

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

There are a number of pressing issues that the school board will need to address. We cannot ignore the fact that teachers are underpaid. Starting salaries are low and salaries of veteran teachers have not kept up with inflation, so that many teachers are making less now than they were ten years ago. Teachers are also spending their own money to supply their classrooms with materials that students need. The question is what can be cut in the budget to provide much needed financial resources that ensure that the Corporation can retain and hire well qualified teachers. Unfortunately, there is a budget shortfall because of state policies passed in 2008 that cap property taxes and took effect in 2010. The full effects of this tax cap will be felt in 2020. But the current board has just committed the Corporation to a \$1.6 million dollar loan to pay for ChromeBooks and associated costs which may well affect additional capital expenses necessary to meet some new graduation requirements passed by the Indiana State Department of Education. I think it is important that as a board we understand local decisions that affect funding and maintain a presence in Indianapolis to lobby for increased funding and resources.

A second pressing issue is that the board has to ensure that the teachers have the support they need to make the best use of ChromeBooks, and this means having a robust curriculum at each grade level and a digital resource person in each school. The Corporation has had 3 years to provide curricula and instructional support since the initial discussions of purchasing ChromeBooks was on the table.

A third issue that will need to be a priority is the state mandated Pathways to Graduation. The legislature passed this initiative in July 2017, but the Corporation is just now addressing what this will mean for curriculum and advising. This is by all accounts an unfunded mandate with little guidance for ways to implement these new requirements by fall 2019. The board needs to set goals, a timeline, and metrics to ensure that students have access to the new Pathways to Graduation requirements and the support they need.

While I agree that teacher raises are important, and this needs to be a high priority, the fourth, and for me, the most pressing issue is developing a strategic plan that incorporates consistent procedures for governance to ensure that the Corporation is proactive and stays ahead of the issues that it is now facing. This means building in accountability to make sure that what needs to happen is actually occurring in a timely way. It is imperative that the board work with all stakeholders to develop a mission, a vision, a manageable set of goals, and metrics for assessing the extent to which the Corporation is on track for fulfilling its goals.

With all that said, I will urge the board on my very first day to improve communication by involving the public more in discussions about issues that affect them, give more lead time for decision making, and increase access to up-to-date information. I am certain that if we keep everyone informed, our stakeholders will support the board when we have to make tough, difficult decisions. I will move that we give the public more time at the podium during board meetings and broadcast the entirety of board meetings, including public comments. We should not silence members of the public or teachers. This is all in keeping with the stated Philosophy of the Board: "The Board declares and, thereby,

reaffirms its intent to: A. Maintain two-way communications with citizens of the Corporation. The Board shall keep them informed of the progress and problems of the Corporation, and the citizens shall be urged to bring their aspirations and concerns about the Corporation and its schools to the Board's attention...." (Revised 3/20/17)

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

Families should have options to choose from to ensure that their children have access to what they need academically, socially, and emotionally. But I have to ask: What kind of choice exists when legislators seek to eliminate the promise of public education?

During the past ten years, the gap continues to widen between what schools need to adequately fund education programs and what the state actually provides. In fact, the gap amounts to \$600 billion dollars that the state has not given to public schools. It seems clear to me that the first priority is to adequately fund public schools. After all, every child, regardless of race, income, disability, religion, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other immutable characteristic, to obtain a free quality public education is a foundational principle in American society. This principle is based on the belief that everyone should be given the opportunity to learn to allow an equal chance for achievement and success.

Of course charter schools are public, so that the state is committed to allocating \$5500 or so to each student who attends a charter school. At the same time, they are also funded by non-profits and other sources. The city of South Bend has provided \$1.5 million dollars to charter schools regardless of performance. This seems unfair since our tax dollars end up in TIF funds that should ordinarily go to schools, libraries, and transportation.

The state with support from the federal government has embarked on a troubling course that steers us toward school privatization. And the Secretary of Education just committed \$399 billion dollars to voucher programs.

This is further evidence that the promise of free quality public education is diminishing, and I want to work with board members to push back against state and federal policies that threaten the very basis of our democracy.

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

The SBCSC Board can reach out to the Chamber of Commerce, the mayor's office, universities, and other community partners to raise money and persuade the public to invest in public schools. There is a clear relationship between the economic well being of a city and the strength of its public schools. Increased financial resources will enable SBCSC to hire more counselors, specialists, and Psychologists and retain highly qualified teachers. I'd like to think that additional funding can help reduce class sizes to make teaching more effective and provide teachers with a living wage.

The Board can be part of the effort to build support in the community and persuade residents to accept the premise that excellence in education is about all of us. It is true that there have been recent efforts to move forward with an IB program at Clay, a project based program at Jackson Middle School, and the piloting of restorative justice in a handful of

schools. However, as a board member, I would urge us to be open about where the Corporation is falling short. We can't ignore the reality that 18 schools have been rated by the state as "D" or "F," disproportionality in both in- and out-of school suspensions, and the low achievement scores in math and reading for students of color in the primary grades. We can instill confidence by showing that we are serious about addressing these problems and persuade parents that they should keep their children in our schools.

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

A first priority would be to affirm a safe and welcoming teaching and learning environment for all SBCSC students, faculty, and staff, regardless of their race, ethnicity or country of origin. I would implement the following in keeping with what at least a dozen other states are doing:

- Strengthen partnerships with La Casa de Amistad and El Campito to build on what the teachers and administrators in the SBCSC believe families and children need to create safe, inclusive spaces
- Sponsor workshops and presentations that address the current political climate
- Protect the privacy of students. Principals should not share student records with ICE, with the rare exception where there is a court order or consent from the parent/guardian.
- Provide multilingual information and palm cards on immigration law and rights for students and their families, as well as guidelines for school personnel
- Prohibit unlawful discrimination and harassment on the basis of immigration status in SBCSC activities, programs, and services
- Encourage parents, families, and caregivers to update emergency contact forms, including backup contacts in case they are detained
- Prevent access to ICE unless the official presents a valid search warrant issued by a federal or state judge or magistrate. Federal guidelines continue to provide that schools are sensitive places where immigration enforcement should not take place.

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

The data are clear in SBCSC – that students of color are 5 times as likely as white students to be suspended for some of the same behaviors, especially perceptions that students are disrespectful. As a board member, I think it's important to deal with the reality of the data and make the public aware of how we are addressing what is also a nationwide problem that research attributes to implicit bias.

To start with, then, it's important to first examine the climate of school using surveys to understand the extent to which students feel a sense of belonging, have developed relationships with adults who they trust and who believe in the students (teachers who they know want them to succeed and believe that they can). I would also emphasize the following goals:

- Focus on socio-emotional learning, informed by trauma-based care and work in Adverse Children's experiences
- Use curricular materials to help develop empathy, intercultural communication, critical thinking, civil discourse, citizenship, and community engagement
- Provide time in classes to address issues of race and have open, honest conversations about implicit bias, perhaps in circles but also in the context of looking critically at history, media, science, policy, and the like
- Train everyone in the school in restorative practices that emphasize conversation, reciprocity, respect, and responsibility to restore a strong community. Give voice to those who have been harmed. Make sure there are other resources such as counseling and psychologists. The Lilly Foundation has provided funding for counseling in Indiana public schools. I hope the SBCSC re-applies for a Lilly grant and develops a plan similar to the one in Crown Point Community Schools.
- Equip everyone with skills needed to engage every student within a positive, culturally responsive school environment and engage parents as partners in reducing discipline incidents
- Create a team of caregivers, family members, teachers, and administrators that meets monthly to monitor the data and climate in schools. I'd like to be on this team to assess the extent to which schools and classrooms are inclusive spaces that respect differences in intellectual development, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, faith, class, and the like. It would be important to review incidents of suspensions, the reasons for these suspensions, and existence of disproportionality by race.

6. What should be done about bullying in schools?

Bullying, either directly (verbal or physical aggression) or indirectly (social media), is a form of unprovoked abuse that threatens the well being of a given student. Students who are abused feel ostracized and threatened as the result of ridicule and harassment. We can do the following to create a safe environment for all students and provide the socio-emotional support they need:

- Gauge school climate and the extent of bullying by distributing a survey to all families, caregivers, students, teachers, social workers, teachers, administrators, and other school staff, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and school resource officers
- Create an anti-bullying program with all stakeholders based on survey responses with personnel in the SBCSC and community partners (i.e., mental health professionals) who will also be involved in the implementation and evaluation of the program. A team of representative stakeholders should meet monthly to assess how well the program is working.
- Incorporate restorative practices in the classroom to address issues of bullying. Our top priority should be to repair the harm that was done: to individuals, including those who witness bullying, to relationships, and to the fabric of community that connects everyone in the school. Accountability should be for the purpose of that repair, not for the sake of punishment.
- Provide ongoing training for all stakeholders to maintain a safe school environment
- Ensure that all school personnel act swiftly and decisively to support students who need support

- Work with families and caregivers who report bullying
- Create a support system for students who are victims of bullying

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

I have been trained by InSource in both the laws and policies that have been in place to protect the interests of students who have special needs. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) has been very specific about what counts as a disability, what the schools' responsibilities require insofar as providing a free, quality education, and the rights of families and caregivers.

However, after attending many case conferences, I would say that there is a bit of a disconnect between what the law states and what actually is occurring on the ground. To be fair, there is a \$600 billion gap between what the federal government is committed to funding for special education under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (IDEA) and what it actually funds. So there are not as many paraprofessionals in classrooms as there needs to be, especially at a time when class size is increasing. There is also a shortage of qualified teachers, not just in South Bend, but also across the nation.

I'd like to see our schools do the following to protect the rights of children, families, and legal guardians:

- Ensure that families and legal guardians are aware of their rights and responsibilities
- Follow procedures for testing children in a timely fashion after it is determined that a child falls under IDEA
- Provide a detailed Individual Education Plan (IEP) that is comprehensive
- Assess students' needs at least twice a year since a students' physical and emotional needs may change given any number of personal or family circumstances
- Offer students regular counseling that includes discussion of goals, timeline, and assessments of how well they are moving forward toward those goals (e.g., graduation, post graduation plans, including readiness to enter the workplace or college)
- Follow consistent procedures for case conferences that inform families or legal guardians in writing of what will occur and with enough time (at least two weeks) prior to the conference. This is especially important if families and legal guardians are not clear about why a case conference might be necessary.
- Ensure with written notice that families and guardians are aware of their right to due process in the case of suspension and expulsion hearings
- Provide families and guardians with written procedures of how they can challenge decisions in a case conference
- Avoid under all circumstances out-of-school suspensions, since students need to be in school