

## Scott Clayton

### Potential Questions for Board of Education Candidates

1. How will you empower educators to develop flexible environments that recognize that learning happens in different places, at different times, and in different ways, inside and outside of school? (2-minute response). **Our job as board members is to establish policy and support budgets that allow teachers to be as creative as possible. Board members also have a strong role in the development of curriculum documents. You may or may not know that teachers are part of the development of curriculum along with Dr. Brooks, and Mrs. Rutledge. Part of the newly designed buildings incorporate flexible environments and I am proud to have support this. In my own school we used stand up desks, desk bands, flexible seating to foster learning. I also think if we are going to promote these types of learning environments, it is important to support professional development of teachers in training them to best utilize these resources.**

2. What do you think the schools are doing right to prepare students for a successful future? Likewise, what do you think could be improved upon and how would you make that happen? (3-minute response). **Access to technology instruction at all levels is certainly a big help. I attended a STEM workshop at Johnson School last year where students were engaged in using different materials to design a rocketship. This was part of Bethel's investment in moving teachers to embrace the next generation science standards where students don't just talk about science, they "DO" science. Two of my older children created some really cool projects in the middle school STEM class using the 3-d printer. One created a race car and the other a prosthetic limb. The STEM expo also provided 3 of my children great opportunity for them to demonstrate expertise in a science related subject. The annual STEM EXPO also gets kids thinking and creating incredible projects. Finally, open AP enrollment, the early college program, partnerships with WCSU, Naugatuck valley, our EMT program, JROTC and the high school pathways program are tremendous assets to our high school.**

3. What do you think are the most important ways we can keep our kids safe in school? How do you balance keeping kids safe with making sure that they are not afraid? (3- minute response) . **The first lockdown I experienced was March 30, 2005 and I won't forget it. A guy with a gun fired it across the street from the school I worked at. A year later there was a bank robbery across the street and we had another lockdown. The most important job we have as educators is to keep kids safe for learning. There are two types of safety. There is physical safety and emotional safety. We can lock doors, make people sign in, wear visitor badges, renew our all hazards plan, maintain our SRO's in schools, which I fully support and establish a physically safe plant. Administrators are legally mandated to conduct all types of emergency preparedness drills. The bigger and more complex aspect of safety is emotional safety. For example, how do we what internal struggles kids are going through? What types of trauma are kids experiencing at home and how is that trauma impacting their ability to learn? We need to have an effective social emotional learning program to deal with real issues that impact kids. I also think there is a developmentally appropriate way to teach kids real life lessons. One of my children still thinks a dangerous wild animal was loose on the Berry School field a few years ago.**

4. How will you ensure schools cultivate engaged and informed citizens, ready to work together across differences and actively participate in our democracy? (2-minute response) **The board's oversight in the curriculum process plays a big part in this issue. I was a social studies teacher at both the high school and middle school levels and it is absolutely important that teachers remain politically neutral and to be certain that there is a balanced conversation of facts from reliable sources. I also think there is a time and a place for everything and I would say that it takes a certain skill set that not all teachers have to conduct a meaningful discussion of political ideas. Like it or not, people have biases and we need to take a stand as a community to say that certain behaviors are not ok, regardless of your political opinion.**

5. If you were to send a newsletter to every Bethel household, around what three issues would you focus your update? (30-second response). **I would send parents a running list of various achievements for both staff and students. I would include extra-curricular activities (community service, donating to charity), athletics, academics, scholarships, etc. There are also really cool things that our teachers do as well. Maybe someone did a really cool go fund me or had some type of amazing lesson plan or was able to demonstrate significant growth in achievement. We should recognize the good and not be so focused on negative.**

6. What are your qualifications for running for the Board of Education? (30-second response)  
**Parent of four children in Bethel Schools. Former teacher and current school principal. Certified superintendent and current office holder. Aside from Mrs. O'Brien, I am the longest serving member of the Board running for re-election.**

7. Numerous rankings are published each year comparing our schools against others in the region and state. There are a number of factors that go into these rankings. What would you prioritize in order to improve our rankings? (1-minute response). **Websites like Niche and school digger manipulate data. This is why the state department of education established the next generation accountability standards. It is simply unreasonable to compare Bethel to Redding, Newtown, New Fairfield and Brookfield. Take AP scores for example. In Bethel, everyone takes the AP test and all scores get reported. In other districts, students get that AP course on their academic transcripts for the purposes of applying to college and then never take the test, which then inflates that schools reported scores. Let me ask you, is that true data? Also, I engaged in an electronic conversation recently about SAT scores. It's the law in CT for all juniors to take the SAT. It shouldn't surprise anyone that students who can't speak English and are on free and reduced lunch are going to have a harder time being proficient on either the SAT or even the SBAC.**

8. What role, if any, do you think students should have in the political process? (1-minute response) . **This is very similar to question #4. Students should absolutely study and learn about how our system of government works. I fully support the town registrar of voters setting up tables to gets students registered. The board's oversight in the curriculum process plays a big part in this issue. I was a social studies teacher at both the high school and middle school levels and it is absolutely important that teachers remain politically neutral and to be certain that there is a balanced conversation of facts from reliable sources. I also think there is a time and a place for everything and I would say that it takes a certain skill set to conduct a meaningful discussion of political ideas. Like it or not, people have biases and we need to take a stand as a community to say that certain behaviors are not ok, regardless of your political opinion.**

9. Looking forward, what do you think are the biggest issues on the horizon over the next 5 to 10 years and what would you do to address them? (2-minute response) . **The changing demographics of Bethel is a serious challenge that we are facing. We are just under 31% free and reduced lunch and over 20% with limited English proficiency. It shouldn't surprise anyone that educating students with these challenges is expensive. Students with these challenges likely didn't attend pre-school and don't have access to other resources, which means they come to the kindergarten not knowing their colors, numbers, letters etc.**

10. With increasing school enrollments, what additional measures beyond current practices would you implement to validate residency requirements? (1-minute response). **We have an obligation to follow the law. I would strongly encourage the administration to investigate all unusual circumstances and take whatever means they have to remove students who do not live in Bethel. I also think there are a lot of arm chair quarterbacks who have no idea about DCF placements or think that there are some dark forces busing kids in from NY when they see a Brewster Public Schools van drive through the educational complex.**

11. As more families move into our great town we are facing two significant challenges: 1) larger class sizes 2) increased expenses for support services needed for our growing ESL and special needs populations. Supporting this growth adequately (including hiring the needed teachers & support staff) can only be accomplished with an increased budget. Will you support this need this spring when budget season comes along? (2- minute response) . **The budget process is very challenging and part of that process includes the examination of data. Each and every year that I have been on the board since 2010, I have carefully looked at every line item and asked the appropriate questions as it relates to relevant to support increases of decreases. When it comes down to it, there are some items that are state mandates that we don't have a choice about and we get zero funding from the state. One of the best examples is ESL teachers. Once a school has 20 or more students in a native language, the law requires a certified ESL teacher. Bethel does not receive one cent from the state or the feds to fund this teacher. Also, everything isn't always about money. Some challenges can be met by changing the way we do things. The most dangerous words in education are "that's the way we've always done it."**

Addendum: 10/18/19 12. Recent research has suggested later school start times may change student achievement outcomes. This topic is currently being investigated in our own school district. One BHS Civics student asks, "What is your opinion of school start times?" (1- minute response). **The state of CA just announced that high schools would now start at 8:30. This was based on some research conducted on the west coast. We are moving our start times to better align all of the schools. I appreciate the manner in which this was researched. Dr. Carver convened a committee and looked at various options. Unfortunately we can't flip the schedule completely. If we were to flip start times to be completely in line with relevant research, we would need to double the size of our bus fleet from 24 buses to 48. Buses probably cost about \$90k per year. Not sure we can make that adjustment.**