



Candidate Questionnaire, Whitewater, WI Municipal Election, April 2, 2019

School Board Candidate: Amy Hagen Curtis

Q1. What motivates you to want to become or seek another term as a school board member? Have you visited our schools and met with administrators?

What motivates me to want to become a school board member is my commitment and devotion to our community. I am a married mother of three: my two youngest children attend Lakeview Elementary, and my oldest is a student at UWW. I am a 20 year resident of the area, small business owner, and am invested the future of our school district long term and am driven to be a part of a solutions team. During this campaign I have toured all five district schools, met with all our principals, met with several members of the district's leadership team, attended our parent/guardian organizations at each school, and have spoken with a variety of students.

Q2. What is your philosophy on the school board's role(s) and responsibility(ies) in the Whitewater Unified School District (WWUSD)? What do you think an ideal school board member does and how should they conduct themselves at meetings?

It is the role and responsibility of any school board member to put our students needs first. They must advocate for educational excellence and be able to see clearly what the district needs. Also, it is critical to gain and maintain all stakeholders trust when making decisions that ultimately impact everyone in our district. The ideal school board member actively listens to all stakeholders questions, comments, and concerns. We are advocates of greater excellence and therefore it's imperative for all school members to conduct themselves in a professional and friendly manner with other board members and the public. As a WWUSD school board member, I will lead by example.

Q3. What kind of relationship should the school board have with the Whitewater community?

How can the school board prove itself accountable to all citizens, especially taxpayers with no children in our public schools? Communication and transparency is essential to relationship building. The community, including administrators, teachers, students, parents, businesses, government agencies and residents, should have input in the output of our school district. The district must inform and engage all stakeholders through the process of decision making when it comes to budget and policies. These decisions often times are difficult to make, therefore, open lines of communication allows stakeholders to get a better understanding of our districts needs.

Q4. What experience do you have with complicated budgets and what values would you bring to the budgeting process for funding the WWUSD?

I am familiar with complicated budgets as I have over a decade of small business ownership experience spanning a few states and have been involved from inception. On a larger surface, I played an active role in the budgeting for a sales and marketing division for a global corporation, saving over a half of million dollars in a nine month period, while increasing market presence. Budgeting is not always an easy feat. If viewed as a roadmap as to what we have and where we want to go as a district, while making sure our spending reflects our goals and values, it will be helpful in the guidance of budget decisions.



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Q5. What specific actions will you take to increase the role of parents in decision making and promote parental involvement in our schools?

Specific actions I will take to increase the role of parents/guardians in the decision making process and parental/guardian involvement in our schools, is by continuing to attend our schools parent/guardian organization meetings on a regular basis. This will help build trust and allow me to keep a pulse on our schools' individual needs. As a board member, I would advocate for district promotion from our parent/guardian organizations and school board via social media, email and mailers to publicize volunteer opportunities to encourage community involvement. It's extremely important that all stakeholders have access and understanding of current events within our district. This means making sure the communications are deliverable in methods all stakeholders will understand. When parents/guardians are actively involved in their children's success, everyone wins. Family engagement in schools improves student achievement, reduces absenteeism, and restores parents/guardians confidence in their children's education. Students with involved parents/guardians may earn higher grades and test scores, have better social skills, and show improved behavior.

Q6. Describe your experience with conflict resolution with in business setting.

My experience with conflict resolution in a business setting is to first have a clear understanding of what the conflict is specifically about. Clarification of the disagreement, understanding the common goal for all parties, determining barriers, and agreeing on how to best come up with a solution is how you deal with conflict resolution in a business setting.

Q7. What do you think are the most important issues for the school board to address in the next two years?

I think that our current school board is doing some amazing things right now for our students and staff. In order for our school board to continue towards educational excellence in our school district, it's important we focus heavily on the mental health and overall emotional state of our students and staff. We have quite a few students in our district requiring extra help in one way or another, and it's our job as a school board to determine the best way to address these needs in a deliverable manner. It is clear to me after meeting with our principals, teachers, parents/guardians, and students, that there is an overwhelming need that must be met. Whether this is the form of additional staffing - para-professionals, special education resources, child psychologists and/or, alternate education programs, or a combination of these, our students and staff must have continuous support. If elected, I will be a proponent in the conversations surrounding these decisions. In addition, I think it's important that the board focuses on future forecasting; becoming more proactive in our districts decisions. We need be able to feel the pulse of our schools, to understand the climate. Examples as to how we achieve this is by engagement in our local schools and reviewing surrounding communities to get a better understanding of what may be coming down the line for Whitewater schools.



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Q8. What strengths will you bring to the school board in order to accomplish the issues of importance you identified in Question 7?

The strengths I will bring to the school board involves being an active listener to all stakeholders and speaking up regarding the questions and concerns of our district stakeholders. In my job, I have to gain the trust and comfort of my clients within the first few minutes of engaging with them. It is my personal mission to keep and grow trust and comfortability by continuous engagement with our stakeholders, and maintaining open lines of communication. When this trust is earned, progress can be elevated beyond expectations for the Whitewater School District.

Q9. Part-time teaching positions lead to high teacher turn over, which distracts from the continuity of the educational experience. What would you recommend for increasing the number of full-time teaching positions?

High employment turnover is not a good situation as it does distract from the continuity of the overall educational experience. We have some incredibly talented and devoted staff in our district and I think if given the opportunity to teach a variety of subject matter versus a part-time position, many would be obliged. This also means that during the hiring process of incoming staff, it is important that we identify the strengths of incoming staff and make sure we are transparent in regards to the expectations. Hopefully we can identify areas that may overlapped with our current talent pool as well.

Q10. What can be done to attract and retain high-quality teachers, administrators, and School Board members that will more closely represent the Whitewater School District population and our diversity? How should their performance be measured?

First and foremost, Whitewater School District needs to be clear of our goals and expectations Looking for high-quality staff means understanding what our needs are and who to best suit those needs. It is very easy to assume that money is what attracts top talent, and although helpful, it is equally important to address the psychological needs of these individuals as well. Everyone wants to feel valued, from the student, teachers, administration, and school board member - they want to feel like they are an asset. One example of how we can better identify high-quality, long term, Whitewater-focused staff is by examining the prospects current engagement level with our community. This is a measurable tool to be able to identify potential and current teachers, administrators, and school board members alike.