



Public Education Partners

Greenville County

Greenville County School Board of Trustees: Area 28 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.

	Jeff Cochran	Brittany Hilbert	Steven Watterson
Years in School Board Area:	16 years	7	17 years family has been here 18 years
Education Background:	I graduated from what is now the University of Virginia's College at Wise, and I have a master's degree in secondary education leadership from Clemson University.	BA Sociology, Minor Biology University of Georgia	I have an AS in information Systems, BA in World History, M.Ed. Secondary Education and US Navy equivalent Marine Engineering.
Employment/Occupation:	I taught high school mathematics in South Carolina public schools for 31 years. The first 18 of those years in Beaufort County, and the final 13 years here in Greenville County at Wade Hampton High School. I am currently retired.	Business Banking Financial Advisor, Pinnacle Financial Partners	South Carolina Department of Education in the Office of Career Technical Education and Student Transitional Services. I am an Education Associate over, Architect/Construction, Government and Public Administration, Law Public Safety Security and Correction including Fire Fighting. Manufacturing and STEM Engineering.
Campaign website and/or	cochran4education.com	Yes, 2 and they both attend Plain	I am using my Facebook account

social media page:		Elementary in Simpsonville	as a campaign platform. Steven Watterson
Do you have children? If so, what school(s) do/did they attend?:	I have one son. He is home-schooled.	www.brittany4schoolboard.com fb.me/brittany4schoolboard28 @brittany_forschoolboard on Instagram	My wife Victoria and I have five children all graduated from schools in South Carolina. Stratford HS Goose Creek SC, Macedonia HS Moncks Corner SC, St. Joseph Catholic HS in Greenville SC, and Greenville Tech Charter in Greenville SC.
Email Address:	jeffcochran4education@gmail.com	brittany4schoolboard@gmail.com	Watterson_abroad@hotmail.com or swatterson@ed.sc.gov
Daytime Phone Number:	(864)906-6283	864-345-4742	864-386-1283
Why do you care about public schools and why are you willing to serve as a member of the Greenville County Schools Board of Trustees?	I care about public schools because I care about our children, and I care about the future direction of our country. Our public schools have a tremendous impact on the lives of so many of our children, and what our children are taught has a tremendous impact on our country's future. I am willing to serve as a member of the Greenville County School Board because I believe what is taught in our public schools is extremely important. What we allow and what we do not allow makes all the difference.	As a graduate of public school with many educators in my family I have always been an avid supporter of public schools and began volunteering in Greenville County Schools with Junior Achievement when I was pregnant with my oldest 11 years ago. I believe all children deserve access to a high quality education in an environment where they are physically and emotionally safe. I am a running for school board because I believe that we need people on the school board who are thoughtful, deliberative and willing to collaborate to find the best solutions to give our kids an education that allows them to pursue whatever path they choose after graduation and, as a mom of 2 kids, I want to be an example to them of how to create	Students are the future of our Republic. Without their proper education our society would fail to exist. My knowledge, skills, abilities, and life experiences have prepared me in the educational field. I strongly believe this will make me an asset to the Greenville County School Board and citizens who I would serve

		positive change and impact their community.	
Please describe your work and volunteer background and how it prepares you to be a Greenville County Schools Trustee.	I think that having been a public school teacher myself for 31 years gives me a lot of insight into many of the problems faced by our students, teachers, school administrators, and other school personnel. I also think I have a head start on finding solutions to those problems. Along with being a teacher I also coached several sports over the course of my first 18 years as an educator. So I also have an understanding of and an appreciation for the value of students being involved with sports teams and other extracurricular activities that are part of a complete well rounded education.	I've been in business banking for over a decade, helping businesses in all stages of the business cycle achieve their financial goals, which means I have a good understanding of how to evaluate return on investment and ensure that we are using taxpayer dollars effectively. Additionally, my job has given me a unique perspective on what businesses are looking for in employees and has made me passionate about workforce development. Because of this, I've volunteered with many organizations to teach financial literacy and entrepreneurship to both kids and adults. This combination of experience makes me uniquely qualified to work with my fellow board members and others in the community to build a coalition to better all Greenville County Schools.	As I described in section 1, I work for the South Carolina Department of Education. I am a retired US Navy Engineering Officer and in my service to our country I was a Training Program Coordinator for 9 Naval Engineering schools. This is where I came extremely interested in education as a career after retirement. Upon retiring I taught engineering at Oconee County School District and Greenville Tech prior to moving to the SCDE as an Education Associate. I serve on fifteen boards state and national and an active member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars awarding teacher of the year award, Patriot Pen award for middle school students and the Voice of Democracy award for high school students. I also teach at St. Mary Magdalene Catholic Church introduction to Catholicism to 7-8th graders.
What do you consider to be the most important issue for the District and Board of Trustees to focus on in the next four years and why? What role should the Board of Trustees play in addressing it?	I believe that the social issues are the most important issues for the Board of Trustees to focus on in the next four years. We need to make sure the focus stays on academics. We should not be teaching sexual content to young children. I believe there should be	There are a number of issues that are critically important for the District, but I recently read an article that COVID has undone a decade of progress in math and reading. With Greenville Co. being an urban school district, we face not only geographical but	The District Strategic Plan. Without knowing your goals how a district can proceed in the proper direction to ensure our students future.

	<p>absolutely no place in our schools for pornographic books and other pornographic materials. I also believe that Critical Race Theory has absolutely no place in our schools. You don't end racism by teaching racism. One of the goals of our public schools should be to help unify our community and our nation. You do not promote unity by constantly trying to divide people into different categories.</p>	<p>socioeconomic challenges in education. When reviewing the district's long term strategic plan, I noted that the correlation between schools with the highest number of students testing at the Meets or Exceeds level in math and reading has a direct correlation with that schools area median income. The board needs to stay focused on finding ways to address these learning gaps using evidence based practices.</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 think the greatest strength of Greenville County Schools is the people. We have a lot of really talented and hard working teachers, administrators, and support staff personnel. As a Trustee I would work to keep the focus on academics and to make sure we are teaching our children the things that we should be teaching.</p>	<p>I think the Graduate+ program is a great framework that could continue to be expanded. In talking to members of the community there are some areas where lack of information is preventing some of the programs from being as effective as possible. For example, when students are electing to take courses in partnership with one of our community colleges, more guidance is needed around course selection and the impact of taking those courses as a high school student vs. college student in terms of financial aid and future scholarships.</p>	<p>Our people, Administrators, Teachers, School Staff on campus and off, our Parents and Business and Industry Partners.</p>
<p>From your reading of the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate adopted by the SC State Board of Education and the SC Education Oversight Committee, what is your</p>	<p>My largest area of concern in terms of academic achievement is the achievement gap between schools, especially those between schools with similar student demographics . I think we need to</p>	<p>Reading is such a critical piece of a child's educational success and I would like to see continued expansion of our 4k programs and Summer Reading Camp so that we can ensure that all Greenville</p>	<p>With the pandemic we lost many student's gains in Math and Reading. Recent reports do show Greenville County Schools students having outperformed other districts which is a</p>

<p>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>carefully study the strategies of our highest achieving schools and teachers, and share those best practices with each other. We should all be in this together helping one another.</p>	<p>County students are at grade level by the 3rd grade. Achieving this metric will allow teachers in higher grades to devote more time to developing the World Class Skills like "critical thinking and problem solving" and "knowing how to learn".</p>	<p>testimony to our great teachers and parents. This area will need to be monitored closely by all staff to ensure these levels improve. As a trustee I would ensure we have the necessary resources in-place to ensure our students receive the proper instruction to achieve success.</p>
<p>"Critical thinking and problem solving" and "collaboration and teamwork" are among the "World Class Skills" called for in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. How best can our educators instill these abilities in their students, and how should the District support them?</p>	<p>To help our students improve their "critical thinking and problem solving" skills it is critical that we get back to an emphasis on teaching logical reasoning skills. We need to make sure the focus is on teaching students how to think instead of what to think. We need to present both sides of issues fairly and let students decide what they believe instead of us telling them what they are supposed to believe. As far as "collaboration and teamwork" go, first of all we need to promote unity. It is hard for children to collaborate and be part of a team if they are constantly in an environment that promotes divisiveness. We also need to give them as many opportunities to work together as possible.</p>	<p>Critical thinking and problem solving typically involve open ended questions and providing real world examples to allow the students to find the solutions on their own. I think small things like decisions about classroom environment and rewards could also be valuable in helping students understand collaboration, teamwork and even compromise. At the end of the day, I think one of the best ways the district can support teachers is to listen to what they feel is going to produce the best outcomes and help them implement those suggestions. Helping facilitate strong teacher networks both within and between schools will encourage them to share best practices on how best to engage students and instill these abilities.</p>	<p>There are several resources available to all our teachers to provide the "Critical thinking and problem solving" and "collaboration and teamwork" A few are Career Technical Students Organizations like SkillsUSA SC, Health Occupations Students Association (HOSA) Robotics teams such as USFIRST Robotics, FIRST Tech Challenge, FIRST Lego, and VEX Robots through the Robotic Education and Competition Foundation. Career Technical Programs offer these "World Class Skills" in all CTE programs. Administrators and Teachers to achieve these results can also use MICROBURST Employability curriculum that takes a student through several examples to instill these skills.</p>
<p>What do you consider the most important factors in building a strong collaborative relationship</p>	<p>I think the most important factors in building a strong collaborative relationship are transparency, clear communications, and clearly</p>	<p>Productive relationships begin with trust. We need to be able to come to the table recognizing that we all want the same thing: a high</p>	<p>Transparency of your actions. As a Trustee we are assigned several schools in our District and should visit each school</p>

<p>between Greenville County Schools Administration and the Board of Trustees?</p>	<p>defined roles. It is important that people not have hidden agendas. In order to work together successfully and establish trust, it is important that everyone be willing to say what they really believe about issues. Clear communications alone can often head off troubling issues and wasted time. Clearly defined roles also help limit confusion and often save a lot of unnecessary work.</p>	<p>quality education for all students and work together to solve problems with that in mind. If we can do this, it will allow for a supportive, positive environment with open communication and sharing of ideas and ultimately a better learning environment for our kids.</p>	<p>during each semester to understand the Administrations needs as well as Teachers, Parents and most importantly the students and their progress. Another crucial factor is Listen, Listen and Listen.</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>One of the biggest issues for teachers today is that they are not allowed enough autonomy, and it is decreasing their joy of teaching. We need to help retain our teachers by making teaching fun again. After teachers have been given the agreed upon curriculum to be taught, we need to give them more freedom to be able to decide for themselves the best way to teach the material to their students. Far too often today teachers are treated like robots or like actors reading from a script instead of being allowed to make full use of their God given abilities and creativity to best serve their students. We also need to do a great job of mentoring our new teachers while they are gaining experience, and we need to protect the planning time of our teachers.</p>	<p>As I've spoken to teachers, the consensus has been that yes, pay is a factor, (and I support continued increases to be at or about the Southeastern average) but there are other issues that need to be addressed as well. There is a lack of internal and external support, we are burdening them with unnecessary meetings, administrative tasks and asking them to pay for supplies out of pocket. Additionally, there is a discrepancy in non-instructional requirements between schools (like working carnivals or football games) that needs to be addressed. In order to find effective solutions we must listen to teachers about what resources they need to be successful and find ways to reduce unnecessary meetings and administrative tasks.</p>	<p>Constantly increased administrative work that does not reflect instructing their students. Teachers do not just work during the school day. Teachers must grade papers create comprehensive lesson plans that take an enormous amount of their off time. When I taught, I looked so forward to the school breaks and teacher workdays to catch up. From experience I worked well above 80 hours a week to keep up. As a Trustee I would look for ways to improve their quality of life and work balances.</p>
<p>What does school safety</p>	<p>To improve safety in our public</p>	<p>To me, school safety includes</p>	<p>Our culture has become in many</p>

<p>mean to you, and how would you prioritize investment to keep students and staff most safe within our school buildings?</p>	<p>schools it is very important that the discipline code in our schools be enforced consistently and fairly. If the smaller level offenses are handled effectively, then there is less likelihood of larger problems developing. Also, students with a history of behavior problems should be suspended, assigned to our alternative schools, and expelled more often so that the students who are serious about their education have more opportunities to learn without the disruptions. It is good that we have a school resource officer in each of our middle and high schools in the district, but we also need to partner with our local law enforcement agencies to increase the number of our elementary schools that also have full-time resource officers.</p>	<p>both physical and emotional safety. Unfortunately, there is no one measure that will make our schools more safe in either of these areas. This should be a multifaceted approach that incorporates physical measures like locked doors, controlled entry or utilization of security technology as well as a more comprehensive approach that incorporates school resource officers, counselors, bullying prevention and assessments of social media threats.</p>	<p>ways complacent concerning safety in our schools. I have visited every school district in the state. I have walked into a school and walked the entire length and not once was asked who or what I was doing. I have also been almost stripped search. There is such a broad scope of how safety is approached. Metal detectors are one item, and a vigilant experienced School Resource Officer is another. Proper and consistent school entrance policies are necessary. Our Students, Teachers and Administrators deserve the best security measures available. A Trustee must review every aspect of this.</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>My highest priority for ensuring that students with higher needs receive appropriate support would be to help maintain an atmosphere of high expectations. We should always push for the highest level of achievement possible for each student and not limit them with low expectations. It is often amazing what students can achieve if we believe and they believe, and a lot of their belief comes from what is projected by our belief in their potential. We need to do the best job we can of</p>	<p>For students to have their needs met, we must first meet the needs of teachers so they can provide the individualized support needed for higher needs students. This means continuing to decrease class sizes as well as continuing to enhance and expand the On Track program to help identify the students with high needs and ensure that we are getting them the services needed, whether those are educational or auxiliary. Additionally we need to be making sure that there are</p>	<p>As a parent of a child who required higher needs while enrolled in a Greenville County School. Her mother and I had to be not only an advocate but also had to learn the laws which would ensure she received the appropriate support. Several times we knew the law and administrators did not. We were successful and our daughter became successful and graduated college Cum Laude. I credit this to the Administrators collaborating with us. I also</p>

	<p>providing every student in Greenville County Schools with the things they truly need in order to receive the best possible education that will help adequately prepare them for a highly successful future.</p>	<p>enough teachers and support staff and that they have access to the instructional resources they need to adequately serve these higher needs students.</p>	<p>credit the Greenville County School District with providing the support she required. Students with higher needs have access to additional funds through the Americans with Disabilities Act. As a district we have staff that know how to assist these students. As a Trustee I would ensure Administrators have the proper information to make the proper decisions.</p>
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