepare them for college or vocational employment.

5. How should the district address underperforming schools?

- I am proud to report that our school district made the honor roll this year – all A and B rated schools. This is the first time since 2015 this has happened in our District. I would ask our Superintendent to work with District staff to attempt to identify key programs and/or instructional methods that have helped our District achieve this goal. After these key programs and/or instructional methods have been identified, we would need to continue to employ these methods and improve them to make sure we keep and improve upon our school's ratings.

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?

- I believe that our District needs to look to creative recruitment and retention ideas. This can range from identifying sustainable funding sources to improve pay for all levels of teachers to working with community partners to help make living in our District affordable. I believe the District's improving school grades is a great starting point to make our District more attractive to teachers. However, this alone is not enough.

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

- I think school choice is great tool for parents to be involved in their student's education. For example, within our District, each of our high schools provide programs that offer different certification programs. Allowing parents a choice of school is how our District can maximize our college and vocational readiness upon graduation. As for other school options within our District, I still believe this is how parents should be involved in their child's education. Further, this ensures that the public schools in my District continue to provide cutting edge and high-quality education.

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

- School testing is the only effective and efficient method by which I aware of to determine the quality of a student's education. As someone who did not always perform well on standardized testing, I used that as an opportunity to learn new skills to showcase what I was taught in the classroom. I believe that the current method that the State employs for reporting the quality of a student's educational experience is better than when I was in school but does not capture all of the potential qualitative benefits of a student's education.

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?

- I believe parents should have a large say in what curriculum is taught in schools. The laws implemented by the Legislature are laws passed by elected representatives at the State level. Parents should be actively involved in electing law makers that align with their beliefs. Local school boards are charged with the responsibility for effectively and efficiently implementing State law at the local level – not with creating the laws.

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

- I am not a proponent of book banning and not aware of any law that permits books to be banned. However, assuming the question is asking about challenging the appropriateness of books for children, I believe that all students should have access to age-appropriate reading and instructional material in our public schools. For example, a third grader is likely not capable of understanding a Tale of Two Cities or All Quiet on the Western Front. These books, and concepts discussed therein, are appropriate for High School Students, and not elementary school students.

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

- My position on the new law is that, as a school board member, I would be obligated to abide by the law. From what I know, the law requires that a union, subject to certain exceptions, require a minimum of 60% of its members to pay dues. This is an increase from the 2018 law that required a minimum of 50% of a union's membership to be dues paying. I believe we are just starting to see the effect of the new law and should judge the impact of the law when we have more data.

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

- I believe that Flagler County students are quite safe in our schools. However, when laws need to be implemented that mandate all exterior doors to school buildings need to remain locked during school hours, it shows that school districts are overlooking simple cost-effective mechanisms to make our schools as safe as possible. It is this type of common sense and cost-effective approach that needs to be implemented in all school districts across the State.

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

- I believe that all government budgets need to be continually reviewed. In general, spending left unchecked normally leads to overspending. One of my top priorities would be to work with District staff to review spending and see where spending cuts can be strategically placed so as to not negatively impact employees or students. By continually reviewing the budget, we can make sure that all spending of taxpayer money is spent on our students education.