



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

School Board Candidate: Jennifer Kienbaum

**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?**

I am running for the school board because I have a vested interest in improving the education of the children in this district. As a mother of four boys, ages 4 to 10, I feel very strongly that schools and the education they provide are the key to a successful community. I have had the opportunity to visit each of the schools as an active leader in scouts and have started building relationships with the administrators.

**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?**

I believe the role of a school board is to provide oversight and direction to the district schools. I believe the most important responsibility of school boards is to improve student achievement in their local public schools. Other primary responsibilities include setting the vision and goals for the school district, setting policies and holding the district accountable for results.

As a former private school board member, I believe an ideal member must have good analytical, leadership and collaborative skills to move a district forward. In addition, they should have a clear vision, be able to communicate with the community, and must have a sincere interest in the success of all students in the district. During meetings, board members should be prepared, respectful and engaged to discuss matters at hand.

**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?**

Members of the board serve as liaisons between the school district and the community within a collaborative relationship, maintaining awareness of community values, concerns, and interests. This is done or achieved using a strong communication structure to inform and engage all stakeholders while setting and achieving district goals. School board members should be engaged and knowledgeable regarding activities within the schools.

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

With a degree in finance, I have held many roles for which I was responsible for managing the financials of various organizations. For example, I have served as a private school board treasurer. Currently I hold two roles, one as the Chief Compliance Officer for a multi-series trust overseeing the financials of multiple investment advisory firms, and the treasurer for the local scout pack and troop. I feel the budget defines the district's priorities with regards to education.



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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?**

Despite research indicating parental involvement in schools increases student achievement and reduces behavioral issues many parents do not feel as if they are able to actively partner with the schools. To bridge this perceived gap, communication is key. Providing information that is clear and concise about the school and classroom and requesting regular input from parents on their concerns and questions is an important first step. Accommodating family schedules for informational meetings and increasing visibility within the community assists in increasing and promoting parental involvement.

**Q6: Describe your experience with conflict resolution within the business setting.**

In 2017 I participated in the highest training offered by the Boy Scouts of America. Wood Badge is a conflict management course, that provided me with valuable tools, that I use in my daily interactions as Chief Compliance officer. The most important of these tools is listening. Whether you are a participant or moderator in the conflict, without actively listening, vital information could be missed that would enable a satisfactory resolution. Next, asking the right questions, focused on the real needs and other viewpoints, adds additional information and perspective. Lastly, awareness of non-verbal communication from one's body and tone as it adds to the message being conveyed, and can send the message opposite to what was intended.

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

There are two items of importance that deserve attention. First are the goals set forth by the referendum passed last fall. It is the board's role and responsibility to ensure, that the district is accountable to maintaining those areas identified, enabling the best opportunity for a student's overall success. Secondly, improving and enhancing the communication with in the broader community. We need to do a better job of informing the community of what is happening within our schools; test scores, student achievements, financial decisions and milestones that impact our district.

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

Previous and current experiences as a board member have given me a working knowledge of the team dynamics and responsibilities. In addition, as an active scout leader and mother I have a unique opportunity to forge connections, that demonstrate an ability and willingness to listen to the concerns of parents, guardians, teachers, and students. Providing them a way to articulate and clarify these concerns or issues, which assist in resolving them even when they are complex.



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**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?**

To increase the number of full-time teaching positions a number of factors need to be reviewed and considered such as classroom size, educational experience of staff and district budget.

**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?**

Research shows that investing in professional growth, competitive compensation and a positive workplace, increase performance. This includes team dynamics, retention and innovation. To increase the district's retention and attract the highest quality talent, the district should devote more resources to intentional recruitment, based on our community's diversity, and develop a retention plan that focuses on growth, compensation and encouraging a positive workplace.

Measuring a teacher's performance is complex and should utilize multiple methods, combined to create the whole picture. In-person observations, along with student outcomes, enables a complete picture of a teacher's ability to be an effective instructor.