

Questions for Board of Education Candidates February 2014

Questions for the Voter Guide

1. Some say the Board of Education appears to work for the superintendent rather than the other way around. Do you agree/disagree? What changes to board operations would you make to reduce or eliminate the perception?

It appears that way. As a BOE member I will ask questions and conduct my own due-diligence research on important topics, not simply rubberstamp whatever the administration puts forward. There have been many legitimate concerns raised by teachers, parents, and students about some of the ways KCS is implementing reform policies. The BOE has not been responsive to these concerns, as evidenced by the 8-1 vote to extend Dr. McIntyre's contract for another year (to December 2017). They do not appear willing to hold him accountable and removed all consequences if he does not keep his promises.

2. Two Knox County communities are mounting campaigns to override the Knox County Board of Education Three-Year Capital Improvement Plan in order to build middle schools in those two communities. Are you familiar with the contents of the Capital Improvement Plan? What, if any, recommendations do you have for adjusting current priorities?

With respect to major capital projects, improvements should be made to existing buildings first in ways that improve facilities used for student learning, and should take precedence over athletic facilities and even new construction. For new construction, Carter Elementary should be the preferred funding model – paid for with cash, no bonds or interest. Funding for technology should come from grants or other sources as this was an unfunded mandate due to RTTT. The BOE should adopt a uniform policy so that the needs of all communities are considered fairly and in the order they are presented.

3. Given the state mandate to implement the Common Core State Standards, what do you believe is the Board of Education's role in addressing issues related to Common Core?

The KCS BOE can address many of the concerns raised recently regarding fallout from CCSS. KCS decided that every assessment listed by the TN DOE would be REQUIRED, while many of those are optional at the state level. Our kids are losing days of valuable instruction time every semester for assessments, standardized tests, and surveys, as well as instructional time lost to test prep and test practice. Additionally, KCS requires TWO unannounced teacher observations under the TEAM evaluation model, while the state requires only one unannounced observation. If the BOE won't advocate for our students and teachers, who will?

4. A perception exists among some in the community that the Board of Education is not listening to teachers. How will you address this perception?

The BOE is not listening to teachers, parents, or students. The Teacher Working Group meetings that were set up did little to resolve the issues. As a BOE member I would conduct regular town hall meetings with parents and teachers in my district. I would ask for their suggestions and recommendations. I would take these recommendations back to the board and Dr. McIntyre and advocate for our teachers. They are the subject matter experts. I am very concerned about the number of high quality, experienced

teachers who are leaving the KCS system or retiring early.

5. Is the current funding for Knox County Schools adequate for teacher salaries and school facilities? Please explain your answer.

Current funding will never be adequate because so little of any increase ever reaches teachers or classrooms. Knox County gave KCS an additional \$40M over the past 4 years. Where has it gone? We are paying 75% of the nearly \$100K salaries of two Eli Broad Fellows, one of whom is advocating to replace our veteran teachers with TFA recruits. We paid nearly \$900K for PR; \$360K to Parthenon to recommend reducing funding; and millions for technology that will be obsolete in 3 to 4 years. The community will support more funding for teachers and facilities when this waste stops.

6. As a member of the Board of Education, would you consider yourself responsible to your constituents or to the county as a whole?

I consider myself responsible to my constituents and would immediately work to improve communication and transparency. I have learned much from the folks I talk to every day while campaigning. I will be much more active and involved in the schools in my district, and will be the voice for students, teachers, parents, and taxpayers. But I also think the BOE members must be responsible to the county as a whole, and work together to improve conditions for some of our communities that keep seeing their needs moved to the bottom of the list (see also number 2, above).

Respectfully Submitted 3/13/2014

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