

Newberg School Board Candidate Questionnaire May 19, 2015 Election

Name: Melinda Van Bossuyt
Zone 3

1. Why do you believe that you would be a good member of a School Board? And what called you to run for this position verses other opportunities to run for an elected office *(200 word limit)*?

I have dedicated much of my volunteering to schools and board work for more than 25 years. I believe I have contributed to continuous improvement in Newberg Schools and the success of hundreds of kids over my years on the school board. I am running again to continue the work. Now I am able to contribute an historic perspective in my board work which helps inform board decisions. School boards are the basis of our democracy. Not much is more important than local folks overseeing the work of educating our children. How well we do this determines the future of our community, state and country.

2. What do you see as the biggest challenge facing the school district today? In the near future? Long term? *(200 words)*

TODAY: Supporting struggling students toward successful school completion is one challenge. Providing professional development for staff so they are better equipped to support all students is another current challenge. NEAR FUTURE: Adequate funding to bring our district and all of Oregon back up to the level of service we had before the recession and those drastic budget cuts. LONG TERM: Beyond that, Oregon has a great deal of catching up to do when compared to the majority of other states in our country. We (Oregon) have the shortest school year and a poor graduation rate among other indicators.

Whenever I am doing board work, my thought is that a child is a fourth grade student only once. Or a first grade student or a ninth grade student... That is why there is always an urgency in my mind to do the right thing for our kids now.

The biggest challenge for the school board may be different than the biggest challenge for the district. Hiring and keeping the right superintendent is probably the biggest challenge for any school board. The superintendent sets the ethos for the whole school district. So it is very important to have the right people on the school board to choose the right superintendent, and to support that superintendent so they want to stay and get the job done right.

3. What has been your process to familiarize yourself with the current priorities of the school board? In what ways do your priorities align or differ? (200 words)

I helped determine the priorities with input from staff, community members, and parents. I support our goals and keep them in mind as we make decisions.

4. Tell us about your experience understanding and working with government budgets or do you have another skill that you feel is valuable to board? (150 words)

I have learned a great deal over the years about budgeting. I am always learning something new in every budget cycle. Unfortunately, I have had the experience of making draconian cuts. I try hard to make sure we are aligning our budget with our established goals.

I now have about 20 years of experience on the board. I believe it puts me in a unique position of being able to provide an historic perspective for the other board members and the staff.

One last thought:

The work of the school board can be boiled down to three main things.

- a. Hiring the right person as superintendent and providing oversight so they can do the job successfully.
- b. Building sound policies to guide the work of the district.
- c. Establishing budgets so that tax dollars are spent responsibly.