



Public Education Partners

Greenville County

Greenville County School Board of Trustees: Area 24 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.

	Anne Pressley	Gene Beckner
Years in School Board Area:	20	Did not respond
Education Background:	BA in English (Clemson University), Masters in Education (Converse College), Education Specialist in Curriculum and Instruction (Converse College), Education Specialist in Education Administration (University of South Carolina), Ph.D. in Education Administration (University of South Carolina)	
Employment/Occupation:	Director of Office of Curricular Innovation at South Carolina Department of Education	
Campaign website and/or social media page:	www.pressley4education.com Facebook: Anne Pressley Instagram: pressley4education	
Do you have children? If so, what school(s) do/did they attend?:	1 daughter at Hughes Academy	
Email Address:	pressleyanne71@gmail.com	
Daytime Phone Number:	864-770-3251	
Why do you care about public schools and why are you willing to serve as a	As a 27-year veteran educator, Greenville County has been my home since I moved here to begin teaching in 1995. Over that time, I have held a variety of	

<p>member of the Greenville County Schools Board of Trustees?</p>	<p>positions in four different schools and at the district office, and I am the mama of a student at Hughes Academy. My current work at the SC Department of Education has served to reinforce my belief in the absolute necessity that ALL students have access to the very best education possible, and my desire to serve as a Trustee would enable me to work to ensure that access for nearly 77,000 children in Greenville County.</p>	
<p>Please describe your work and volunteer background and how it prepares you to be a Greenville County Schools Trustee.</p>	<p>I am a 27-year veteran of the SC Public School System. As a former National Board Certified teacher, I taught at JL Mann Academy, Mauldin High, and Eastside High prior to becoming an Instructional Coach. I have been an Assistant Principal at Berea High School and have worked as Director of Teaching and Learning in Beaufort County School District and as Director of Academic Support Services in Greenville County School District. Since 2015, I have been employed as a Director in the Division of College and Career Readiness at the SC Department of Education where I have collaborated with policy-makers to lead Standards and Curriculum Development to support teaching and learning across the state. I believe that my experience at building, district, and state levels equips me to provide insight as a Trustee and collaborator with District Leaders over decisions that are critical to the success of our students.</p>	
<p>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?</p>	<p>As with all school districts across the state and nation, Greenville County School District is not only challenged to grow our students forward but also to be responsive to the impact of the last two years. Continued assurance of a return to safe and engaging learning environments and continued recruitment and retention of highly-skilled teachers are essential to GCSD's success. If elected as a member of the Board of Trustees, I would work collaboratively with fellow Trustees and District Leaders to inform critical decisions that will remove barriers and provide support that focuses on our students and the teachers who support their learning.</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 consider the greatest strength of Greenville County School District to be its wealth of resources – instructional, technological, and human alike, and my opportunities to work outside of Greenville County in other districts and at the SC Department of Education has reinforced my understanding of just how fortunate we truly are in GCSD. As a Trustee, my role would be two-fold: first, to work collaboratively to ensure the continued enhancement, equitable distribution, and effective implementation of our wealth of instructional and technological resources; and secondly, to advocate relentlessly to protect, grow, and support our most precious commodity, the administrators,</p>	

	<p>teachers and staff who directly impact the lives of our students on a daily basis.</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>Since its 2015 adoption, the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate has provided a clear and robust vision of the knowledge, skills, and characteristics deemed essential for post-secondary student success. Perhaps the Profile's greatest asset is that, beyond the call for rigorous content knowledge, it stresses the need for skills and characteristics like self-direction, perseverance, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving that our partners in higher education, business, and the military have identified as sometimes "lacking" in our students. As we well-know, academic achievement and post-secondary success are both contingent upon students' possessing all of the facets that make up the Profile; as such, Trustees and District Leadership must work together to ensure that instruction is designed and delivered so that students have ongoing opportunities to learn actively via collaborating, communicating, and problem-solving. On any given day, in any classroom, this type of learning should be the norm, not the exception.</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>True learning occurs when content and skills are authentically fused together through real-world learning opportunities that actively engage students as collaborators, communicators, and problem-solvers. To be clear, this type of learning does not occur through outdated instructional practices that only measure lower-order thinking skills such as "recall" or "remembering of facts" in classrooms that are "teacher-centered" where the teacher does most, if not all, of the talking, and students are passive recipients of information. As GCSD continues to support the development and implementation of project and problem-based learning opportunities that make student-engagement and critical thinking an organic part of their learning, teachers MUST be provided with robust, relevant, and ongoing professional support for how to plan and deliver this type of instruction.</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 Trustees?</p>	<p>Working with Boards in multiple school districts and at the State Department of Education has taught me that one of the most important factors in building and maintaining strong and collaborative relationships is clear, frequent, and open communication. Throughout my career, I have collaborated with stakeholders with vastly differing views to find common ground. At the State Department of Education, the Standards Approval Process required that thousands of stakeholders reach consensus over documents that would inform student learning in a content area for seven years. Similarly, my work</p>	

	<p>in districts and in schools has required me to gain stakeholder support for initiatives for which all may not have been in favor. Again, I attribute my ability to navigate these challenges to a commitment to clear, honest communication and to always keeping students and what is in their best interest as the driving force behind all of my actions and decisions.</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>The myriad of challenges facing teachers today is daunting and, in my opinion, directly attributable to the shortage we are facing as a state and as a nation. Accountability requirements such as tests that don't show how far a student actually grew even though he or she didn't "meet expectations," the time needed for effective instructional planning that must take place outside of the workday, and teachers' need to just feel "valued" are only three of the issues we read and hear about. As a District, we must take steps to protect teachers' planning and preparation time at all costs, meetings and professional development should be relevant and useful, and teachers' voices should be heard whenever possible when making decisions. Teachers are our "boots on the ground," and no group of people can offer better perspectives on the reality in our classrooms.</p>	
<p>What does school safety mean to you, and how would you prioritize investment to keep students and staff most safe within our school buildings?</p>	<p>In addition to the protocols and steps that are currently in place, GCSD should continue to focus on the idea of "awareness" of any potential issue. Students, parents, faculty, staff, and community members, should they become aware of even the slightest threat to the safety of an individual or a school, must ALWAYS be compelled to report it appropriately and immediately. While not a complete solution to the problem, this level of proactivity continues to be essential. The mental health and well-being of our students should be a central focus at all times; as such, building-level supports in the form of guidance and mental-health counselors as well as other entities should be a priority so that they are readily available as needed.</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>Effective implementation of a well-developed and robust MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) is a critical and research-based necessity for any district seeking to meet the needs of every student. While I honor the need to move every student to his or her highest level of achievement, there are groups of students in our district who require different or more intensive support to reach their goals. The Tiers in a MTSS system are designed to account for the learning needs of all students. As a board member, my priority would be to ensure that the District constantly monitor and report on the effectiveness of the tailored instruction, program support, and/or interventions provided to students via all of the data – diagnostic, formative, and summative that is</p>	

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