

Charlotte County School Board
Candidate Questions 2022

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What are Charlotte County Public Schools' greatest strengths?

First and foremost, the focus on student success is one of our greatest strengths. Our dedicated teachers and staff of Charlotte County Schools are also one of our greatest strengths. They work hard each day to ensure a safe, nurturing, and challenging learning environment in support of student success. The school safety measures taken over the last several years is another important strength of our district.

How do you plan to support these strengths?

I will work to continue to find ways to attract highly qualified teachers and staff to Charlotte County Schools by making sure our county stays competitive with teacher pay and to look for ways to improve our benefit package. We need to be competitive with our surrounding counties and do everything we can to keep and attract great teachers. I support the Vote Yes Referendum which will help continue the extra 30 minutes of instructional time each day. The referendum also allows for students to participate in after school sports programs, music and arts, programs that may not have been accessible before because of cost to their families. These programs help encourage school attendance and passing grades. The referendum will also help enhance school safety measures that are currently in place.

What are Charlotte County Public Schools' greatest weaknesses?

The ability of Charlotte County to attract great, highly qualified teachers is one of their weaknesses. Although they have done a good job making new teacher salaries competitive with surrounding counties, I believe the next important piece to the puzzle is to improve the benefits package. The federal funding for vocational programs for non-college bound students has also declined over the last number of years while federal funding for college has increased. I believe this is a major weakness for our students and community. In order to keep Charlotte County moving forward, we need our students to have greater access to trade programs. Not only will these programs allow for these students to learn a trade and make a good living, they will more likely remain in Charlotte County and become assets to our community.

How do you plan to address these weaknesses?

In order to address the competitive benefits package issue, we need to make a commitment for the good of our people, to find excellent healthcare benefits. Once we have an understanding of competitive teacher pay, we can begin to research better healthcare choices. When potential teachers decide whether or not they accept the position, they are not only looking at salary, they are looking at the cost and quality of their benefits. If our pay is comparable to Sarasota County but our healthcare benefit package is substandard, our chance of hiring that teacher is low. In regard to increasing vocational opportunities for our students, it is important that we continue to collaborate with our local business owners. That collaboration should be in conjunction with the Charlotte Technical College. It is important that we make it easier for our high school student and even middle school students to have access to vocational or trade classes. College is not for every student, and we must encourage and develop other avenues of student success. The work that the CDBIA has done in attracting and supporting high school students has been outstanding. They have brought awareness to the importance of vocational and trade programs and I support the continued collaboration with them.

Why are you the right choice for the Charlotte County School Board?

With 32 years of educational experience and a member of this community for over 45 years, I will bring a unique and needed perspective to the board. Over my 32 years of experience, I've been a teacher, dean of students, interim athletic director, coach, assistant principal, and principal. I also have experience at every level – elementary, middle, and high school. Prior to my retirement in March, I served as principal of Port Charlotte Middle School where I led them to 3 consecutive "A" ratings and the highest performing school in the district for several years. I will use my leadership skills developed over the years as a school leader and what I learned serving my country as a United States Marine. I've served my community on the Boys and Girls Clubs of Charlotte County Board of Directors for the past 7 years, served as a Take Stock in Children Mentor, and volunteered on the United Way Impact Panel. I vow to address the concerns of students, parents, teachers, and administrators and to work to bring the community together. I'm proud of the strong relationships I have made over the years with my students, teachers, and community members. I am keenly aware of the needs of our students, teachers, staff, and parents and will bring this knowledge to the board.