SAFE Schools School Board Candidate Questionnaire

* **Do you support School Resource Officers (SRO) and Constables in schools? Please explain your position.**
* I am aware that some families are not advocates of SROs for various reasons. Different SROs have different personalities and personal beliefs. Can there be bias and prejudice within the ranks of SROs, of course, just like bias and prejudice exists within all aspects of society. I believe a more thorough interview process should be implemented to assure school SROs do not have any underlying issues that may contribute to the disproportionality in school discipline. SROs should be used more as mentors to our troubled youth instead of disciplinarians and enforcers. These authority figures, used in a positive way, could be instrumental in the molding of a student’s life, as some have done in the past.
* **Delaware Department of Education data shows that Black, Brown and Special Education students in Red Clay School District are disproportionately represented in discipline referrals, suspensions and arrest. What other steps, beyond existing policies, should the school district take to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all students?**
  1. Besides professional development and identifying inherent bias within the school system, I believe outside mental health and other wrap around services for students, and educators as well as career guidance for students to give them hope for employment at the end of their educational experience is essential. Suspensions and arrests can only exacerbate the issues of disciplinary inequities creating a “school to prison pipeline” situation. Getting to the root causes of behavioral issues and developing a plan to address these causes with students and families is a viable means to an end to this disproportionality. Instituting mentoring programs early in the student’s learning experience would also be beneficial in curbing some of the behavior issues. My wife Elaine and I started Just Mentoring over five years ago to mentor middle school students in academics and study skills, as well as social behavior with remarkable success. More programs like this are needed throughout the district to assure the success of many of our students.
* **What does equity mean to you?**
  1. **Equal opportunity and fairness for all stakeholders regardless of socio-economic background, race, religion or gender identity. This includes equitable resources, treatment and respect to assure a safe and nurturing environment for learning.**
* **How would you work to improve equity in funding and resources allocations in the District?**
  1. **A system of checks and balances must be in place to assure economic equity between schools. School demographics and population data should be considered along with socio-economic status of families and specialized needs of certain school community groups who may be in need of assistance to maintain a quality education for their children.**
* **Do you believe implicit bias impacts students and staff? If so, how will you work to lessen the negative effects of implicit bias within the school district? How will you work to address implicit bias within yourself?**
  1. Like all other workplaces different employees have different beliefs and biases, educators and administrators are no different. To address bias that may affect students and families, I believe higher levels and frequencies of training on recognizing bias are necessary through state and district professional development and through professional learning collaboratives. Surveying educators and administrators on personal and community bias would be helpful and solicit their ideas on how to address these biases
* **Describe how you would ensure quality education for a diverse student population: i.e. the gifted and talented, the “average” student, students with special educational needs, students with different abilities, English Language learners, low-income students and those with cultural differences.**
  1. College Academy and AP courses as well as charter and magnet schools satisfy the needs of many of our district children. The challenge facing a school district is developing programs for our many students who have no plans for attending college. I propose a coalition with local companies and municipalities for the development of career pathways to give these students hope for a brighter future with the prospect of learning a trade or skill upon graduating. More programs for our special needs students are also needed to teach career and life skills. Mentoring programs are very valuable for our special needs and ELL students as well, giving them the extra attention they need to succeed in the classroom and in life. More assistance in the form of aids and paras is also needed in many inclusion classrooms.
* **Are there any other equity, racial justice, or funding goals not talked about above that you hope to accomplish in your term in office?**
  1. **I believe a big part of our student achievement puzzle is parent/family involvement in their child’s educational experience. The biggest difference I have seen in recent years is the decline of family involvement , which seems to correlate to achievement declines, behavioral issues and participation in extra-curricular activities. We need to find a way to bring these families back into the school community as participating members by eliminating barriers like transportation, childcare and language barriers that may be preventing their participating in their child’s educational experience.**