

## **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 would like to see our district continue to be an attractive place for teachers, staff, students and their families to join and succeed. We have strong community engagement. We have great building administrators and teachers. We have already created great strategic goals for the district to move us forward. It will take a strong cooperative board to continue to allow these positives to continue.

I think my experience as a Manager for several years has given me the ability to communicate effectively with many types of personalities. With each employee I hire, I try to find out how each one best learns new procedures as well as what motivates them to improve.

My years with the District Wide Parents Organization, has given me a chance to visit all of the great schools in our district and meet teachers, parents and students from all across our district. Being on the executive board for the DPO was a rewarding albeit challenging experience. I have also enjoyed my time as the PTO treasurer for Garner Elementary. I have developed a great relationship with all of the staff there.

I have also been involved with the North Central PSTO and now I am the treasurer for the Liberty PSTO group. These two positions have allowed me some insight into the differences between our secondary buildings and our elementary schools.

2. Please list your top priorities if elected.

My number one priority is to work with the board and the rest of the community to put extreme pressure on the state legislature to significantly increase the amount of dollars being spent on education. More money simply means more flexibility. Not just more teachers to reduce class sizes, but adding teaching assistants, more instructional coaching or probably most important, getting the necessary resources to each school so all students can succeed.

Second, I am a supporter of the Facilities Master Plan and what it can offer to so many students across the district. I am hopeful that the bond passes on this ballot. If it does not, the needs do not go away. It will still be a priority of mine to determine how we can still affect changes to our learning environments across the district.

I want the Board to ensure that the environment is such that the new Director of Special Education is free to affect change. There is a lot of improvements that can be made in this area. Those improvements will be most successful with a collaboration between the Director, District Administration and the Board.

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 is the implementation of WRAM. It is early in the process, but there have already been successes due to this new structure. It still can be tweaked to gain more improvements, such as using more than solely FRL to determine class sizes. Perhaps mobility and stability numbers for schools should be part of the equation.

For a failure, I was originally going to answer with something that I feel was more of a failure of administration than the Board. But in the end, what I realized is that most failures in the district have come about because the Board has failed as an entity to set the tone for our district. Instead of a cooperative group with constructive discussion and deliberation, the Board has set a tone of argumentativeness and personal criticism and name calling. This has decreased the effectiveness of the Board and therefore the administration. It has also diminished trust in our District by the community.

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

The district is successful when we have great staff. Great staff is acquired and retained as long as they have a good relationship with District Administration and good direction from the Board. It is important for the District to work collaboratively with the ICEA to ensure we are maintaining the ability to attract and retain quality staff. They should also serve in an advisory role to the District and the Board in regards to policy decisions that may have unforeseen consequences.

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?

As I mentioned earlier, we need to change that narrative of inadequate State funding. That is something the board and other community members need to constantly remind the legislators to address. In the meantime, I think it is important to leverage one funding stream vs. another. For example, as we have upgraded to geo thermal at buildings or installed high efficiency lighting, utilities bills have gone down. This is using facility money for the upgrades, but decreasing spend from the general fund which goes towards the personnel costs.

We will be faced with tough choices at some point with the budget. My goal would be to keep that impact as far from the classroom as possible. As a district, I feel like we run fairly lean on administration for our size, but we could look at the numbers to make sure we aren't creating redundancies. With the opening of Liberty High this fall and the new boundaries coming in 2019 to go along with new elementary schools, we should be able to save overall on busing costs as well.

My own education was pretty heavy in the sciences as well as music programs. I would hate to see either of those areas be cut. Foreign language is always one of the first things to be cut when times

are hard, but we have an increasingly global economy and workforce. Communication is key to succeed in that climate.

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

I absolutely support both. The FMP has driven great change in the last few years in our district. The plan itself has always been to use a bond to pay for the next several years' worth of projects. It is key for all of our students to have equitable learning environments. I have already mentioned the benefit to the general fund by installing more efficient HVAC and lighting systems. With the implementation of WRAM, we had unintended consequences of students needing to be in portables at brand new schools. We have a shortage of seats across the district as well as spaces that are not appropriate for the instruction going on in them.

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?

Much like continuing to lobby with our legislators for additional funding, we should also be lobbying with them to return to a more beneficial collective bargaining process. This allows for a more robust way to attract talent to the area as well as retention of those same staff. The Board, however, needs to be able to do these things regardless of what is happening in Des Moines. A board, after all, is a policy making group. If things are not allowed to be discussed via bargaining, the board would need to enact policy to close the gaps.

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 support the work of past collaboration between the District and the ICEA. We have had a successful partnership up to this point. This has led us to where we are now which is a top tier district in the state and the country. One alternative way to decide teacher pay is to base it on student achievement (test scores). I feel that this is an ineffective solution and would only serve to push teachers away from schools that need the most support.

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

I would have no reason to revisit anything that has already been agreed upon. I would also hope that by the time this current contract is up, changes will be made in the law to allow us to continue to

have good bargaining conversations. At the very least, I feel like we should come to the table to discuss all allowable areas of bargaining not just the mandatory base salary.

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?

My previous several answers all led up to this. I feel that it is incumbent on the Board to be the buffer between the National and State decisions that are attempting to erode public education. Salary and benefits are one way to attract teachers and staff, but the environment the Board can create from the top down will go a long way to attract and retain them as well. We want the teachers and staff to know that they are supported and have the authority to do what they do best. We want all students to be able to succeed and the only way to do that is to provide top notch facilities, teachers and staff. Anything short of that, we have failed.