

2018 School Board Questions (Written) – Elizabeth Andersen

Financial Resources and Budget

1. *What are your plans to address the budget deficit in order to fiscally stabilize our schools? What other sources of revenue would you propose instead of relying strictly on the reserves in order to balance the budget?*

I agree with the current board's proposal to reduce district level positions and academic coaches at non-turnaround schools. This is projected to save nearly 20 million dollars and has the least direct impact on students. I also hope to help implement wise social and emotional programs which have been proven to reduce costs over time with an 11:1 return on investment. Moving forward, rather than relying strictly on the reserves to balance the budget, I believe we can make more effort to partner with community organizations and local businesses to help support resource and enrichment opportunities. As someone who has been working in a community nonprofit for years I plan to bring these relationships with me to the board. We also need to focus efforts on communicating our needs and working with our local and state officials to properly fund programs and mandates.

2. *In order to better equip our students to enter the work force, do you support expanding our curriculum to include vocational and/or technical training classes? Why or why not? If you support this, how would you propose to implement and finance this expansion?*

I believe that we have excellent vocational and technical training programs and I believe that we should continue to maintain these. If the budget allows in the future I believe we can look into more certification curriculum that will help children coming out these programs to be job ready. With that said, my priority at this time is working more on students 'soft skills' such as organization, communication, and relationship skills to ensure that ALL students are career ready.

3. *Would you support having a forensic audit conducted to better determine how the resources are being allocated? Why or why not?*

It is my understanding that a forensic audit may not be the most appropriate type of review to investigate our resource allocation as it is often conducted in conjunction with a legal process. Our current board agreed and recently requested an in-depth internal review rather than spending unnecessary funds on a forensic audit. At that time their investigation identified some faulty accounting processes that made it difficult for the board to determine if spending approvals would be covered. Since our former superintendent has moved on along with his chief of staff and CFO, new processes have been implemented and moving forward the finances reported to the board will reflect a more balanced picture of available funds.

Personnel/Safety Issues

1. *How do you plan to determine the needs and interests of the individual schools in District 2 and effectively advocate those needs and interests to the Duval County School Board?*

Since I understand that the 2018/19 district/school leadership is set to be full of changes, and in an effort to begin work right away in November, I've already reached out to school

PTAs and SAC committees to introduce myself. As soon as this election is over I plan to be in communication with the school leadership and hope to sit down with these teams to learn about their needs and priorities. I also plan to attend these school meeting regularly throughout the school year to continue to stay connected to the needs and interests of students, parents, teachers, and schools in District 2. As a teacher and therapist, I have to listen, analyze and create actionable plans for change and I am ready to bring these skills to District 2. My experience has also afforded me the opportunity to spend more than a decade advocating for the needs of children and families and I plan to continue this advocacy as a Board member.

2. *What are your plans to make our schools safe without creating a “prison-like” atmosphere?*

Schools should be welcoming environments that communicate a sense care, respect, and security to students without being “hardened”. As someone who specializes in children’s developmental needs, I know that the foundation for learning and achievement is trust and safety. This requires much more than locks, fences, and guns. While I agree that securing our campuses and facilities is critically important, to keep potential danger out, we must do more ensure that we are addressing potential risks and dangers within. We know that many of the tragedies playing out across the country are a result of people who are hurting- hurt people, hurt people. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among young people and student reports of depression has nearly doubled in the past 5 years. This is a critical issue for our society, and I believe that DCPS has an opportunity to address these concerns and lead the state with programs and a plan for intervention. Here is my plan:

- 1) Social emotional learning curriculum in all schools.
- 2) Suicide prevention and mental health first aide training for staff
- 3) Increased awareness and focused efforts on reducing the stigmas surrounding mental health so students feel comfortable asking for help
- 4) Improved behavior plans and supports for students with emotional and behavioral problems instead of suspension and expulsion.
- 5) Development of Threat task force at each school with personnel trained and prepared to move quickly if a student shows signs of being in trouble- which will include a strategic plan for de-escalation, safety planning, and resources for referral

3. *What changes at the policy level, if any, would you propose to address chronic absenteeism and other discipline-related issues?*

I believe that many of the issues related to chronic absenteeism and other discipline related issues are connected to changes to the value of education in our society, problems children face in their homes and neighborhoods, and the teachers’ struggle to inspire students and make learning relevant in the face of high stakes testing and performance pressures from administration. In a technological age where information is constantly at our fingertips, students are struggling to see the value of classroom learning, falling behind, and/or turning to other institutions to meet their needs. Additionally, social pressures and distractions are impacting students’ focus, mood, and ideas about success which directly impacts their willingness and ability to comply with rules and policies. This is costing Duval County Public Schools money and distancing the school system from the communities we want to support and inspire. We must

re-evaluate our priorities to meet the changing needs of students and communities. Based on my years of experience working with children and families plagued by these issues, I believe that integrating curriculum that addresses, social and self awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision making will help make learning relevant and return to a focus on the fundamentals of creating lifelong learners and productive citizens in this community.

Governance/Communication

1. *Describe your plans for improving communications with the State Board of Education and the Duval County delegation.*

I believe that the most important thing anyone can do when attempting to improve communication is to listen. I feel that listening to understand rather than simply hearing, is important if we hope to have our own needs and desires understood. This will take regular and persistent attempts at connecting. I also believe that as a board our mission and message should be specific and consistent. It is essential that we work to build these relationships so that our children's needs can be met effectively.

2. *How do you propose to keep your constituents informed on a regular basis with regard to pertinent matters related to District 2?*

In order to keep people informed and build a relationships with parents, I plan to have regular 'school hall' meetings where we can gather together and I can hear their needs and priorities. I also plan to attend our schools' local PTA and SAC meetings. I would like to create an online network for people to connect with me, their schools, and each other.

4. *What is your position on maintaining local control over the evaluation and renewal of charter schools?*

I believe it is necessary for us to maintain local control over the evaluation and renewal of charter schools. Taxpayers' money goes to funding charter schools. Removing this local control essentially means removing your representative for how your tax dollars are spent. Holding anyone accountable if people are unsatisfied with management or decisions being made will be nearly impossible without a lot of red tape. Unfortunately, legislation makes any oversight difficult, and as a result, charter schools managed by private entities stand to profit and public schools are losing funding. Additionally, the few local charter schools that are actually providing innovative and effective learning opportunities for students are also losing out. I believe our board should make it more of a priority to visit and monitor Charter schools for efficacy.

Stormwater Fees

1. *The Duval County School Board recently stopped paying stormwater utility fees in all three beach cities, claiming that the fees are actually assessments and that the beach cities have no power to sue for collection because of sovereign immunity. The school properties continue to receive stormwater service despite non-payment for the past several months. Over the years, all three city governments have provided support and materials to the schools within their jurisdictions in*

the form of crosswalk signage and markings, police supported traffic control and safety plans, landscaping and tree service, post-storm recovery, educational and career support, and other similar services that assist the schools with their daily operations. How would you propose to bring this problem to a solution that can work for all sides and ensure the cooperative relationship between the schools and the beach cities continues to benefit our teachers and children? How does this decision affect the inter-local agreement, if any, with regard to the school board's authority to stop paying stormwater fees?

This issue has been litigated between schools and local governments across the state. Most end with schools returning to pay the fees in some form. A central Florida case was recently resolved after 11 years in the courts. I would like to look more closely at the precedence set in these cases and come to an agreement without extended discord. Of course, it is in the best interest of our children, schools, and communities to continue operating on a basis of mutual advantage and cooperation for the betterment of the local community needs.