

## **Meeting the candidate: Robin Dehlinger**

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

- I am running because I am very committed to public education in general, in Seminole County Public Schools specifically. I have wide experience in K-12 education as a teacher, assistant principal, principal and assistant superintendent and believe I can be a positive member of the School Board.

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

- I have been involved in the Take Stock In Children program, as a Dividend volunteer, and the League of Women Voters of Seminole County.

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

- The top issue is to ensure our high performing district remains the innovative and problem-solving district it has been for decades and to continue to provide our students equitable opportunities and access to a high quality education that allows them to become productive citizens. This priority requires a safe learning environment for all students and many opportunities open to students, whether they wish to go on to post secondary education or directly into their career via work or the military.

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

- The district must continue to provide a wide variety of pathways for students, whether for college or career. To ensure every student who graduates is ready, the district must provide ongoing support to teachers and school leaders so they have the ability to provide optimal conditions for learning, support for quality instruction, support students' safety and mental health, and on-off ramps when students change their minds about their goals.

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

- The district must provide the support necessary to address students' learning needs so the staff has the opportunity to focus on quality classroom instruction, student safety and a positive learning environment. Underperforming schools may need above usual levels of coaching for teachers, instructional materials, instructional coaches and administrative support. Funds to provide these things should be allocated.

#### **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?**

- What more do you think needs to be done to recruit and retain teachers in your district? As the pay gap increases due to inadequate funding from the state, districts can improve conditions by taking unnecessary tasks/record keeping/testing off of teachers' plates, provide mentors and coaching, and maintain positive cultures where teachers' voices are respected and trusted. This will help with retention, however, the inadequate salary has become problematic and not one that can be solved at the district level. Parents should demand that more funds from the state are allocated to raise teacher pay.

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

- I personally do not support the school voucher program because accountability is not required from the private schools or home school. I believe parents should be able to choose private school or to homeschool their children; however, it should not be at the expense of public schools. How is a parent to know how the instruction compares to others? How do they know if what their children are taught at least matches what is taught in a public school? Public accountability should follow public tax dollars.

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

- No. It is only one measure. There is more to a schools' educational quality than what is measured on a very narrowly constructed test. The tests say nothing about the arts, humanities, sports, or other areas in which a student might really excel. Tests only answer a few narrow questions which can also be learned from establishing a collaborative partnership between the parent, teacher and school.

## **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?**

- How much say should parents have in deciding what is and is not included in the public school curriculum? Parents should always have a say in their own student's curriculum. If they object to some particular material or resource, they can request their child not be taught whatever it is or be provided an alternate assignment/book, etc. However, all children and parents are not the same, or want the same things. There must be a level of confidence in the school and teachers' ability to choose materials appropriately and to collaborate with parents in their child's education.

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

- The school district policy is the rubric. Districts should follow their policy consistently.

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

- I think it is harmful to teachers and is designed to create chaos that further weakens the teaching profession. The state does not need to “protect” teachers from their own associations. Teachers are adults and are more than capable of making the decisions that best meet their needs and beliefs. The rules are meant to undermine teachers, not support them.

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

- Or does more need to be done to protect school campuses? In Seminole County, I believe students are safe at school. The district has an outstanding relationship with the Sheriff’s department and the local police departments that share responsibility for school safety. It’s important to understand school safety is about more than law enforcements’ responsibilities. It also includes the school culture, which welcomes and respects all students. This positive culture is the result of the work teachers and school leaders do to create a safe and accepting learning environment. The collaboration with law enforcement is continually working to ensure the safety of all students.

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

- I believe the School Board does an excellent job managing the budget. The district is always seeking to scrutinize resources to support improving teachers’ salaries. A continual improvement process is constantly in motion to use data to evaluate the effective use of funds.

## **Meeting the candidate: Carl Tipton**

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

- I have spent almost three decades in our Seminole County Public Schools where I have taught the DARE curriculum to elementary students, been a teacher in multiple high schools, coached both girls and boys high school sports, and currently serve as a school resources deputy sheriff at Lake Mary High School. My diverse background gives me a unique perspective on the problems in our schools. I look forward to working with parents, teachers, and staff to make all of our schools a safe and productive learning environment where every student can be successful.
- My top goals will be to provide more to our students as in greater mentoring opportunities, provide a trade diploma/Apprenticeship program at all high schools, and restore our alternative schools to a place of transformation and restoration. I also desire to restore discipline to our schools and enhance the protection of students/staff.

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

- I am entering my 27th year in our SCPS district. I was a DARE Officer in elementary schools, a high school teacher, a boys and girls high school coach, and currently a school resource deputy. I am the founder of a community help non-profit serving single moms and veterans called "Red Suitcase Ministry." I have served the youth in our community for over 30 years as a coach. SCSO PAL Camp counselor and mentor as well as a youth leader at my church.

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

- Students need to be ready for a productive and fulfilling life after graduation. That's our goal! That's the top issue driving all we do. Under that umbrella, there are a few key focus areas. We as a school system have a responsibility to ensure students are reading on grade level in elementary school. We need to help students consistently behave with respect throughout all levels. Also, we need to have solid options for college, military, or a decent paying trade attached with an apprenticeship after graduation.

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

- We need to increase mentoring opportunities for our students through non-profits, after school mentoring, and teacher-based mentoring. We also need to establish a trade diploma with apprenticeship at all of our high schools partnering with many local businesses.

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

- I would make sure all available resources are being used and applied to those schools. I would also try to attract our best and most innovative teachers to those schools using incentives.

#### **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 pay them better. I have several initiatives to try to put money back into the budget to include replacing the aging bus fleet for lower fuel costs and better resale value, auditing our technology spending in the district, and streamlining or combining upper level district executive positions. These measures would put money back into the budget for the teachers and staff. Teachers are leaving for lack of school discipline as well so with my three restorative discipline measures in place, teachers will come to our district and stay in their positions as they now can focus more on teaching and less on discipline.

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

- I am a supporter of Florida's School Choices program. This initiative empowers parents and students to select the educational environment that best suits their individual needs, be it traditional public schools, charter schools, private schools, or homeschooling. By providing families with various options, we ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive academically and personally, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographic location.
- The program fosters a competitive environment that encourages schools to innovate and improve their educational offerings. This competition can lead to higher standards and better outcomes for all students. Additionally, school choice promotes parental involvement and accountability, as families are more engaged when they have a direct role in selecting their child's educational path.
- Overall, the Florida School Choices program is a vital component of our educational system, driving excellence and providing opportunities for all students to succeed.

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

- School testing alone does not provide an accurate portrayal of the educational quality or experience of a school. While tests are a tool to measure certain academic standards, they only capture a small fraction of what constitutes a quality education. Education is a multifaceted process that encompasses much more than what can be assessed through standardized tests. Teachers take educational standards and transform them into engaging lessons that inspire and motivate students. They work tirelessly to encourage and guide learning, creating an environment where students can thrive. Beyond the classroom, every person on campus—administrators, support staff, and counselors—plays a crucial role in shaping a student's daily experience.
- Additionally, testing does not account for the individual challenges students may face. Some students may not perform well on tests despite understanding the material, while others might be dealing with personal issues that impact their ability to perform at their best.
- To truly assess the quality and experience of a school, we must consider a broader range of factors, including the dedication of the teachers, the engagement of the students, and the overall school environment. Only by looking at the full picture can we gain an accurate understanding of a school's educational quality.

## **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?**

- These issues are important to many families, and the best place for students to learn about them is in the home through the influence and guidance of their parents and guardians. In this way, students can learn about these sensitive topics at an age and stage that's most appropriate for them.
- In light of current legislation passed by the Florida Legislature, the Florida Department of Education has issued guidance that prohibits gender ideology and sexuality from being included in the curriculum for certain age groups. As a school board member, I have the responsibility to ensure that our district adheres to those policies.

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

- I am opposed to book bans, but do support age appropriate content. I value the importance of freedom of speech and the exchange of diverse ideas. I also understand that some books may not be ideal for readers of all ages. Thankfully, SCPS has an established system that allows for parents, teachers, and community members to draw attention to books that may not be age appropriate. This system allows for a productive conversation that honors community input and leads us to a consensus determination.

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

- The new law presents challenges to teacher unions by requiring more action and participation on the part of its educators. I'm compassionate toward the affected educators because it requires more effort from already busy people. That said, more participation from the individual teachers can lead to additional accountability and better representation from the union. In that way, it can have a beneficial outcome. However, it is goal to provide teachers with the pay, benefits, resources and support they need so they don't feel the need to have union representation.

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

- The third pillar of my platform is the enhancement of safety for our students and staff. First, I propose a "No Repeat Bullying/Violence/Threats Contract". This would act much in the same way as SCPS current "No Contact Contract". Secondly, students who are on felony probation and violate on campus or who are on GPS/ankle monitors due to violations recommend an alternative learning environment. and lastly, placing school security under the direct supervision of school resource deputies/officers to better patrol and protect the campuses.

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

- As I have mentioned throughout my campaign, I support the replacement of the aging bus fleet, auditing technology spending, and combining/cutting executive level district positions. Our district is getting a lot right. Seminole County is a great place to live and raise a family, and as with any organization, there are opportunities for improvement and refinement. I hope to lead our district toward making innovative incremental changes.