

# School Board Candidate Questionnaire



## Regenia Jones Responses

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

First, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Regenia Jones. I am the eldest of seven siblings. My family relocated to Fort Wayne in the late 70s from Selma, Alabama, and I have been a resident of this great city for 44 years. I am the mother of three adult children and wife of 24 years to Edward Jones. I am a graduate of the Indiana Institute of Technology with B.S. in Business Administration (dual concentration in management and human resources) and also hold certifications in case management and family skills training for high-risk and general population families.

Having struggled myself with educational challenges, I understand that every child learns and processes information differently, and needs appropriate resources and support to succeed. My passion for securing all children a quality education is fueled by my experiences as a child who was “left behind” academically, without sufficient resources or an advocate.

As a parent, I actively worked alongside my children’s educators to ensure a strong partnership between home and school. This has given me a solid appreciation for everything teachers do and reinforced how important it is to provide them with the resources and support they need to teach our children.

As a Court Appointed Special Advocate (2003-06) and a foster parent of 15+ years, I work with the Division of Child and Family Services, Family Court, and FWCS to advocate for children and their education. In 2007, I cofounded a non-profit youth organization to provide mentors for girls and young women, with is still ongoing today.

Professionally, I have worked in social service for 30+ years, with families of different socioeconomic backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, teen moms, youth clubs, school groups, and mental health agencies. Today, as the founder/owner of Hands-On Services of Indiana, I advocate for, and provide access to, mental health and wellness services for children and families.

I am running for the FWCS school board because I believe life is truly about service, because I am dedicated to the success of all children, this city, and its residents, and because I am committed to the process of working with local government and a diverse group of people to make our city great for all constituents and their families—not just a select group. I have spent over half my adult life working on the front line with children and families, trying to make a positive difference in the lives of children, and I believe I have demonstrated the desire, determination, and drive to work hard and stand for those who otherwise feel they do not have a voice.

As a FWCS alum, the parent of three FWCS students, and a life-long advocate for children, families, and education, I want to lay a better foundation towards securing a solid future for generations to come and feel election to the FWCS board provides an opportunity to be more impactful on a broader level. I want families and voters to know I am not running to be a career politician; instead, I am running to be an instrument of change for the people who feel their voices are unheard. I am one of you—a former student, a parent, and a citizen of Fort Wayne—and your voices will be heard through me.

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

I have not attended any school board meetings since my adult children attended high school. I have never addressed the school board.

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

The primary role of a school board is determining, developing, and implementing policies to guide the board in making decisions that provide a roadmap for the superintendent, administration, and staff to follow in all facets of providing a high-quality, equitable education for all students. This includes not only educational programming, resources, and supports but also transportation, the lunch program, extracurricular activities, and hiring a competent and effective superintendent to lead the district. I would also note it is the responsibility of the school board to ask questions, investigate challenges and problems, provide for transparency and accountability, and—most importantly—provide an open-door policy through which they can truly listen to the needs of the constituents and educators.

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

I feel school boards have a moral obligation to help establish social and racial equity within the public-school system through policy, ongoing professional development for new and seasoned teachers, and diversity in faculty. Concerted efforts should be made by the board to ensure the FWCS school district personnel reflects our community. There should be diversity on school boards that is a representation of the community and curricula should reflect social and racial equity.

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

What FWEA is currently doing and has been doing is crucial in regards to giving teachers a platform and increasing state and community awareness on issues that plague our educational system. Teachers are the backbone of our educational system; they deserve increased compensation and better working conditions, i.e., more teachers and more resources for them to effectively do their jobs. As a community, we have to continue to fight on a legislative level for policy change that ensures teachers are treated and compensated like the professionals they are and that they have all the resources they need to provide a high-quality education to our children.

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?

A school board trustee works for the constituents of the school district, which includes students, parents, and teachers. If elected to the FWCS board, I will always support and advocate for teachers by connecting with organizational platforms that support teachers and the work they do. Teachers are the heart and soul of public education and are on the front lines every day, educating our children. The FWCS board must make it a priority to invest in a strategic recruitment and retention plan to develop targeted outreach based on FWCS' mission and goals. This plan should focus on technology, diversity, and professional development for new teachers that help to build skills in the critical first years in the profession. It should also provide systemic support for all teachers (new and seasoned) with regards to on-going professional development to foster on-going opportunities for growth and learning. This is particularly important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which I feel has forever changed the way education is provided. Teacher access to on-going professional development that includes remote instruction training will be vital to the success of our children and future. Finally, the plan should include increased compensation and better working conditions, i.e., more teachers and more resources for them to effectively do their jobs. Teachers should not be required to take on dual responsibilities for remote and in-person instruction.

When teachers are not thriving, public education is not meeting the ultimate goal of every student receiving a quality educational experience. We have to do better by our teachers.

I will ask teachers for their input on safe working conditions/learning environment, resources, and professional development needs on a regular basis. I will visit classrooms and talk with teachers, bringing their concerns to the board and ensuring every opportunity for teachers to have a platform to be heard by the board. And I will make my voice heard in platforms that best support and advocate for teachers.

7. Do you support charter schools?

No, I do not.

8. Do you support vouchers?

No, I do not.

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

Absolutely! If we want to see change, we must start with being involved in the political process. Standing and lobbying for causes that ultimate make our world a better place.

10. Do you have a campaign plan?

Yes, my team kicked off our strategic campaign plan, beginning with canvassing and fundraising efforts a few weeks ago. I have a team of volunteers and advisors. Please visit my campaign website at [www.regeniajones.com](http://www.regeniajones.com). I am not new to advocating for children and families and, if elected, I will advocate for teachers, too. My resume and track record speaks for itself. If I am elected to the FWCS board, my constituents will gain a dedicated, passionate, and humbled representative who cares about children, families, and education and is committed to making the community better. Make your Statement Vote "YES" for JONES on November 3, 2020