

# PENN

## PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL NETWORK of NUTLEY



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

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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](http://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 a familial relationship with anyone working for the Nutley school district. I am not a member of the local teacher's union or any teacher's union in the state of NJ, nor are any members of my household. In the interest of open & honest communication, I would like to say that my mother, Dr. Catherine Danchak is a former Nutley school teacher, and past Science Department Chair for the Nutley School system.

- 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 have reviewed the New Jersey School Ethics Act and am confident that I can fulfill the requirements and will abide by all the standards.

The act is extremely important as it provides a standard for all board of education members. In our representative form of government it is essential that the conduct of members of local boards of education and local school administrators hold the respect and confidence of the people. These board members and administrators must avoid conduct which is in violation of their public trust or which creates a justifiable impression among the public that such trust is being violated. I also think it's important to review and stay abreast of current rulings, decisions and opinions issued by the School Ethics Commission.

- 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?

Despite budget pressure, we must figure out a way to accelerate innovation and keep our schools moving forward. Attracting and retaining high quality teachers is essential to our students' success. We need to advocate strongly for our fair share of funding from the state and federal governments, look for opportunities to partner with universities and corporations, and be open and receptive to new ideas. We'll need to work collaboratively with the commissioners & civic organizations to coordinate and maximize our efforts to allocate our tax dollars wisely. And promote strict adherence to state and federal laws so that we do not lose funds or spend a single taxpayer dollar on unnecessary litigation.

Just like a corporation has a strategic plan or a town has a master plan, I propose the need to formulate a flexible cohesive plan or roadmap to help Nutley prepare for the future. We have to ask ourselves, “What do we want for our children and how do we get there”? Clear expectations and goals should be established with input from all. From that we can establish short term, midterm and long term objectives to help us budget for and attain those goals.

- 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?

The board of education adopts policies under which the school district operates; oversees the budget; approves the curriculum; hires and evaluates the superintendent; represents the public during contract negotiations; and serves as a communications link between the community and the school system. Board members are elected to represent the entire community. The function of the school board is not to run the schools, but to see that they are run effectively. The board establishes school district policy and goals and communicates those goals to the superintendent. The superintendent is accountable to the board, and all other staff members are accountable to the superintendent. Teamwork between the community, board and superintendent is essential.

- 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.

I feel a successful board member must listen to everyone in the township and make ethical decisions based on the needs of the entire community. They must be open and honest and strive for continuous improvement. "Driving Student Achievement", a seminar held by the Educational Leadership Foundation of NJ presented the findings of The Iowa Lighthouse Research Project and how to apply the findings to local school boards. The Iowa Lighthouse Research Project is an evolving study of the leadership role of the school board for improving student achievement and indicates that school boards in high-achieving districts are significantly different in their knowledge and beliefs than school boards in low-achieving districts. I think board members would benefit at looking at this research and consider where they can build skills to become better and more focused in supporting school improvement.

- 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.

Findings from the department of education reported in the QSAC showed that the past boards did not pay enough attention to the districts adherence to NJ curriculum standards or support ongoing curriculum development. I think because of this our scores suffered & our students were shortchanged. During the past year the current BOE has taken positive steps to improve the situation. The curriculum has been updated and the board is actively supporting its' ongoing development. We have to make sure that the progress continues by allocating the proper resources. Schools are the backbone of our community and are valuable in so many ways. Strong schools strengthen property values, attract home buyers, entice new business and most importantly ensure student success.

- 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?

Educating our children is the greatest investment we can make in our future. While we cannot anticipate all the challenges they will face, a quality education can give them the tools to successfully deal with those challenges. As a parent, business owner and taxpayer I have a vested interest in our school system and feel the success of our school district depends upon parents, businesses, board members, administrators, teachers, and staff working together for the benefit of the children.

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

Creation of a district strategic plan or road map would be top priority. As I stated above just like a corporation has a strategic plan or a town has a master plan, I propose the need to formulate a flexible cohesive plan or roadmap to help Nutley now and prepare for the future. We have to ask ourselves, "What do we want for our children and how do we get there"? Clear expectations and goals should be established with input from the entire community, teachers, administration, parents & business owners. From that we can establish short term, midterm and long term objectives to help us budget for and attain those goals.

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

I was raised in Nutley, graduated from Nutley High School, and went on to graduate summa cum laude from Kean University. I believe that the education that I received here directly contributed to my success. I have served on many academically-oriented committees, including Volunteers in Service to Nutley Schools and have been Vice President of the Nutley Academic Booster Club. My husband Mike, also a Nutley High School graduate and local business owner, and I are the proud parents of 3 girls, Caroline a freshman at St. Lawrence University, Shayne a freshman at Nutley High School and Kelly a fourth grader at Yantacaw School. I am currently employed at Automatic Data Processing as a Product Release Manager in the National Accounts division at Automatic Data Processing, Inc., with nearly \$9 billion in revenues and over 550,000 clients, is one of the world's largest providers of business outsourcing solutions.

I believe that my corporate business experience and commitment to public service will be an asset to the Nutley Board of Education. With your support I will work to, promote fiscal responsibility, improve the academic competitiveness of our schools, advocate transparency & open communication, make ethical decisions and represent the students' and community's best interests. For more information please contact me at [lisaforboe@optonline.net](mailto:lisaforboe@optonline.net) or visit [www.lisforboe.com](http://www.lisforboe.com).