

## **Meeting the candidate: Gavin Rollins**

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

- I'm a certified history teacher with a master's in Education Leadership, an ESE endorsement, and years of classroom experience. I've taught American History, World History, and Civics. And most recently taught in the Aviation Science Program at Eustis High School. I've also been a senior-level administrator working on government transparency, safety, and better utilization of taxpayer dollars. I also have military leadership experience. I was deployed to a combat zone in the Horn of Africa as an Army Intelligence officer supporting counter-terrorism operations and defending US Embassies. I've been activated for multiple hurricanes. I was selected for a two-year tour of duty in the National Capital Region as an executive officer helping craft policy impacting all 50 states. Before that, I was a company commander and am currently part-time with the rank of major in a role with the 164th Air Defense Artillery Unit in Orlando. My education and military leadership background give me a blend of skills that will be helpful on the School Board.
- I want to help Lake County Schools become an A school district. We are currently a B; we can become an A by emphasizing American History and Citizenship. If we raise our scores in American History Test pass rates, we can reach the goal of an A school district. I also want to increase teacher pay, focusing on top-performing, long-serving teachers. We are losing high-quality talent to surrounding school districts, and some estimates say that it takes \$20,000 to train a new teacher. We should be spending that money on keeping high-quality teachers on the team.

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

- I have taught in several Florida schools and, most recently, at Eustis High School in the Aviation Science Program. I am the only candidate with an active teaching and a Florida Education Leadership certificate. I also work with local veterans' groups, including one I helped found called FireWatch, working to end veteran suicide. I have also been a coach and mentor, and I received the Presidential Volunteer Service Award Gold level for over 4,000 hours of documented community service.

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

- Teacher pay and retention
- Becoming an A district
- And American history and citizenship instruction, especially at the elementary level, as we build student knowledge into middle and high school grades
- Consistent application of discipline in the classroom

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

- Begin by building knowledge in elementary school through a coherent, sequential, knowledge-based curriculum. This will build reading comprehension and domain knowledge, then expand those student's ability to build on that foundation in higher grades.
- Create a community and citizenship-minded culture of service and character throughout the school years.
- Partner with businesses to equip students with industry certifications and job skills
- Teach financial management
- Work with colleges and universities to understand the challenges graduating seniors have entering college.
- Value and celebrate both college readiness and workforce development.

### **5. How should the district address underperforming schools?**

- Changes in leadership at the school
- Additional support in training and curriculum
- Build community and parent involvement
- Work with partner organizations to increase mentors for struggling students

### **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?**

- Higher pay for experience to retain quality teachers
- A teacher college in Lake County
- Creativity in supporting teachers. I will meet with local companies to advocate for discounts on power, internet, and other teacher discounts to help offset costs and to demonstrate community support for our teachers.

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

- I support school choice. Families should have options and decide the best path for their children. Most students will be in public schools, though, so we should make public schools excellent.

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

- Schools should be accountable to the community, but progress monitoring is a better way of getting feedback. We need to move away from one high-stakes end-of-year test from the state.

## **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 support parental involvement; parents should have the final veto on what their child is taught through the opt-out process. I also support parents speaking at board meetings and giving feedback.
- We should also focus on reading and writing, math, science, history, and art, music and not a teacher's political agenda in the classroom.

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

- Most books are not controversial, but those that are controversial should be age-appropriate and time-tested classics with a clear educational goal.

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

- I support raising teacher pay, fighting for better working conditions, and treating each teacher professionally.

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

- More can always be done to protect our students. As an army intelligence officer, I have extensive training in safety and security. As a former school district administrator, I participated in multiple school safety exercises to improve coordination between local law enforcement, school officials, and the community. Preparation and rehearsal are vital in keeping our students safe.

My School Safety Plan:

- Ensure the locking of classroom doors during school hours by having administrators do random checks
- Control visitor access to campus through a single point of entry
- Screening all campus visitors
- Empowering all staff to activate an emergency response
- All staff should be able to identify the safest space in every classroom
- Provide emergency covers for all classroom windows
- Coordinating with first responders before a campus emergency and conduct exercises
- Train guardians with the tools and skills to protect our children

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

- We should use state funds to give raises to teachers with experience in Lake County.
- We currently spend 75% of the total budget on what the state categorizes as classroom spending. I want us to increase that to at least 80% and streamline anything not directly impacting teaching and learning.
- We should also bid out contracts often to get the best prices from vendors
- We should have a robust grant-writing office and get funding from public and private grant programs