

9 QUESTIONS FROM



Responses from Nadia Combs

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

My candidacy for office is driven by a passion to effect positive change in our community. With over 30 years of experience as a teacher and educational business owner, I have a deep understanding of the issues we face. My upbringing in poverty has fueled my lifelong commitment to improving the lives of children and the broader community. I firmly believe that education is fundamental to success, and it is imperative that we give our students the foundation and knowledge they need to thrive. Currently, our greatest challenge lies in addressing the vacancies in teaching and non-instructional staff positions.
2. What can be done to ensure everyone who graduates is either ready for college or a vocation?

To ensure students are prepared for college or a career, it's essential to strengthen early learning programs. Advancing literacy requires teaching foundational reading skills from a young age. Moreover, introducing college and technical programs earlier can benefit students. As our education system evolves, providing high school students with a variety of challenging academic options is crucial to ensure they graduate ready for college, military or career/technical programs.
3. How should the district address underperforming schools?

Addressing underperforming schools effectively involves prioritizing early learning, particularly in schools that are struggling the most. Ensuring that fundamental literacy and numeracy skills are at the core of a child's education is crucial. Additionally, it's important to secure community support for our lowest performing schools, which may include outreach to the community when necessary. Working closely with parents and the communities that are underperforming is essential. Lastly, a key strategy is to attract and retain the most skilled teachers and support staff to the schools with the greatest needs.
4. 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?

Addressing teacher vacancies requires more than just hiring new educators; it's crucial to retain them as well. The average tenure of new teachers in the classroom has significantly declined. To boost teacher numbers, we must enhance salaries and also foster a better daily work environment and culture within the profession. An inventive solution could be to repurpose the

sites of closed schools to provide affordable housing for teachers. Innovative thinking is essential to guarantee that our students are taught by highly qualified and certified teachers.

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

As an experienced educator and owner of an educational business, I support parental choice in education. As both an educator and a taxpayer, I find it essential to have oversight of schools that benefit from federal and state funding. It is crucial to guarantee that taxpayer money is utilized directly for student benefit, regardless of the school they attend. With our funding ranking at 50th in the nation, it is imperative to ensure that public and charter schools are subject to equal oversight and accountability.

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

I believe that a school's grade is just one aspect and doesn't fully portray a school. As a former middle school teacher and a parent who was very engaged in their children's education, I consider various elements as indicators of a school's success. These include student safety, attendance, literacy, numeracy, parental involvement, and the school's ability to meet the unique needs of each student. It's also vital to recognize that while some children may struggle with tests, this does not preclude them from achieving success in life.

7. 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?

Parents should have a role in discussing school curriculum, but it's important to recognize that the Department of Education sets the official curriculum standards. School boards must adhere to these standards while addressing diverse topics. The curriculum needs to provide a balanced and inclusive education for all students. Balancing parental input with adherence to official guidelines ensures that students receive a comprehensive education while allowing parents to influence their children's learning outside of school.

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

Student safety is always our top priority, and we continually strive to ensure it. We implement comprehensive safety measures, conduct regular drills, and work closely with local authorities to maintain a secure environment. Our commitment to safety means ongoing evaluations and improvements to our protocols. We recognize that keeping students safe is a constant responsibility and remain dedicated to making it a top priority in every aspect of school operations.

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

Being funded 47th lowest in the country presents significant challenges. This funding level necessitates a thorough review of every budget item to ensure we prioritize resources that directly support schools and benefit students. Our focus is on maximizing the impact of every

dollar to enhance educational outcomes and address critical needs. By carefully evaluating and directing funds, we aim to make the most effective use of our budget, despite the financial constraints we face.

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Meet the Candidate: Julie Magill

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3. How should the district address underperforming schools?
4. 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?
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8. Do you feel students are safe at school? Or does more need to be done to protect school campuses?
9. Do you feel any changes are needed to your district's budget? Is money being spent in the right places?

Answers:

1. I am running to because I do not like the direction the school board is going. They have had 4 years to make a change. There are questionable ethics violations. I will make budget transparency, school safety and school equality my primary focus.
2. We need to get back to basics such as reading, writing, math, english and science. We need to stop focusing on social and emotional learning and spending money on that, instead of money

being spent on basic curriculum. I am a big fan of vocational schools and I would like to see more implemented.

3. Every school seems to be underperforming. Almost 50% of our kids are under grade level. We need to investigate which teachers are also underperforming. We need good quality teachers and we need parent involvement as well. We do not need to be pushing kids ahead of the grade level they are on, this is a huge problem.

4. There is plenty of room in the budget to pay the teachers a fair wage. They are not making enough to attract more to the profession. Attractive pay, rights and a grievance process other than the unions will attract teachers.

5. I am on the fence on school choice. If we are allowing all the kids to leave one neighborhood because of an underperforming school, we are defeating the purpose. We need to fix the school. If choice is because of a work situation, or a certain course offering at one school and not the other then that should be acceptable.

6. Way more factors need to be explored to grade a school. Testing is only one. Safety, community involvement, parent involvement, these all should be considered when grading a school.

7. There should be a consensus that only academics are taught, pe and vocational electives. There is no need for gender, race or sexuality (other than a health class) to be discussed. This should be a school policy.

8. I feel there is more we can do to promote a safe school environment. I would like to see school personnel who are properly trained and vetted be able to be armed. I would also like to see more than one resource officer at schools.

9. The budget is not transparent. From what I have already studied, we are wasting money and spending money that it not in the best interest of our kids. We have not had a forensic audit in 10 years and there are millions of dollars being spent on things that I have a lot of questions about. We tear down a school just to rebuild it. Stupid expenditures like this are a huge waste of tax payer dollars.