

School Board Candidate Questionnaire



Jennifer Matthias Responses

1. Why are you running? (If an incumbent, tell us your accomplishments as a Board member.)

I am running for school board because I am an active FWCS parent who believes parental engagement in education is important to the success of not only our children, but also to the success of our school district. I am a proud graduate of FWCS and a parent of two children who have graduated and two children who currently attend FWCS. If elected, I promise the opinions and suggestions of parents, grandparents, teachers, support professionals and concerned citizens will be heard.

2. How often have you attended school board meetings, and have you ever addressed the Board?

I try my best to attend every board meeting. If I miss a meeting, I watch the posted archive. Yes, I have addressed the Board with various concerns during board meetings, board workshops, through email and in-person meetings. Since the start of the pandemic, I have attended most FB Live board meetings and often post questions, comments and suggestions. Upon the conclusion of a board meeting, if the meeting does not cover my concerns, it is likely I follow up with an email to the board.

3. What do you see as the overall role of the school board?

The overall role of the school board is to hold the superintendent accountable. We are living through unprecedented times. We have recently hired a new superintendent who is undertaking a position in the largest district in Indiana. Now, more than ever, the school board must be diligent in asking the hard questions and staying on top of daily changes and the direction of our district. The school board should have a clear vision for the district, adopt policies to achieve successful goals, work with the community to improve student achievement and develop a fiscally sound budget.

4. What role does the school board play in establishing social and racial equity in the district?

Local School Boards are legally and morally charged with the responsibility to serve the community of learners by setting the vision and mission of the school system. One important vision shared by administration and the school board is that social and racial equity is considered in every decision made by the district. Many times equity of opportunities for all children across the district is driven by financial decisions as it relates to staffing and facilities. The school board has the authority to endorse budgets offered by the district and to make certain that those financial plans are socially and racially equitable.

5. What role do you see the Association playing in supporting teachers and/or support professionals?

The Association's role is to be the unified voice of the teachers during negotiations and on a daily basis. Sometimes, I see that role perceived as adversarial by the administration and I do not think it should be that way. I believe common ground is attainable, especially when you consider both sides are ultimately striving to do what is best for kids. The Association's role should be to protect it's members from unfair labor practices and this role should not be viewed as a negative. The Association, along with the school board and administration should be doing everything possible to recruit and retain the best teachers available.

6. Working conditions in general are no longer negotiable under current bargaining laws. How would you as a school board member seek input from teachers regarding working conditions to ensure the best learning environments for students and safe working conditions for educators?

Electing a FWCS parent as a school board member makes reaching out and staying in touch in the schools a bit easier. My children are encompassed with what is happening in the classroom daily and in turn, I have a child's perspective in the learning experience. As an engaged parent, I ask the questions either through email or face-to-face (when this option is available.) I have and will continue to reach out to the teachers in our district so that I understand where help is needed and offer my support in any way possible. I want to know the problems the teachers are facing, the struggles they are having and their opinions on how to resolve issues. I believe that a teacher who feels valued and trusted to do his/her job are far more likely to go above and beyond for our students. We must start by listening and then provide our teachers with the tools and support they need in order to retain amazing teachers and achieve the highest level of academic success from our students.

7. Do you support charter schools?

NO.

8. Do you support vouchers?

NO.

9. Would you be willing to lobby the legislature with the Association on areas of common interest?

Yes.

10. Do you have a campaign plan?

Yes. My platform involves the following:

1. Parental Engagement
2. District Communication and Transparency
3. Fully Funding Public Schools

I have listed three pillars to my platform, but these are not limited and they do not stand alone. The success of FWCS depends on a collaborative effort of the school board, the superintendent, teachers and support professionals, students, families and FWEA. Careful time and consideration went into my decision to run for a school board seat. I have always been an engaged parent trying to do what is not only best for my child, but for all children in my district. I am not afraid to ask the hard questions. I needed to decide if the school board was the appropriate place for my voice. After careful time and consideration, I came to the conclusion that if I wanted to make a difference in my district and my community, I needed to have a seat at the table.