

**Question #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?*

Educators in Bethel are already working effectively in this direction. An example of this type of learning would be the Pathways program. Another example would be the STEAM program, including the STEAM Expo, which develops home-school partnerships to support students in STEAM learning. My roles as a BOE member related to this topic are to listen to the needs of school personnel, evaluate proposed programs, and support the implementation of quality programs by providing needed resources. As a Board member, I will continue to be open to innovative ideas and support those that keep budget constraints in mind while benefiting student learning.

**Question #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?

We are doing a lot of things right. We have a strategic plan that is has a clear mission and clearly-defined, achievable goals. One of those goals is to purposefully incorporate the important skills of critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and innovation into instruction. Another is a focus on using research-based intervention models to help students reach their potential. In addition, we continue to work towards recruiting and retaining excellent educators.

We have active curriculum development in process by a skilled faculty and administration who are keeping current with what's new in education and working to make sure that our students have the benefit of the most up-to-date and beneficial learning environments. Going forward, it is important that everyone continue to stay current by being active in professional organizations and keeping informed about research and advancements in education, so we can ensure that our students are benefitting from the most up to date information.

One area that we should pay more attention to is school climate. Children don't learn as well, if at all, when they are anxious. Some of the negative interactions between people outside of school may filter down into the schools. Those of us who are assisting in charting the course forward need to work hard to create the most conducive climate for learning. We need to continue to create a learning space where every child feels safe, supported, and valued. When we all work together to maintain a positive school climate that accepts and values each individual for the unique gifts, talents, and abilities that they bring to the school community, everyone benefits. As a board member, I will continue to support the great work already being done in our schools as well as additional goals that improve the learning environment for the children of Bethel.

### **Question #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)

Safe schools begin with a safe infrastructure—security protocols and buildings that support safety and security. Every adult working with students must be well-trained in security protocols, so that, in the event of an emergency, they know exactly what to do. As a nurse, I've been in emergency situations, and as both a nurse and a teacher, I've trained for them. When emergencies happen, training has to kick in. There's often not a lot of time to think, so it's important that most of what you do is by muscle memory and appropriate training.

As far as the students are concerned, we need to be age-appropriate and sensitive to their fears, but also explain to them that all safety drills are there so we can practice the skills we might need in an emergency. Kids aren't usually nervous about fire drills because they have become so commonplace. Other drills serve the same purpose. They just haven't become part of their routine yet. Well-trained adults can help calm student fears by modeling calm. Students often take their cues from the adults in the room. Training helps us be the calm adults. As the well-trained adults, it's also important that we know our students and provide extra support for those we know to be more sensitive or impressionable. Being aware of individual differences is important.

As an elementary school student, I remember having to do air raid drills. I participated in the drills without fear, because, while I understood the gravity of the potential threat, I trusted my teachers. If they were calm, I was calm. I also knew that some of my classmates didn't take this in stride as I did. The teachers gave them extra support. It seemed like everyone got what they needed and we did the practice that we needed just in case. As a Board of Education member, I will continue to keep safety and security as a top priority.

#### **Question #4**

How will you ensure schools cultivate engaged and informed citizens, ready to work together across difference and actively participate in our democracy? (2-minute response)

As a science teacher, one of the many things I teach my students is how to critically evaluate information; to not just accept everything they read as true. Having the tools to be critical consumers of information is one of the basics for becoming an informed citizen. To participate in democracy, one must also understand democracy. I would support the continuation of this type of instruction in the curriculum. It is often said that democracy is not a spectator sport, but to be a participant, you have to understand the rules and be familiar with the playing field. Education can and should help with this.

Working together across differences means that there has to be opportunity for students to practice the skills that make collaboration more successful. Skills don't develop automatically, they must be taught and practiced, just like becoming a good athlete or a musician. Collaboration is no different. Among other skills, students must be given the opportunity to practice their listening skills and not just their talking skills, how to disagree agreeably, how to ask for help when they reach an impasse, and the value of compromise. As a Board of Education member, I will work hard to support any and all efforts to prepare students to be responsible and productive members of society.

#### **Question #5**

If you were to send a newsletter to every Bethel household, around what three issues would you focus your update? The hypothetical newsletter would be coming directly from you, as a representative of your position, in addition to any and all communications that are currently available. (30-second response)

I don't see any necessity for this. The information that is already communicated to the Bethel Community by Dr. Carver is detailed and extensive. There is such a thing as too much information. If there is other information that community members feel is missing, that could be a conversation to have in the future. As a member of the Board of Education, I will support effective communication between the school and the Bethel community.

### **Question #6**

What are your qualifications for running for the Board of Education? (30-second response)

I have always been a strong advocate for public schools. I am highly motivated to work hard on behalf of the Bethel community and its young people. I recognize the value of schools not just as educational settings, but as places where communities come together. My personal background includes both nursing and teaching. For the past 18 years, I've been a middle school science teacher. I have mentored new teachers and participated in many building and district level committees. Some of these committees include Safety and Emergency Response, Professional Development, Character Education, STEAM, Shared Decision-Making, and Scheduling. I have been an adjunct professor teaching aspiring science teachers to be more effective. I am certified in both building and district level school administration, so I also have an administrative perspective.

I have been a conscientious, thoughtful, and reliable participant in fulfilling my responsibilities as a current member of the Bethel Board of Education. With my varied background, I believe I am uniquely qualified to continue to serve as a member of the Board.

### **Question #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? Our intent for this question is for the Candidate to identify the various factors used in the many ranking systems, and then prioritize the most important factors. (1-minute response)

The criteria used in the rankings are important factors that should be considered in assessing the quality of our schools. However, many of these criteria are related to testing and test scores, such as the measures of college readiness. Just like students are more than their test scores, schools are also more than their published rankings. The rankings are only one measure of the success of a school. In addition to the rankings, we need to consider all of the components of the educational experiences that we offer to our students. Everything we do as a school district is important. If I had to prioritize one of the items in the college ranking system, I would prioritize math and reading proficiency and performance, since these are basic skills necessary for success in all colleges and careers.

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**Question #8**

What role, if any, do you think students should have in the political process? (1-minute response)

In order for students to become active participants in our democracy, they must be given the proper tools. An active student government can facilitate this learning as a complement to classroom instruction. Authentic instruction should include discussions of current events, but educators should remain politically neutral in those discussions. The role of the school is to provide a platform for discussion and sharing of ideas and different perspectives. This is a way that students can broaden their outlook, critically consider other points of view, and make decisions about their own choices in politics and elsewhere. As a Board of Education member, I will support student learning related to informed participation in the political process.

**Question #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? We are looking for issues that may be facing our own school district over the next 5 to 10 years. (2-minute response)

One of the issues at the top of the list would be making sure that our school buildings and grounds are kept up-to-date so that they are safe as well as able to accommodate any population growth. Other issues are more difficult to predict. We know that we must prepare our students for careers that are probably not in existence today, so we must continue to look at knowledge and skills that have the potential to transfer to broader contexts. These would include things like critical-thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and innovation.

If issues develop in the future, as a member of the Board of Education, I will continue to do what I typically do when faced with a problem. I will collect relevant data, analyze it, and work collaboratively with the rest of the Board to develop solutions.

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#### **Question #10**

With increasing school enrollments, what additional measures beyond current practices would you implement to validate residency requirements? (1-minute response)

We want to make sure that all of the students in attendance at our schools have the right to be there. Current practices consist of a comprehensive system to ensure that Bethel residents do not have to shoulder the burden of educating non-residents. While the system is not perfect, the data that we collect reflects that this is not a significant problem in Bethel. The protocols we have in place are working. As a Board of Education member, I will continue to support providing the necessary resources to continue these protocols.

#### **Question #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).

Absolutely! If we want to maintain the quality of our schools, we cannot continue to add students to our school system without providing needed resources. Bethel is a wonderful community with great schools. If the needs increase and we don't provide the necessary resources to meet those needs, the quality of the schools is likely to suffer. We obviously need to continue to be mindful of costs, but at some point as the population grows, we will have to invest additional resources to maintain or exceed our current standards. If we don't invest in our young people now by doing everything we can to prepare them for a successful future in college or their careers, there may be an even greater cost for them down the road. As a Board of Education member, I will continue to be mindful of budget constraints by setting priorities for resource allocation that maintain school quality.

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**Question #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)

As with anything else in a school, school start times are only one component of a complex system with a lot of moving and interacting parts. While there is research evidence to support the benefits for students when their school day starts a little later, that must be balanced with how any change in start times would impact the rest of the system. For example, changing the starting and ending times of the school day would impact bus routes and bus needs, as well as students who may have jobs or activities after school. We need to try to find some balance so that the overall impact is either positive or neutral and not a positive change in one area that causes a negative change in another. As a Board of Education member, I will continue to be open to the possibility of a scheduling change while being mindful of all of the components of the school system that might be affected.