

PENN

PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL NETWORK of NUTLEY



To: All Candidates for Board of Education
From: Parents' Educational Network of Nutley (PENN)
Re: Request for Information

As you may know, PENN is an organization of parents which has formed to provide a means by which the interests and concerns of parents and citizens in the Township can be communicated to the school district and the Board of Education. Many parents and citizens are concerned about the direction of the school system and would like more information about the entire process. The objective of PENN is to maximize parental and family awareness and participation regarding matters involving the school district. Nutley PENN provides a forum by which its members can easily obtain information regarding the school board and candidates. The PENN membership can then vote for those candidates who are best prepared to address their concerns. We have created a website to provide our membership with news information regarding the school district: www.nutleypenn.org.

In furtherance of our objective, we will be including information about the candidates seeking election on our website to help educate PENN members and encourage involvement by members of PENN and the community in the election process. We would like to include information regarding your candidacy on our website.

Our membership has identified a number of key issues and concerns and would like to hear from the candidates on those issues. We would like to post your responses to the questions below on our website. Kindly forward your responses at your earliest convenience.

- 1) Potential Conflicts: Are you or any member of your household members of the local teacher's union or any teacher's union in the State of New Jersey? If so, please advise how this may impact your position as a board member. Also, please state whether you have a familial relationship with anyone working for the Nutley school district.

I do not have any members of my household as members of any Teachers Unions. I know and I am friends with many employees within the Nutley School District. I also do have a Brother n Law who is a part time substitute; he is a full time Firefighter in Bellville. He is not covered under any contract within the school system therefore does not create a conflict for me on voting.

- 2) Adherence to Code of Ethics: The New Jersey School Ethics Act (N.J.S.A. 18A:12-23) requires board of education members to adhere to a Code of Ethics. Please see “NJ School Ethics” link on this website. Please confirm that you have reviewed the Code of Ethics and indicate whether you are confident that you can fulfill the stated ethical requirements. Also, please explain why you think this act is important.

I feel that I can adhere to the code of ethics required of Board of Education members. As a past Assemblyman I voted and supported this code of ethics for all Elected Officials including my past position as an Assemblyman.

- 3) Planning for the School District’s Future: What do you foresee as the biggest challenges facing the school district in the next year? During the next five years?

I feel the biggest challenge for the School board next year will be advancing education within our district and complying within the new 2 percent CAP Laws. The larger picture of our challenges in the next 5 years still deals with the CAP Laws and how we advance our overall Ranking and GPA averages for the students of our District. There are many needs which must be maintained or advance to this with very little new resources. We must become very creative and work closely with the Commissioners in the Township on shared services. We as Board of Education Members need to remember that we are in the Business of Education.

- 4) Role of Board Members: Please provide some ideas as to how members of the Board of Education should interact with members of the administration, teachers and teachers union in order to maximize the effectiveness of the educational system in Nutley?

I have explained this at the last 2 candidates’ nights, that just as it was in Trenton we must remember that we are the legislative and policy side of the School system and that the fulltime leaders of our school district are the administration side. They are the ones that we speak with to follow the policies that we create and to also handle all of the employees that work within the district. As a Board of Education member it is not our job to interfere with the administrative operations within the district but to work through the proper process to handle them.

- 5) Role of BOE: Describe what you feel are the attributes of a successful board of education and how you can, as a potential board member, contribute to the Board of Education's future success.

A successful Board member is one that must remain involved in the community and programs. It is important that they are not fully engage at times only during an election cycle. They must be willing to be active on committees and to work positively with the entire board to accomplish the goals that need to be reached for our children. As I continually state, "we are in the Education business" and that should remain a major factor in all of our decisions.

- 6) Educational Standards/Curriculum/Test Scores: Please state your position on the current educational standards in Nutley. In responding to this question, please advise whether the existing curriculum sufficiently addresses any shortcomings noted by recent test scores and other data regarding the school system. If there are any changes you would recommend to the curriculum or any school policy which would improve the educational standards of the district, please discuss. Please describe the role of the board in addressing any concerns that it may have with test scores. Finally, state whether the impact of recent test scores have a positive or negative effect on the administration, teachers and/or students.

I believe the current Board is presently modifying the periods in the High Schools to deal with the shortcomings that have been pointed out. I have also begun discussion with some of the board members on creating sports to be a considered an additional period. When I attended the high school if you were in sports you did not take gym, but were able to do homework and study. I would like to look at this since I have been involved with many students in sports who are good students that have their grades drop when involved in a demanding sport. I think this would truly have an effect on the test scores in the high school. The recent test scores I feel affect perception of our school system. I believe that our teachers do not want be considered as failing along with our students. This should and I believe with changes will make them both work to bring Nutley standards up.

- 7) Interest in Public Service: Please state why do you want to serve on the Nutley Board of Education and how, as one voice of nine, you feel that you can bring measurable change to the board?

As you know I served in the Legislature for the almost past 8 years. I feel proud of all my accomplishments of over 100 bills signed into law As well as brining millions of dollars back into Nutley alone. I reflect on my voting record as one of 80 in the Assembly. On those votes I spoke when it was required and voted independently, as I felt in my hearth what was good for this state. I will be the same independent person if elected to the Board of Education.

- 8) Candidates' Priorities: As a new board trustee what is the first thing you would work to change/improve within the school system?

One of my first priorities will be to create new programs that retain students to attend Nutley High School and not leave the district. Private schools recruit some of the best student that Nutley may have. This year alone we could be losing at least 29 students from not attending Nutley High. The programs I want to create in short in the Walker Middle School will be what I call Sports weeks, Music weeks and Vector weeks. This will include coaches and teachers' meeting with interested students after school about those programs as well as a night for the parents to meet and speak with coaches and teachers' also. We need to engage and excite our students and this is just one idea that I have to begin that process.

- 9) Qualifications of Candidates: What personal experiences will contribute to your qualification as a Board of Education member?

I have been involved in our community since I was 14 years old. Attending Commissioner Meetings as well as Board of Education meetings. I have volunteered and belonged to many organizations within the township, too many to list here. I have always given back to the community and I feel this is just another avenue to give back. My past and current involvement as well as being a Past Assemblyman will bring new ideas and initiatives to the Board of Education. My life experience as a Fire Chief, Code Enforcement Official and elected official will all be beneficial if I am elected to the Board of Education.