

**2017 Iowa City Education Association School Board Candidate Questionnaire**

Candidates, please send your written responses to Brady Shutt at [shutt.brady@iowacityschools.org](mailto:shutt.brady@iowacityschools.org) or at [shuttsaylor@yahoo.com](mailto:shuttsaylor@yahoo.com) no later than 5PM on Monday, August 7. If you have any questions or experience technical problems, please email Brady or call/text him at 319-383-4141.

1. Please share with us why you are running for the Board. Specifically highlight professional or personal experiences that will make you a good Board member.

I believe in the value of public education. It is the core of our democracy. Our public school system is under duress from the national and state levels. I am running for school board to protect and grow our local public schools so that every student in our district, regardless of race, income, parents' educational background or occupation, has the opportunity to receive a world-class education.

Experiences that have prepared me for school board include the following:

- a) I am a mom. I have two children who have gone to Iowa City schools. My daughter attended Longfellow, Southeast, and graduated from City High. My son will be starting 6<sup>th</sup> grade this fall at Longfellow. I've experienced first-hand the care and expertise of our teachers, staff and principals.
- b) I have worked at ACT for 27 years, and during that time I have gained significant insights into the issues facing our public education system, including the following: national/state/local politics, teacher salaries, teacher training, crumbling infrastructure, lack of funding, voucher movement, educational standards, accountability, testing, shifting demographics, and the widening achievement gap between the US and the rest of the world. This experience and understanding of **systemic** issues uniquely prepares me for the governance role of school board member.
- c) I have extensive leadership, management and communication experience that will be useful on the school board. I started at ACT in 1990 in an entry-level content development role. Over the years, I worked my way up the organization, assuming greater levels of responsibility. I am currently Chief Operating Officer at ACT and oversee ACT's testing operations, project management, quality, audit, risk and security functions with an annual operating budget of \$112M. My team also manages large, complex special projects with a budget of over \$40M. As a leader at ACT, I have led and participated in strategic planning and transformational change activities. I have worked on both sides of the management and employee relationship, and one of my strongest learnings over the years has been to always trust people on the front line to solve problems and create new ideas for improvement. In the case of the school district, the front line is teachers and principals, and they will be my bellwether of what is needed for student success.
- d) I am a strong leader. Strong leaders create a vision and rally people behind that vision. They provide clarity of support and resource. They get to know people on the front line. They hold themselves accountable when things go wrong and never take praise when things go right, instead showering praise on their teams. Strong leaders are humble, they listen, they continue to learn. They make tough decisions based on strong information and stick to those decisions. I have practiced and honed these leadership skills throughout all of my life's endeavors, and I am ready to bring these skills to bear on the school board.

## Janet Godwin Questionnaire Responses

e) I have a great deal of board experience both as a board member and an executive who is accountable to a board. In my role at ACT I am accountable to a board of directors and work closely with them. I have also served on boards of local not-for-profits and have gained experience exercising policy, oversight and fiduciary responsibilities. I understand first-hand how a board can operate to create transformational change and stabilize organizations. I also know how dysfunctional boards can create organizational gridlock, distrust and instability. A good board puts good people in place, sets goals and holds them accountable. I served on the board of the Iowa City Community School District Foundation (foundation) between 2010 and 2017, resigning in May 2017 in light of my school board candidacy. Serving on the foundation board has given me experience with the specific budget shortfalls facing the district. It has also shown me that our community will rally behind a clear vision and description of need and donate significant amounts of money to support our schools. I see the foundation as one means of overcoming budget cuts from the state and national levels.

2. Please list your top priorities if elected.

- a) Reboot the way the school board functions. As the governance, strategy and fiduciary arm of the district, it is paramount that the board is highly functional and operates with mutual respect (between board members and with the administration), according to agreed-upon board protocols and focused on strategic goals. Board members must understand the board's role and follow its own rules of governance. At this time the board's failure to do this has created an atmosphere of distrust, anxiety, and fear. This must change. It is a requirement for *effectively* managing all other district priorities.
- b) Complete the facilities master plan. I am a very strong and public supporter of the GO Bond. Hopefully it will pass. If it does not, a top priority will be to quickly develop an alternative bond and get it in front of voters. I do NOT support starting over with the FMP. Rather, my goal will be to leverage the good work of the FMP and simply carve the plan into smaller phases based on the current sequence of building projects in the FMP.
- c) Develop the process that the ICEA, school board, and district administration will use to work through the pay and benefits items that will shift from a negotiated contract to employment policies. Our teachers should feel protected regardless of what is happening at the state house. It's not too soon to start this work. We need to develop the process, be transparent about the process, and then carefully work through it. It is critical to establish strong relationships between the board, administration and union, especially since the board will be largely reconstituted in the election.
- d) Uncover the details on special education issues highlighted in the state audit and ensure there is a strong plan in place to remediate gaps. Make sure that parents and teachers are partners in whatever processes are put in place to develop this plan.
- e) Begin a process, perhaps with a working group of teachers, to consider alternative approaches to student-based learning focused on increasing academic achievement. Ideas to consider: magnet schools, immersion programs, cross-functional and project-based learning experiences, perhaps in partnership with local businesses and post-secondary institutions.

3. In the past two years, what do you think the Board's biggest success has been and what do you think its biggest failure has been?

## Janet Godwin Questionnaire Responses

- a. Biggest successes: executing on the FMP, WRAM, climate survey, and quickly getting a 2-year contract in place for teachers and para-educators before the law changed.
- b. Biggest failures: The board has been sidetracked by a disproportionate focus on operational matters, and some members do not respect the board's own rules of governance. It creates a huge sense of instability when parents, teachers, and administrators cannot count on the board to do its job and follow the rules. Everyone in this district, regardless of whether they agree with the board's decision or not, should at least be confident a decision was made based on reliable data and what is best for the district as a whole.

4. In your view, what is the appropriate role for ICEA--the teachers' union--to play in the District's decision making process?

Teachers are the district's most important asset. Hands down. The advocacy that ICEA provides for teachers is critical, and ICEA should have a seat at the table for all issues that apply to or have an impact on teachers. The most obvious is the development of employment policies, where ICEA should advise administration and the board on priorities for teachers. Some other examples: ICEA should be at the table to advise the administration and board on impacts to teachers when budget cuts are being discussed. ICEA should have a seat at the table when legislative priorities are set. ICEA should have a seat at the table when administration personnel changes are made.

5. Over the past several years, funding from the State of Iowa (Supplemental State Aid) has been woefully inadequate. Cuts to federal funding for education are also likely. Approximately 80% of the Iowa City School District's budget goes for personnel costs. Given these factors, what will your budget priorities and goals be if you are elected to the Board? What (if any) areas would be off limits from cuts?

Off limits:

- a) Teacher salary and, as much as possible, benefits.
- b) Educational programs. To provide a world-class education, we need to have depth and diversity of educational programs. I think there may be ways to provide diversity and manage costs without cutting programs.
- c) Time and resource for professional development and planning.

Budget priorities:

- a) Maintain 5% unspent general fund as a means of reserve.
- b) Advocate for the state house to reestablish SAVE.
- c) Maintain proper balance of funding. This is the hardest part of establishing a budget. A good example is transportation costs. If the district decided to increase bussing in support of equity or educational programming initiatives, the board should be willing to increase transportation expense in order to achieve student outcomes. To make these decisions easier, the board should clearly establish student outcome goals and use the goals as guiding principles when making budget decisions. ICEA should be at the table when developing those goals and should inform the budget decisions.

## Janet Godwin Questionnaire Responses

6. Do you support the September GO Bond? Do you support the District's Facilities Master Plan?

Yes and yes. Strongly and publicly. Please see priority b) above. I have no interest in joining the board and undermining or unraveling the strong work of previous boards that incorporated thousands of hours of public input and public dollars. The district has successfully delivered on 4 years of the 10-year FMP. We need to stay the course.

7. In February 2017, the Iowa Legislature gutted much of the language in Chapter 20 of the Iowa Code that, for over forty years, had provided a proven, effective method for labor and management to come together in the collective bargaining process to resolve differences over topics such as wages, safety, leave, workplace conditions and insurance policies in the creation of a negotiated agreement (i.e. a contract). As a prospective Board member, how do you think the District should move forward after these changes? What role do you see the Board playing? And, what do you see your role as an individual Board member being in this?

I think the district should continue the direction that was established when the district, ICEA, and board came together to complete contract negotiations at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour in advance of the law changing. This demonstrated leadership and commitment to work effectively with ICEA in support of teachers. Going forward, the board needs to require that same level of collaboration and good faith work to ensure teachers have the best, most competitive packages and policies. The board must lead the district in this direction. As an individual board member, I will exercise my leadership skills to ensure this collaborative process continues and thrives.

8. The salary schedule for the Iowa City Schools uses base wage as a starting point and then compensates teachers for their additional years of experience as a teacher, as well as for reaching certain educational benchmarks (e.g. MA plus 30 graduate hours). This salary schedule is the result of decades of collective bargaining. Will you commit to support the salary schedule being used in the Iowa City School District?

Absolutely. From my perspective the schedule very appropriately rewards experience and professional development. I also like that it very concretely outlines milestones of achievement and what teachers can expect when reaching those milestones. Clear, objective, and fair.

9. Do you support maintaining all benefits in the current contract that were agreed upon in good faith over decades of bargaining?

Yes. I also support ensuring permissible items be included in the bargaining process.

10. There is a shortage of teachers at the state and national level. The continued attacks on public education are worsening this problem. How can Iowa City Schools continue to attract and retain the best and brightest teachers and staff members? If elected to the Board, how will you contribute to that effort?

As I noted earlier, teachers are the district's most important asset. Hands down. The board must do the following to attract and retain the best teachers and staff:

## Janet Godwin Questionnaire Responses

- a) Ensure the district maintains competitive wages and benefits for teachers and staff
- b) Ensure safe, clean, modern, appropriately sized, and flexible working environments for teachers and staff (hence my unwavering support for the GO Bond and FMP)
- c) Ensure opportunities for professional development and planning
- d) Ensure teacher's voices are heard at decision-making tables through the advocacy and support of ICEA
- e) Ensure the district has a clear vision of success and measurable goals for getting there
- f) Ensure the district is *committed* to equity and inclusion
- g) Support innovations in the classroom
- h) Build relationships with groups/organizations in the district that will support the schools to augment funding when state/national funding levels are cut (e.g., UI, Kirkwood, ICCSDF, local business, ICAD, Chamber, city councils, etc.)
- i) Model a culture of inclusion, mutual respect, transparency, fairness, and accountability.