ROCKINGHAM COUNTY - BOARD OF EDUCATION (5 AT-LARGE SEATS)

John Smith



Lives in: Stoneville

Contact: jsmith194@earthlink.net

Age: 61

Profession: Retired, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission

Highest degree earned: Bachelor of science, business administration

Leadership Experience: I served on the Rockingham County Board of Education for four years. I was regional training officer for the N.C. Wildlife Commission. I was certified by the N.C. Criminal Justice Department as an instructor at the Institute of Government. I served on a statewide promotional interview panel for the N.C. Wildlife Commission.

What is the value of prior elected experience? If you have none, how will you overcome the lack of experience to be a successful member of the board? Since I have served on the Rockingham County Board of Education, I have experience dealing with school issues, such as student and parent concerns, school budgets and personnel matters. I have worked with the board, school administration and county governmental agencies to set policies, obtain funding and provide student services.

What is the biggest challenge facing your school district? Our biggest challenge is inadequate funding to meet the needs of our schools. Although we must spend money wisely, we must have adequate funding for instructional supplies, teachers and teacher assistants. Over the past several years, state and local funds have been consistently cut. This has impacted our schools tremendously.

How can the school board improve graduation and dropout rates? We need to target at-risk students early. The school board must establish policies that will better identify those students and make sure their needs are being met. Polices must mandate that at-risk students are provided services and support throughout all grade levels. Parents must be included and kept informed.

Do you support the state's recent decision to rewrite the Common Core curriculum? Why or why not? The problem is not necessarily the Common Core. The problem is that there are too many mandates and too much testing required by the state and federal government. Teachers should be allowed to utilize teaching methods that will meet the needs of students and allow for academic growth.

Steve Smith (i)



Lives in: Eden

Contact: stevesmith91@hotmail.com

Age: 63

Profession: Retired town manager

Highest degree earned: Public administration

Leadership Experience: U.S. Army National Guard, N.C. Rural Economic Development Institute, scoutmaster, PTA president, baseball coach, church youth sponsor, Sunday school teacher and served on the following boards: Rockingham County Board of Education, Chamber of Commerce, United Way and Economic Development Commission.

What is the value of prior elected experience? If you have none, how will you overcome the lack of experience to be a successful member of the board? From serving as a school board member, I possess the abilities to communicate and collaborate with the public, fellow board members and school administration. These abilities are complemented with my local government and civic experiences. My elective experience has taught me to obtain information necessary to make good decisions.

What is the biggest challenge facing your school district? The top challenges facing Rockingham County Schools are: 1) the level of state and local funding; 2) the high poverty among our students; and 3) the challenges to retain high-quality personnel by offering competitive salaries and benefits.

How can the school board improve graduation and dropout rates? Rockingham County Schools has many good programs in place to move our students toward graduation. Suggestions for improving the graduation/dropout rate: second shift of instruction, remediation including transportation, keeping counselors available for counseling, and working on improving a culture that expects high school graduation and postsecondary school for all of our students.

Lynn Tuttle



Lives in: Madison

Contact: teachertuttle@yahoo.com

Age: 60

Profession: Retired educator

Highest degree earned: Master of arts in education, Western Carolina University, 1981

Leadership Experience: Vice chairwoman, Board of Directors, Camp Carefree; Board of Trustees Leaksville United Methodist Church; director of handbells at the church.

What is the value of prior elected experience? If you have none, how will you overcome the lack of experience to be a successful member of the board? I have no prior elected experience, which makes me more open to the needs of the parents, students and teachers. Open communication with respect towards each other is imperative. Going into each school and listening to concerns will give a realistic perspective of the needs.

What is the biggest challenge facing your school district? The need to hire and retain good teachers is one of the biggest challenges we face. We need to encourage all those involved in the education system of Rockingham County to have a sense of pride and of ownership in the development of a positive learning environment for all students.

How can the school board improve graduation and dropout rates? To improve student performance, we must place value on learning. Students who drop out often feel their needs and learning styles were overlooked. We need to provide alternatives to the methods used educating these at-risk students. We need to encourage the discouraged.

Do you support the state's recent decision to rewrite the Common Core curriculum? Why or why not? If you have been in education, you know every time there is an election a new curriculum is introduced under a new name. A basic curriculum is necessary, but trust the professionalism of the educators to instill the knowledge needed to produce productive, thinking adults.

Ken White



Lives in: Eden

Contact: kenwhitemassage@gmail.com

Age: 47

Profession: Licensed massage therapist, Eden YMCA

Highest degree earned: Bacherlor of science, marketing

Leadership Experience: Manager, A Cleaner World, 21 years; chairman, Eden Chamber of Commerce; Tourism Development for both Eden and Rockingham County; Salvation Board member; director Eden YMCA; 40 Leaders Under 40; Leadership Rockingham County; Board of Adjustments, city of Eden.

What is the value of prior elected experience? If you have none, how will you overcome the lack of experience to be a successful member of the board? I have no prior elected experience, but I have lots of experience working with community boards.

What is the biggest challenge facing your school district? I am running for an at-large seat. It will be a challenge to represent the whole county fairly, but I think these seats are necessary to offset people who only vote in favor of the schools they represent.

How can the school board improve graduation and dropout rates? It starts in the elementary schools. We must instill in children that learning never ends. I went back to school after changing jobs in my 40s. It wasn't easy, but necessary; learning gives a person more opportunities.

Do you support the state's recent decision to rewrite the Common Core curriculum? Why or why not? Yes. Children do not learn the same way. How can you test them the same way?

Ophelia Wright



Lives in: Reidsville

Contact: owright8515@triad.rr.com

Age: 61

Profession: Retired teacher

Highest degree earned: Bachelor of arts, elementary education K-6, K-12 music (voice)

Leadership Experience: I have served as the vice chairman of the School Improvement Team, lead mentor, Curriculum Committee member, Calendar Committee member, president of NCAE-CARE (local association).

What is the value of prior elected experience? If you have none, how will you overcome the lack of experience to be a successful member of the board? I have no prior elected experience, but I did apply for a vacant seat on the board and came in No. 2 of the 22 applicants. I have attended Board of Education meetings on a monthly basis for 30 years. My attendance has given me a great deal of insight.

What is the biggest challenge facing your school district? The biggest problem that our school district faces at this time is economic development and the budget crisis.

How can the school board improve graduation and dropout rates? The school board can improve graduation and dropout rates by continuing to remediate those students who are falling through the cracks. Insufficient attendance in school should be examined, and study the cause of students dropping out of school. Above all, contiue to ask students to return to graduate.

Do you support the state's recent decision to rewrite the Common Core curriculum? Why or why not? Yes, I do support the state's recent decision to rewrite the Common Core curriculum. If curriculum standards are not allowing students to experience growth because of the way that they are written, then I think that they should be studied, reviewed and changed to accommodate student progress.