



Public Education Partners

Greenville County

Greenville County School Board of Trustees: Area 26 Candidate Questionnaire Responses

Candidates' responses were limited to 150 words per question. Other than edits to meet the 150 word limit, responses are uploaded exactly as provided.

	Amanda Brett	Roger Meek	Stephanie Leonard
Years in School Board Area:	Did not respond	37	9
Education Background:		Bachelors Degree	Bachelors of Science and Nursing, Masters of Business Administration
Employment/Occupation:		Semi-retired, Director of Sales, Keith Young & Associates	Healthcare IT Director
Campaign website and/or social media page:		None at this time	www.stephleonard.com
Do you have children? If so, what school(s) do/did they attend?:		Yes. They attended Bakers Chapel Elementary School, Tanglewood Middle School, Berea Middle School, Carolina High School, Berea High School (My grandchildren attended Pelham Road Elementary School and presently attend Greenville Middle School)	Yes 4, Fork Shoals School, Ralph Chandler Middle and 3 year old twins not yet in school
Email Address:		rdmeek@bellsouth.net	stephschoolboard26@gmail.com
Daytime Phone Number:		864.380.8389	864-617-8474
Why do you care about public		I have spent over forty years of my life	As a parent and community member, I

<p>schools and why are you willing to serve as a member of the Greenville County Schools Board of Trustees?</p>		<p>volunteering at schools and/or serving on the School Board of Greenville County and I look forward to serving my community and helping those that need my assistance in the future.</p>	<p>understand that investing in our children must be priority. They are the one lifeline we have to our future. Supporting our educators and students must be in all decisions we make, starting with the school board. I am willing to serve because I feel an obligation and drive to advocate for teachers and students. We must maintain trust in our educators, and know that they have our children's best interest in mind. We must keep the focus on our students, and not focus on media driven terms that distract from our ultimate goals and needs of our kids.</p>
<p>Please describe your work and volunteer background and how it prepares you to be a Greenville County Schools Trustee.</p>		<p>I have a Bachelor's degree in Accounting and have used those skills in the past to help balance the Greenville County School District's budget while maintaining a superb educational opportunity for our students. I have volunteered in many levels at schools such as room assistants, PTA's, School Improvement Councils, and member of the Booster Club's when my children were older.</p>	<p>As a healthcare leader, I have learned how to problem solve in non-traditional ways, consider new solutions and manage a high volume of issues with low or no budget. I am very financially focused, managing a very large budget. I understand the different types of learning styles, and support technical needs of a large healthcare system. My clinical experience has taught me compassion and understanding that we have a need to focus on individuals as a whole, and not only certain aspects of a person. I have a great understanding of how education and healthcare align and the importance of keeping a healthy balance of both. I have learned the importance of collaboration and hearing the voices of those decisions impact, in this case our educators and students.</p>
<p>What do you consider to be the most important issue for the District and Board of Trustees to</p>		<p>Although our District made great strides in improving our test scores I feel we still have a long ways to go to recoup</p>	<p>The most important issue we face today is recruitment and retainment of teachers. National trends show many</p>

<p>focus on in the next four years and why? What role should the Board of Trustees play in addressing it?</p>		<p>our losses especially in the mental health of a lot of our students. The Board should be very supportive in funding more remedial opportunities for our students while funding more counselors to help those students that are struggling as a result of the pandemic.</p>	<p>teachers leaving the field completely and enrollment in college for education programs are declining. The role the Board of Trustees play in the solution is making it a priority for the district, identifying trends and supporting solutions. The Board can partner with our educators and hear their perspective directly. The Board can put forth votes on how we achieve proper assessments of our teachers, identifying their needs and supporting solutions in and out of the classrooms.</p>
<p>What do you think is the greatest strength of Greenville County Schools and how would you as a Trustee work to enhance it?</p>		<p>I have always felt our greatest strength in Greenville County is the exceptional leadership of our teachers in the classroom on a daily basis. Our teachers are underrated by many members of the public not knowing the many challenges they must face daily, especially during the past couple of years with trying to teach during the Pandemic. We, as Trustees, should show our appreciation daily to our teachers and agree to pay them more than they receive.</p>	<p>The greatest strength of Greenville County Schools is the dedication to our students. Despite the size of the district, the autonomy given to each individual school allows our students to feel like they are important and a part of a smaller community of educators. As a Trustee, I would work to identify barriers at the teacher level, striving to reduce hours of busy work and give teachers back time and authority in the classroom. I would help protect our schools from distractions and allow our educators to help decide what is best for our students.</p>
<p>From your reading of the <i>Profile of the South Carolina Graduate</i> adopted by the SC State Board of Education and the SC Education Oversight Committee, what is your greatest area of concern in terms of academic achievement in our schools and how would you as a trustee work to address it?</p>		<p>I think it is great that everyone agrees on what the "Profile of the South Carolina Graduate" should be but I for one think it is long overdue that education funding is revamped and education receives the money they need to insure they receive what they are asking the education community to do for them. I will continue to provide</p>	<p>My area of greatest concern is that of STEM. While some schools do very well in this area, we do not have equal opportunity. Students have different needs, barriers and outside influences impacting their ability to learn. School choice helps drive some students to schools with higher performance in these areas. As a Trustee, I would</p>

		<p>as much funding to the class room that is possible.</p>	<p>prioritize identifying the schools with the most barriers, and supporting ways to improve in these schools. School choice is a fantastic program, however due to transportation or financial constraints, not all students are in a position to benefit from these programs. If we cannot bring the students to the schools with the better programs, perhaps we can bring the programs to the students. As a Trustee, I would love to be a part of a task force to identify strategies to improve the access to these students.</p>
<p>“Critical thinking and problem solving” and “collaboration and teamwork” are among the “World Class Skills” called for in the <i>Profile of the South Carolina Graduate</i>. How best can our educators instill these abilities in their students, and how should the District support them?</p>		<p>I believe in Greenville County our schools are already much ahead of the State of South Carolina in providing these skills to our students. We need to continue as much funding down to the schools and to our teachers with appropriate guides to insure what we have been doing for years continues.</p>	<p>Our educators can best instill these abilities in our students by experience and leading by example. These are not traits that are taught well by text book. Our students need opportunities for classroom experiences and the teachers need the flexibility in the classroom to simulate real world examples. There are opportunities for our teachers to learn from these exercises as well. For example, partnering with other schools to collaborate with other first year teachers to learn problem solving, skills and other support needed for new graduates. The district should support by working together and supporting programs that provide these experiences and finding resources needed to support.</p>
<p>What do you consider the most important factors in building a strong collaborative relationship between Greenville County Schools Administration and the Board of</p>		<p>I believe the open communication we have developed over many years should continue between the Administration and the Board. It helps us tremendously to be able to trust</p>	<p>Visibility, communication, partnership. I feel strongly that the best way to understand the issues is to see them firsthand and listen to the people that are doing this daily. As a Trustee, I would</p>

<p>Trustees?</p>		<p>each other during the good times and the bad.</p>	<p>meet regularly with the administration of the schools in my district, tour the schools in person and speak to the "boots on the ground" staff. I would build the relationships with the administration so that if there are issues or concerns, they are comfortable reaching out directly to me. I feel it would be my duty to best represent them fully.</p>
<p>Teacher pay is always a top concern in recruiting and retaining quality teachers. This is reflected in Greenville County Schools' priority of keeping teacher salaries at or among the highest in the State. So other than this issue, what are the biggest challenges facing teachers today? What forms of support should the District provide for teachers facing these challenges?</p>		<p>I think school discipline is a top priority at most schools. I believe the District can provide more professional development to help any teachers that are struggling in this area.</p>	<p>Teachers have over time had other responsibilities added to their daily activities. The teachers that I have spoken with want time back in the classroom, more autonomy, and to feel appreciated and trusted. Teachers have been frontline the last several years, facing the same risks as healthcare workers, but without similar support or protection. We've not given teachers the resources to handle or cope with the added stressors. I feel we need to do proper assessments of what the teachers feel are their needs, and the district has a responsibility to identify solutions to those concerns. I suspect many would be of very little cost to the district. Teachers do not want to work evenings and weekends planning or grading papers, feel as if they are neglecting parent communication or fall out of compliance with mandatory learning. They need time embedded during their day to help get these activities done.</p>
<p>What does school safety mean to you, and how would you prioritize investment to keep students and</p>		<p>I have always been concerned with the safety of our students and staff and I know the School District is very active in</p>	<p>School safety to me means an environment where everyone feels safe. This is not limited to keeping our</p>

<p>staff most safe within our school buildings?</p>		<p>making sure our schools are safe and secure. I know the District administration is looking daily at new and innovative ways that may change things that may be feasible in the future. We as Board Members should support our Administration during this time and pass along any information we receive from the community that would help in the search for a better way to make our schools safer.</p>	<p>schools free of weapons. I believe in investing in mental and emotional well being of our students. Helping students better handle stressors, cope with outside influences and identify when additional help is needed. I would also prioritize education and resources to our teachers on dealing with these stressors in the classroom, and how to refer to resources. Mental and emotional health should be normalized. Studies show that children and adolescents who are better equipped at dealing with emotions and stressors have less violent tendencies and outcomes.</p>
<p>What would be your priority(ies) as a board member to ensure that students with higher needs receive appropriate support to reach their highest levels of achievement?</p>		<p>I supported the Magnet Program and all initiatives that have been presented to further all our students, no matter at what level of need they require, to be a successful student and I will continue to do so when I am reelected.</p>	<p>This is a very personal issue to me as a parent. I have a child with very high anxiety that is a complete barrier at times to learning. As a parent, I have done everything I can outside of school to help, however I have yet to have a teacher independently identify that he has anxiety. Once they know, it makes complete sense. I would advocate for training for teachers to identify these students first. Once identified, have documented next steps on how to get the child the assistance needed, talking points with parents, etc. We often have resources as a district, but a hard time identifying the students in need. Parents often depend on the schools to help identify the issues and navigate solutions, better assessing the needs of the students should be a priority.</p>