

The 2013 Board of Education Candidates Reply

Question #4

Many would say, "The fork in the road to college can be found in the middle school." How can we optimize success for college and careers by focusing on the middle school curriculum, programming, etc.?

Rose deVries:

Since my first term on the Board in 2007 I have been advocating for a fully articulated district wide guidance curriculum focusing on grades 6–12 for college and career planning and a guidance supervisor to develop and administer the guidance curriculum. Since purchasing the college and career planning software Naviance, I have advocated for full implementation beginning in the middle school and following through the high school. Last summer, the district hired a Supervisor of Guidance. Having a supervisor to coordinate guidance between the middle school and the high school will ensure that planning for college and career success is a smooth path that begins in middle school with full use of a guidance curriculum and Naviance, <http://www.naviance.com/>.

Jonathan Lifton:

Having two children currently in Edgar Middle School, I can attest to the many difficult transitions children of that age are going through. There are tremendous academic and social pressures which students must deal with in order to excel and position themselves for a successful High School career. Recognizing these challenges, the Middle School has focused on increasing the support students can access. There is a new "advisory" program where all Edgar students meet with their peers to discuss issues at the Middle School. The restructuring of the guidance department on a district-wide level has led to a much more active partnership between the High School and Edgar guidance departments. Naviance access has been extended to all students at the Middle School. These changes and enhancements are designed to help Edgar students become aware and serious about their High School and post High School careers at an earlier age, and help them make the choices that will enable them to reach their goals.

Michael Stern:

I absolutely agree with that statement. The middle school experience is incredibly important which is why I think our children need to be exposed to more unique learning opportunities early in their middle school experience. As a school system, we need to keep a close eye on emerging career trends and respond rapidly through agile curriculum decisions that will position kids to be most competitive in college and in life.

Question #5

How important to you is the community's interest, knowledge and participation in school issues? How would you go about increasing public input, if at all?

Rose deVries:

The community's interest, knowledge and participation in school issue are very important to me. I advocated to keep the right to vote on the school budget in April. If school elections are moved to November the public will lose their right to vote on the school budget.

http://medm.gmnews.com/news/2013-01-30/Schools/Metuchen_school_board_split_on_moving_elections.html

I think it is important to encourage public participation at the Board of Education meetings.

Meetings take place on Tuesdays bi-monthly at 8pm. If you are unable to attend, you may view the meetings at the MeTV website:

<http://www.metuchenschools.org/metuchen/About%20Metuchen%20District/MeTV/>

You may review the Board of Education meeting agendas and minutes posted on the district website:

<http://www.metuchenschools.org/metuchen/Our%20District/Board%20of%20Education/>

Go to the Superintendent's Open Forum taking place four times a year at Moss, Campbell, Edgar or Metuchen High School. Volunteer for Board of Education ad/hoc committees when committees are formed to address pertinent issues.

Join community groups such as:

The Citizens for Quality Education (CQE):
<http://metuchencqe.org/membership-form/>

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO):
http://teacherweb.com/NJ/CampbellSchool/Campbell_Moss_PTO/2012-13-PTO-MEMBERSHIP-FORM.pdf

The Booster Club:
<http://www.metuchenschools.org/mhs/Athletics/Booster%20Club/Booster%20Club%20Membership%20Form%202012-13.pdf>

Support The Metuchen Education Foundation (MEF):
<http://www.metucheneducationfoundation.org/Welcome.html>
Attend the MEF fundraiser April 5th,;
http://www.metucheneducationfoundation.org/2013_Fundraiser.html

Please become involved. We encourage your participation and input. Feel free to contact the Board of Education with comments and concerns:
<http://www.metuchenschools.org/metuchen/Our%20District/Board%20of%20Education/Contact%20Information.html/> [top](#)

Jonathan Lifton:

One of my goals as President of the Board has been to increase communication between the community and the board. We are in the process of overhauling the structure of our board meetings to make them more understandable and transparent. For the first time, the minutes of our meetings are now posted on the district website. But more than any formal changes, I hope the community has noticed a change in tone. All comments and input are welcome at our meetings, and issues of concern are debated openly. One example was our recent debate on whether to move our elections to November. Whatever side of that issue you were on, I feel that all sides were heard and all views respected. If I am re-elected, I hope to continue to enhance that openness and respect.

Michael Stern:

The taxpayer has every right to be involved in their community's school system. I've seen Boards and Administrations run like exclusive clubs with little to no input from the outside, often to disastrous results. This is not the case in our town. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience in this community. It should be leveraged to the maximum extent possible. However, we need to remember that we hire educators and administrators to carry out important responsibilities and that they shouldn't be micro managed. My role on the board is to listen to all sides' ideas and use the best of them to help effect positive change. The public has a right to open communication with their school

administration and educators. They should be part of the process. Consensus is a good thing but we need to run the railroad while we're building consensus so there needs to be a balance. I see this all the time in business. Too little or too much consensus building doesn't work. The balanced approach works.