

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 seeking a Board of Directors seat to offer my skills and experiences in service to the community. I am particularly focused on being a voice at the table for groups who may have felt marginalized in our district, including students and families of color as well as students with special needs and their families.

Since my daughter started attending school within the district, I have taken an active role as a parent and community member. I began by serving as the treasurer for Lucas On Campus (LOC), which is the before and after school program at Lucas Elementary, in 2008. I worked hard to maintain our fiscal security while also serving our families. Under my tenure as the treasurer, I instructed our program to begin accepting families that received childcare assistance which allowed some of our lower income families to have much needed stability and security for childcare. In 2010, I also stepped into the role of treasurer for our PTO at Lucas. To ensure that our board had transparency reporting on our spending, I introduced a more detailed budgeting system as well as recommended that we used an outside agency to file our taxes. In addition, I worked with the board to introduce a new reimbursement policy for our teachers and staff who often times spent their own money on items needed for their classroom. In addition, I was part of the committee that introduced a very successful direct ask campaign to our school that raised over \$6500 that went directly to much needed educational items and projects for our school. While my daughter attended SEJH, I actively volunteered at many activities like registration and chaperoned school dances. I was also an active participant of the PTO and chaired the magazine fundraiser. Finally, I have taken an active role at City High by serving as a volunteer for the school as well as serving as the treasurer on the PSTO since 2015-2016.

Besides being an active parent, I also bring with me a host of professional experience that is detailed on my attached resume. You should note that I have several years of experience related to financial reporting and interpreting which will be key as a board member. I also offer keen insight on how to effectively supervise staff as seen in my current role where I have a staff of 10 that directly report to me in my role as Departmental Administrator.

I am also the wife of a school teacher in the district and as such I have a direct connection to the issues and concerns on the minds of our teachers.

Lastly, I think the most important experience that I can bring to the board is one of an engaged community member that understands the hard work and dedication that this role will require. I have lived in our community since 1994 and bring with me my experience of living in a growing and thriving community with a diverse population.

2. Please list your top priorities if elected.

1. Rebuild trust between the community, district administration and school board: As the parent of a current student, wife of a teacher, and candidate who has spent the last four months meeting with voters, I have had an opportunity to give this some extensive thought. The lack of trust is a common theme I have heard for several years, and has been amplified as I have met with voters and school principals. They view this to be a damaged relationship and hope that this can be addressed with people like myself who are willing to bring an open mind to every discussion and who is willing to hear from community members.

2. Invest in our teachers: In the wake of state-level changes to collective bargaining, I believe the Board needs to give concrete assurance to our teachers that they are invaluable components to our success as a district. Our Board and district must take all reasonable steps to ensure that we are able to retain stellar teachers, recognizing their dedication to our students and our community.

3: Adhere to the GO Bond and/or the FMP: I believe that we as a board must guarantee that either the GO Bond is adhered to if passed or make a commitment to focus on our educational needs as outlined within the FMP if the bond doesn't pass. This is also a common theme that voters have shared with me as it relates to the underlying issue of lack of trust and transparency. The board will have the power to see that these things happen if we elect the people willing to do this work.

4. Create a welcoming climate in the ICCSD: I want our district to be open and welcoming to all students, families and staff. We have people from a variety of backgrounds attending and working within our schools and we must take the effort to see that they have the tools to be successful. We have taken steps to address some of these concerns for our student population by administering an annual climate survey for them and creating policy that address areas of concerns. As a board, we should work to ensure that this is also happening for our many employees and not just the teachers because each role is an important part to ensure that we are a successful district.

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?

I believe the Board's biggest recent success is the implementation of the Weighted Resource Allocation Model that begins a process of addressing some of the achievement gaps that we are in some of our higher FRL schools. This is a great first step in working to close the gaps that have continue to grow and separate our minority and lower socioeconomic students from their peers.

By far the Board's biggest failure has been its own in-fighting. As a governing body the board members need to be able to work together in a respectful manner and not allow their differences of opinion to create rancor at meetings and divisions among the public. There is no expectation that all board members will agree on every issue, but once all sides of an issue have been heard and discussed and a vote has been taken, the issue should be settled and all parties abide by the majority vote. This has been

a common recurring theme that I have heard from not only parents and community members but also from district employees.

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

The ICEA is the voice of our teachers, our most valuable asset, and as such, should participate in decision making as it relates to teachers. The Board and the administration need to be open to hearing from teachers on all issues and should place those views at the forefront of their discussions and policy making. I believe that like any vested group, the ICEA should have representation at the table to ensure that their needs are not only heard but addressed by members of the board in a manner that can be productive.

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 first goal would be ensuring that I am thoroughly educated on our budgeting model. Like the University of Iowa, ICCSD has different funding streams that have restrictions. It will be important to ensure that I fully understand what those are within a very short timeframe so that the information our CFO presents is fully understood. This is something that I believe so strongly in and can be seen by the fact that I have already opened the lines of communication with Craig Hansel. We have met and started the discussion of our budgeting model and the constraints that we are faced with.

I want to ensure that we have a budget that can allow us to do that work for which we are here, which is educating our students. We want the best possible teaching staff to do this, so cutting teaching positions is an area that I would adamantly resist. I recognize that personnel costs are one of the first areas looked into when cuts are needed but I have also seen the repercussions that follow with increased class sizes, greater growth in achievement gaps and losing quality teachers to other professions or districts. As a board member, I want work to avoid these things and look at all possible cost saving measures that would allow us to avoid losing one of our most valuable commodities.

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

Yes, I support the GO Bond and the Facilities Master Plan. The GO Bond ensures that we as a district continue to move forward to making our schools not only safe but equitable. Without its passage, we will be a district halted on any movement associated with our master plan. The Facilities Master Plan is also paramount and should be retained as closely as possible because so many of our community members had a voice in its creation.

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 currently work at the University of Iowa in a role that works closely with members of Campaign to Organize Graduate students (COGS). Unfortunately, they didn't enter into a contract before Chapter 20 was changed and this created concerns for our students since their new contracts wouldn't address previous included items like health insurance, leave time or wages for returning members. During meetings within my college administration, I vocalized my concerns that we must guarantee to our students that we would create either a standard handbook or policy that addressed the non-permissible items. I also offered feedback for the policy that my college developed which took into account the items that were previously negotiated with COGS.

As a board member, I would take this same approach of directing that a handbook be developed to address the items that were formerly negotiated. We will need these safeguards in place to give our staff the assurance that we value them and will work to retain them in the district. Without having some policy or handbook to address these areas, we are opening ourselves up to having to deal with greater issues of not being able to hire or retain the type of employees will help our district to thrive.

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?

I believe the salary schedule is fair and allows us to attract and retain immensely talented teachers. I want to continue this tradition and ensure that we have a salary schedule that is fair and represents the many different attributes that our teaching staff bring. As a board member, I will devote my efforts to ensure that this continues and develops over time to ensure that we are staying ahead of neighboring districts in order to attract/retain the highest quality of teachers.

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

I support maintaining the benefits in the current contract. As a board member, I would work to ensure that our entire body was educated on the negative impacts of not including permissible subjects of bargaining, such as paid leave and insurance, in negotiations. We need to be aware that not maintaining these benefits could lead to the loss of highly skilled and valuable employees. Not being willing to include items that are permissible could also create some mistrust between us and employees which would run counter to one of my top priorities mentioned above, which is rebuilding trust.

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 a board member, I recognize that my role is to work with administration to set policy for our district.

While we will continue to advocate for adequate funding at the state level, we must recognize the limits of our influence in these political decisions and look toward areas in which we have more local control. I would ask our district administration to look into non-wage elements of the compensation plan to improve the quality of life for our employees by increasing areas that may not lead to a larger paycheck but offer other benefits to their family. These include the amount of paid leave, assignment lengths and flexible schedules as well as paid training that would make them even better employees.

As a district, we need to also ensure that the hard work and dedication of our many teachers are highlighted. We have started this with SHINE awards but, I would like to see this type of recognition expanded to include more social media good news posts that focuses on projects that our teachers are spearheading that directly impacts our children. As a spouse of a teacher, I know that these come in a variety of forms from special after-school clubs, to donating their own time to after school events.

The best way to invest in the students within our district is to invest in the employees that influence their educational experience. The board and administration should make certain that we have a strong talent acquisition strategy that looks at building our employees in order to fill positions so that we don't lose talent and knowledge that would cost us more to replace.