

2017 Iowa City Education Association School Board Candidate Questionnaire

Candidates, please send your written responses to Brady Shutt at shutt.brady@iowacityschools.org or at 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 am running because I hope to see a renewed focus on curriculum, instruction, and school climate. Facilities are important, but whether our children are learning, and whether they feel safe and supported at school is more important than the size of their gymnasiums. Curriculum, instruction, and school climate also directly relate to the district's three main goals: increasing the percentage of students proficient in reading and math, with a focus on closing achievement gaps, and improving the educational experiences for all children through culturally inclusive and responsive school environments and classroom instruction.

I am a graduate of the University of Iowa College of Law. In recent years, I have served on the Department of Education's Assessment Task Force and have served two terms on the State Board of Health. It has been my experience that if we do not take disagreement personally and we are open to hearing and considering the perspectives, knowledge, and experiences of other stakeholders, we can improve decision making.

2. Please list your top priorities if elected.

- Renewed focus on curriculum, instruction, and school climate.
- Improved relationships between Board members, and between the Board and the community.
- Increased transparency in Board deliberations and decision making.
- Continuing the work of the FMP.

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?

The biggest success of the Board has been the continued work on the FMP resulting in two new school buildings ready for students and much needed improvements for existing schools.

The biggest failure of the Board has been an unwillingness to listen to and consider alternative viewpoints in order to compromise and build consensus.

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

Teachers have important professional knowledge and experience as well as direct knowledge of the daily operation of our schools and student experiences in them. It is essential that the Board and administration hear from teachers on a variety of issues, but especially ones that directly involve their

Karen Woltman Responses

classrooms, in order to improve district decision making. ICEA can raise concerns and speak on behalf of members, especially when teachers are uncomfortable speaking up as individuals.

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?

My budget priorities and goals will be to keep cuts as far from students as possible. The District needs to continue to look for opportunities to save money, for example, replacing planners with the Canvas Learning Management System and bell schedules that reduce busing costs. But the District also needs to reach out for stakeholder input when painful cuts need to be made.

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

Voters have very few opportunities to directly decide school issues, but GO Bonds are one of them. The ballot language is set and the voters will decide the issue on September 12th, before the new Board is seated. I am committed to working with whatever the voters decide to keep making progress on completing facilities projects in the FMP.

I support the FMP and the structured process in place for assessing, prioritizing, and planning for needed facilities projects.

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?

The District should continue to include all permissive topics in the collective bargaining process and work to maintain previously negotiated benefits, policies, and procedures that are now prohibited topics of collective bargaining. The Board needs to set these expectations for the administration and hold the superintendent accountable for ensuring they are followed.

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?

Yes.

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

Karen Woltman Responses

Yes.

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?

The District needs to maintain a collective bargaining process that includes all permissive topics and provide competitive salaries and benefits. The District needs to make good use of TLC funds to create attractive teacher leadership opportunities. The District needs to continue to update facilities and build additional capacity as needed to improve working conditions for teachers. If elected to the Board, I will support the collective bargaining process and continue the work of the FMP.