

D86 candidates discuss their views

Seven are competing for three four-year terms on the high school board



Where do the candidates stand on the issues?

Pamela Lannom compiled these responses from personal interviews and questionnaires.



Fotini Bakopoulos



Cynthia Hanson



Erik Held



Kathleen Hirsman



Matthew Marron



Yvonne Mayer



Urszula Tanouye

Teacher contract negotiations in 2020

Did not participate in any interviews; no response available.

District should be in alignment and able to compete with neighboring districts while ensuring fiscal responsibility and financial sustainability. Last contract was negotiated successfully, with both sides feeling positive about the compromises reached.

District needs to be competitive with offer to teachers without over-promising, given future economic uncertainties. Teachers are an important resource.

Collaborative approaches are most effective. In 2016 ground work ahead of time helped talks succeed; contract included hard and soft freezes and tied salary schedule to the tax cap. Negotiations will be tough if referendum fails.

Took graduate school class on negotiating skills. If both sides can't agree on wage freeze or something board can afford, a merit-based bonus is an option. Supports faculty having skin in the game in how well students do after graduation.

Look at what other districts are doing, such as LT, with a 5-year contract and low percentage increases. District can't keep paying for everything that's on the table without looking at everything that's on the table.

Has not taken a deep dive on this issues. Supports teachers and believes compensation packages that are similar to surrounding districts are fair.

Unifying the district

Did not participate in any interviews; no response available.

A larger discussion needs to take place across the district. Build a larger table and open the discussion to all, including those from South who feel, for whatever reason, they do not have a voice.

Pursue open and transparent communication initiatives, such as standing town halls, perhaps quarterly and rotating around the community, to secure to non-financial foundation of the student experience

Refocus on common interest in excellent educational experiences for all students, embracing unique strengths of each school and taking the best of each school and expanding it across the district

Recent candidate forums and Central vs. South faculty basketball game, planned joint band trips, possible joint service projects and similar events that bring parents and the community together will help unify the district.

Supports having an oversight committee if referendum passes that includes people who voted no, which might help shrink the rift. Hold town hall meetings twice a year and interactive roundtables to give people a voice.

Believes South hasn't been treated equally, which is reflected in choices and ways words are used. Believes more transparency and a closer examination of data would help the district earn more trust.

District's greatest strength, area of concern

- strength — geographical areas with diverse student populations
- concern — deteriorating infrastructure

- strength — pride families have in schools and community, as reflected in active and engaged community members
- concern — facilities that limit ability to provide safest, most secure, most accessible learning environments that best serve students

- strength — high quality education experience with top-level core academics, well-rounded extracurriculars and strong support network
- concern — facilities in need of serious work, a problem created over time by board members ignoring or politicizing problems

- strength — excellent educational program
- concern — facilities and infrastructure

- strength — strong, committed families and talented faculty, enabling students to pursue scholastic, athletic, music and other interests
- concern — curriculum must be aligned with employment trends/needs in engineering, medicine, information technology, construction

- strength — strong partnership that exists between teachers, students, parents and community members
- concern — district facilities that fall short of creating a safe, 21st century learning environment at both schools

- strength — dedication of school community members (residents, parents, students and teachers)
- concern — lack of community members' trust in district leadership, feeling that decisions are skewed, community concerns are not sufficiently addressed

Top three priorities if elected

- a commitment to students first
- a commitment to fiscal responsibility
- a commitment to excellence

- ensure curriculum alignment continues on time and meets goals
- continue to support initiatives that help students pursue ideal future
- guide district as it continues to unify under one District 86 of Excellence

- bridge fissures in the community
- use financial experience to continue work to straighten out finances and resource management to benefit students' education
- work with administration on curriculum equity and close book on argument of which school is superior

- provide oversight on projects if referendum passes; work within means to accomplish highest priority infrastructure and facilities projects if it fails.
- attain goal of curriculum equity within approved scope and time frame
- bring South and Central communities together

- align curriculum with employment/career trends and opportunities, "how to go to college"
- balance fiduciary responsibility to the community with faculty compensation
- share resources where feasible between schools (hockey club, department chair, extra-curricular activities) and in community

- ensure projects are finished on time/budget if referendum passes; explore options to reinstate cut athletics, activities while pursuing new referendum if it fails
- implement curriculum equity plan
- employ communication and transparency to heal mistrust, confusion and discord

- implement a districtwide program of studies
- improve technical communication so data can be better used in communication and decision-making
- discuss strategic plan at board meetings to ensure progress toward community defined goals

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