

Meeting the candidate: Anne Douglas

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

- I am running for school board because our educational system is in a fragile state. Our teachers are leaving the school system in droves due to their poor salary (we rank 50th in the U.S. for teachers' salaries) and due to the censorship and workload. I believe by valuing teachers' perspectives and embracing innovative ideas, I am confident in finding solutions to fortify the education system. I strongly believe that by fostering a supportive and nurturing environment, all students have the potential to thrive and exceed expectations. My top goals as school board member I would champion policies that allow academic freedom, provide salaries that align with the cost of living, and provide mental health support for students, faculty, and staff.

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

- I have been teaching for over 25 years at OCPS. I have taught title I schools for 16 years. I have been involved in school beautification. I have organized an event where parents and students went to see a game at the AMWAY arena for the first time. I invited motivational speakers to the school in Elementary school.

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

- I believe the top issue for the district needs to address is teachers' retention. Teachers are leaving the profession in droves. It is estimated that 35% of the teachers will either retire or leave the profession by the year 2025.

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

- We will offer AP courses and dual enrollment opportunities, allowing students to earn college credits while still in high school. We will develop robust CTE programs that align with local and national labor market demands, offering students practical skills and certifications in fields such as healthcare, technology, trades, culinary and more. We will collaborate with local businesses and industries to provide students with internships, apprenticeships, and hands-on training opportunities that offer real-world experience.

5. How should the district address underperforming schools?

- We need to establish specific, measurable goals for improvement and hold schools accountable for meeting these targets. Implement a system for regular monitoring and evaluation of school performance, using data to inform decision-making and track progress.

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?

- We will Ensure that teacher salaries are competitive with those in other districts and professions to attract and retain high-quality educators. We will offer comprehensive benefits

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

- The school choice program should ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, have fair access to high-quality educational options. This includes providing transportation and other necessary resources to low-income families.

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

- School testing is one tool that can provide insights into the quality of education and the student experience at a school. However, it has limitations and should not be the sole measure of educational quality. Excessive emphasis on testing can create stress and anxiety for students and teachers. It may negatively impact student motivation and the overall learning environment.

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?

- While parents should certainly have a voice in their children's education, it is also essential to balance with the expertise of educators. We need to offer an inclusive and equitable education for all students. Schools should establish regular, open lines of communication with parents to discuss curriculum content and educational goals, this can include parent-teacher associations, school board meetings, and public forum where parents can express their views and concerns.

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

- We will evaluate whether the book supports the educational objectives and aligns with the curriculum standards. Consider its relevance to the subjects being taught and its potential to enhance students' understanding of important concepts. We will determine if the content of the book is appropriate for the intended age group. This includes evaluating themes, language, and situations depicted in the book.

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

- Teachers should have the right to organize and join unions to collectively bargain for better working conditions, salaries, and benefits. Unions play a critical role in advocating for teachers' professional needs and ensuring their voices are heard.

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

- Ensuring the safety of students at school is a top priority. While schools have implemented significant measures to protect students, there is always room for improvement. We can hire more mental health professionals to ensure adequate support for all students. Implement programs that address mental health issues, stress management, and resilience building. We can encourage involvement from parents and the community in safety planning and support, and we can invest in modern security infrastructure, such as reinforced doors, shatterproof windows, and improved lighting.

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

- We have to assess if sufficient funds are allocated to essential educational resources such as textbooks, technology, and classroom supplies. Determine if funding supports high-quality curriculum development and instructional materials. We have to evaluate if teacher salaries are competitive and aligned with the cost of living. And finally, we have to ensure that we invest in professional development to support teacher training and growth.

Meeting the candidate: Kyle Roger Goudy

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

- To help ensure that our schools are preparing our kids for the future. We need to make sure every student has a chance for success. That can be done by teaching them to think independently and learn to problem-solve. We also need to ensure that respect is being shown throughout the entire system, it seems as though this is being lost in our society and it needs to be an emphasis of schools.

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

- AAU Cares: Kyle has been involved with AAU Cares for over 10 years. One thing that was dear to Kyle was the work with Feeding Children Everywhere (now US Hunger). We pack meals for over 50,000 people annually.
- Roger Goudy Scholarship: after Dr. Roger Goudy passed away our family set up a scholarship fund in his honor. We are proud to give out thousands of dollars in scholarships every year. We are continually expanding this Scholarship Fund and Kyle is proud to announce that he will be donating a portion of the SB salary to expand the scholarship. We have helped Southwest Middle School & Winter Garden Squeeze baseball through the RGS in 2024.
- The Verb Kind: this group has a program called "Come to Jail with Me." Kyle is proud to serve as a part of the mentor group that visits the Orange County Juvenile Hall. Many of the kids ask for prayers and often all they want is a hug.

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

- Ensure we have a through student safety plan for all schools. We need to modernize the way we protect our schools with systems like what the major theme parks use for security.
- Ensure all OCPS staff are properly compensated so that we can recruit the best and brightest. Also, we need to ensure that our long-term staff are not being overlooked as we increase starting wages. Veteran teachers and OCPS staff are integral to the success of OCPS, and we need to make sure our comp plans reflect that.
- Recruit more Bus Drivers to alleviate our transportation woes.
- Improve literacy rates for our students through early intervention and Orton-Gillingham techniques (learning sounds and blending, not sight words).
- Ensure we are being good stewards of taxpayer dollars through fiscal responsibility. Allow the community to use facilities like the tracks at schools to walk (not in conflict with any school activities, of course).

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

- We need to make sure kids are learning skills and strategies for them to be successful after high school. Rather than teaching to a test we need to teach our kids to solve complicated problems and think independently of their phones and AI. Pam Gould and the Board did a great job of increasing career and technical certifications by 300% and I think we need to continue on this path. The expansion/renovation of Orange Tech is great, and we need to ensure that we're preparing kids for the industries of the future.

5. How should the district address underperforming schools?

- I think it is important that leaders like School Board Members are present in the schools. I'm not suggesting that we tell teacher's how to teach, in fact, quite the opposite. It is so important to hear from the teacher's and administrators that are living in these environments every day. There may be some commonality, but many schools have unique challenges, and the only way to identify them is the hear from the employees in those schools. Once you have figured out the needs then you start problem-solving, which is how I have spent my entire career. I would hate to generalize a solution for 'underperforming schools' with a one size fits all approach.

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?

- Obviously, we need to offer top-notch compensation packages. The district is in negotiations with CTA as we speak, and it seems like the evaluation of teacher's is a pillar of these negotiations. There needs to be some compromise on both sides, with the protection of our teachers at the forefront of everyone's mind. We also need to

- respect and understand that the School Board has budgets, and we need to ensure that any go-forward plan is one that is fiscally responsible over the long haul. One thing that does not get enough attention is the support we give our staff in the schools. We need to make sure as many resources as possible are in the schools. By resources, I mean additional staff. When I hear that schools are cutting back paraprofessionals and other non-teaching positions it concerns me. We need to make sure that we're properly staffed in the schools.

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

- Fundamentally, I believe that parents should be able to send their kids to the best school possible. While also understanding that not everyone has the option for private school and often the best charter schools end up in a lottery. The role of the Public Schools is to provide the best product possible for our community. We should leave no doubt that the Public Schools are the best choice for all families. Competition is woven into the fabric of our country, and I believe school choice will make the Public Schools even better.

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

- I do not believe that it does. Many teachers that I have met feel pigeonholed in how they can teach the curriculum because of state laws and testing requirements. We need to be teaching our kids to think freely and problem-solve, not remember the answers to a test.

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 think it is imperative that there is transparency between the schools and parents. I do not believe that parents should be dictating curriculum or things of that nature. That is what we have experts for. I believe a lot of this division is driven by media and the current state of our country. We need to be building bridges of trust between parents and teachers and I believe transparency is the key to that. Parents have the right to know what is going on in their children's schools.

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

- I believe we need a system for rating books that would be like the ratings systems we use for movies, music, video games and just about every other form of media. For now, though, we need to trust our Media Center Specialists and make sure that there is transparency with parents. The books that our kids are reading should be based on the age of the reader and the content of the book.

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

- If the Union is doing a good job of representing their members, then there should be no concerns about retaining 60% of their potential membership, which is the threshold that SB 256 calls for. Also, the payroll deduction should not be a barrier for their membership if they're providing the proper representation of their members. The union did a nice job of negotiating their most recent agreement. This negotiation along with other protections from the union should be a compelling message for their prospective members.

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

- I do believe that students are safe, but I think more can be done to protect students. As an example, one of our High Schools recently implemented metal detectors, but only made the kids that drive themselves to schools go through them. Due to the lack of equipment the plan was to move the detectors back and forth to keep students guessing. We need to be using state of the art equipment that does not slow down the admission to school, like what major theme parks use. Additionally, we need to implement speeding cameras in school zones. This is first and foremost to protect students leaving schools. An additional benefit is that the program would be funded by a revenue share from the \$100 ticket that goes to violators at no additional cost to OCPS. This money would also help train crossing guards.

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

- I do believe the Finance Team does a good job, but within a \$2.6 billion dollar budget there are always opportunities to become more efficient. One example of wasted money is in the Windermere High School Football Stadium. The stadium was originally built in 2017 at an offsite location over a mile down the road from the school at Deputy Scott Pine Community Park. This caused several logistical issues in getting kids to and from the facility. Fast forward to today and the stadium is getting ready to open onsite at the school. I would contend this is where it should have been all along, and this entire endeavor was a waste of taxpayer dollars. My experience getting the approvals for a building on land that AAU owned was very similar to the challenges the school faced when trying to get the approvals for the stadium the first-time. Neighbors did not want the noise, traffic, etc. This is understandable, but I think with strong leadership there could have been a compromise between the residents and the county.

Meeting the candidate: Jacob Patroski

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

- I'm running because I believe in the positive impact public education has on our students, families and communities. As a former public educator and father of two current OCPS students I believe I can effectively help OCPS create pathways of success for every student.

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

- Former public school teacher
- OCPS Leadership Orange Graduate
- School Advisory Council
- Varsity head coach
- West Orange Chamber of Commerce member
- St. Luke's UMC volunteer coach
- PTO board
- Lake Down Home Owners Association board member
- OCPS Additions volunteer

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

I believe in addressing the following issues immediately.

- School safety
- Teacher investment, support, and retainment
- Transportation
- Student Literacy proficiency

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

- We need to make sure every student has a pathway of success at OCPS. For some that means college prep, for others it may mean earning an industry certification through a CTE program. It can also be a mix of both for some students. As a former CTE teacher I have first hand experience in CTE programs. OCPS must continue to expand these programs to fit industry and community needs. The district must strive to create strategic partnerships with industry leaders so that they can help guide the programs that fit workforce needs in our community. This will help ensure that our students receive the skills needed to gain valuable employment after graduation. These programs offer a wide range of benefits to students as they also expose them to a variety of hands-on experiences that enrich their education.

5. How should the district address underperforming schools?

- The district should continue to offer extra support to schools that are struggling. Currently there is a leadership team committed to supporting underperforming schools. The team creates a plan and continuously works with the school until better results are achieved.

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?

- We need to do a better job investing, supporting, and respecting our teachers. We live in an amazing community and should have no issues attracting the best teachers. I believe we need to continue to cultivate new pathways for people to become teachers. We need to make sure new teachers are being properly mentored to better navigate the challenges they face. We need to make sure we have salary structures that do not create compression or less pay increases for our more experienced teachers. I believe we need to also be creative and think bigger with possibly offering workforce housing to district employees. Lastly, we need to lessen the burden on teachers by making sure they have the resources and tools needed to deliver innovative lessons. Too many teachers are paying out of pocket for supplies and other items needed to educate our children.

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

- I think it's great that students and families have options in education. I am concerned with the current voucher system, though, and the accountability when funding is taken from public schools. We need to make OCPS the premier educational choice for the students and families of Orange County.

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

- I think high stakes testing is a great way to gather certain data, but by itself does not give a fully accurate portrayal of an educational institution. There are many other factors that contribute and enhance the full education of a student that isn't reflected with current high stakes tests.

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?

- As a former teacher I can say with certainty that engaged parents are beneficial to students and schools. As a parent I believe in trusting the professionals tasked with educating our children. I do not believe parents should attempt to change approved curriculum for others based on personal opinions. We need to strive for academic freedom and celebrate our diversity of thoughts and perspectives.

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

- I am 100% against book banning. We have amazing media specialists and professional educators that I trust to deliver age appropriate material to OCPS students. Schools need to have diverse literature available to our students so that they may continue to grow, develop, and learn.

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

- SB 256 is an attempt to dismantle public sector unions. I find this new legislation very concerning because the Orange County Classroom Teachers Association plays a critical role in advocating for the teachers in Orange County. From salary to grievances, the union is there to advocate for our teachers. Our state legislators need to understand the importance of the union and do a better job helping them not dismantling them.

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

- Safety must be our top priority. Students are safe at OCPS schools, but more can always be done and more should be done. Students, teachers, and staff need to all feel safe for learning to occur. OCPS can increase campus security by tightening our points of entry. We need to utilize technology and use it appropriately in a layered approach to enhance the safety and security of schools.

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

- OCPS runs very efficiently, but there are opportunities to improve. Utilizing renewable resources and new technology will be key. These opportunities take initial investments, but in the long term save the district money. For example, OCPS has an electric school bus. While the initial cost may be more than a traditional bus the long-term operational costs are much less and thus frees up money in the budget. Another example is using solar power to help lower costs. It can be difficult to initiate many of these investments, but we need to strive to think long term in order to free up money in the budgets.