



**Indivisible Indiana District 2 School Board Candidate
Questionnaire**



Please send your replies to nmaspenson@gmail.com
by October 26, 2018

1. What should be the school board's top priority in the coming term?

SBCSC is facing looming property tax caps in 2020. Board members need to examine the budget to understand what steps have been taken, and what needs to be done next to blunt the impact of lost revenue. Having done this, the board should then move quickly to raise teacher pay to be competitive with surrounding districts. Paying our teachers equitably is the top priority.

2. What is your position on the role of charter and academy schools in the school district?

The policies regarding charter schools and vouchers are set by state government. SBCSC should take a more aggressive role in lobbying state officials. We must join with other districts and fight these attempts to weaken public education.

3. How should the school corporation deal with the problem of declining student population in South Bend Community Schools?

As long as the state continues to fund charter schools and vouchers, and allow inter-district enrollment, student retention will be a challenge. SBCSC should concentrate on offering a quality program to students and families to retain our students. Parents' concerns must be taken seriously and resolved. When students achieve and enjoy learning, when teachers are satisfied with their working conditions, parents and employees will spread the word in the community. Our families, students and employees are our front-line public relations.

4. What should our schools do, if anything, to protect students who have an undocumented status?

The SBCSC board policies do not have specific language about undocumented students. Policy 5540 has general language that the board "recognizes its responsibility to cooperate with law enforcement agencies." SBCSC should review and implement the Stanford Law School Policy Lab recommendations to protect vulnerable students:

1) Limit the types of information required for enrollment. 2) Protect the confidentiality of all student information. 3) Enhance a sense of safety by limiting ICE and other law enforcement agencies access to students at school. 4) Provide a variety of services to students whose parents may be detained.

5. *What should be done about racial profiling and the school-to-prison pipeline in our schools?*

SBCSC currently has three initiatives that can make great strides in reducing racial disparity in academics and discipline. Responsive Classroom at the elementary level has been underway for five years. Its practices are shown to improve relationships with students, improve behavior and foster academic achievement. In middle and high schools, Restorative Practices focus on strengthening relationships and repairing harm. These programs must be implemented with fidelity and regularly evaluated. Finally, the comprehensive Student Code of Conduct, revised in 2014, must be systematically implemented, with supporting professional development. SBCSC can also take advantage of free training offered by Beacon Health in the Adverse Childhood Experiences Survey. This training changes the question from “What’s wrong with the student?” to “What happened to the student?” and informs expanded strategies in working with students.

6. *What should be done about bullying in schools?*

SBCSC has a strong policy prohibiting bullying. Detailed procedures are listed about how to report and how reports should be investigated. Unfortunately, not all cases are reported and some reported cases are minimized. The initiatives discussed in the preceding question are strong preventative measures: Responsive Classroom, Restorative Practices and the Adverse Childhood Experience Survey. In addition, school personnel must take even informal reports seriously. Decreasing bullying increases school safety.

7. *What should be done to educate and assist special needs or developmentally disabled individuals in the schools and community?*

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) give children with special needs and developmental disabilities Federal protection. These plans need to be carefully developed, implemented and reviewed. Families need to be made aware of their child’s protections. Keeping in mind the race and gender disproportionality in special education referrals, all possible general education interventions should be attempted before children are recommended for special education services. Additionally, special needs children are often targets of bullying. The proposals in the previous question about bullying are even more important for these students.

