

The 2013 Board of Education Candidates Reply

Question #1

Why are you running for the Metuchen Board of Education?

Rose deVries:

I am running for re-election to the Metuchen Board of Education because I want to continue my lifelong advocacy for academics and co-curricular programs.

Prior to serving on the Board of Education, I worked for physical improvements to our schools when I campaigned for the Pass'97 and Bulldog '05 construction referenda. In 2005-2006 I successfully advocated eliminating the reporting out of class rank on high school transcripts and I co-founded the Student Alumni College Fair in 2006 (now known as CQE MHS Alumni College Day). I worked to support co-curricular activities by successfully advocating for the establishment of the Edgar school inter-scholastic sports program, including the co-ed swim team. I held a number of PTO officer positions and chaired many PTO events and co-founded the Edgar Middle School Booster Club.

My advocacy efforts on the Board of Education since 2007 have contributed to a number of initiatives that have been implemented in our school district. Some of them are: the addition of a guidance counselor and guidance supervisor, expanded AP course offerings, the creation of a .5 grade-point differential between honors and AP courses, the full implementation of Naviance software for college and career planning, and the use of IMPACT concussion software for all student athletes.

There are a number of items I wish to continue to advocate for and see through to implementation on the Board of Education. Some of these are: increased differentiated instruction, uniform grading practices, increased classroom rigor, participation in regional science fairs, expanded exit interviews for 8th and 12th grades as an additional self-evaluation tool for the district, and continued fiscal responsibility.

Please see my website rosedevries.com for a complete list of my accomplishments.

Jonathan Lifton:

I am running for re-election because I feel my experience as President of the Board, Chair of the Negotiating Committee, and member of the Finance and Policy Committees would continue to be an important asset to the Board. I also feel my experience in business, where I own my own company employing unionized labor and have over 20 years of collective bargaining experience, enables me to be a unique voice on the Board. With the changes that have occurred in our district in both personnel and program, and our teachers' contract expiring next year, my experience in managing employees, facilitating productive meetings, understanding budgets, and negotiating collective bargaining agreements has provided and, I hope, will continue to provide a positive contribution to the Board.

Michael Stern:

I've been pained to see that the TV ratings for televised BOE meetings have been slipping over the past several years and decided that I needed to bring my "colorful" perspective to higher education in full view of the community in order to boost ratings. At the end of each televised Board meeting I will either sing or perform a magic show.

On a more serious note, there are a few pet projects that I would like to see initiated in order to make our kids more competitive in college and their careers afterwards. These two areas are introduction of Mandarin into Metuchen High School and Edgar School as well as expanded Information Technology education that will appeal to a broader range of student. China is our largest trading partner and a world superpower. There is not enough Mandarin speaking Westerners to fulfill the demand for such across a broad range of career opportunities. We need to take a leadership role in this pursuit. Also, I work for an IT company and in that role, see a broad range of emerging technologies that we can expose our children to. Technology is no longer knowledge of convenience. It is a life skill that goes far beyond knowing how to use an iPhone or surfing the web. Technology skills are not just for the best and brightest students. They're for everyone and our kids should start understanding the true role it plays in our daily lives. I am going to push hard for these if elected.