

Question 4

What are two or three strengths that you believe our district can be proud of, and why do you consider these to be significant strengths?

Jim Packard

The overall sense of purpose for the school district is a strength, with a belief in people, and not programs.

The recent efforts to improve reading skills in the school district is another strength. These efforts are wide ranging, and several are being accomplished with the aide and direction of the Missouri DESE. K-2 teachers completed LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) training over a 2 year period to give them a knowledge base for working with beginning readers. The district adopted a new reading curriculum last year. Missouri DESE instituted a new Reading Success Plan last year, with a goal of identifying and providing additional assistance to those students who are not proficient in reading. Rolla Public Schools is also participating in The New Teacher Project, which helps train primary grade teachers over a two year period.

Last but not least, our teachers are a strength. We have highly qualified teachers, and try to recruit the best by paying them competitively. RPS tries to stay near the top of the salary surveys in comparative schools. However, to increase pay requires more revenue, as 80% of the expenditures of the district are payroll related, and this fact is lost on many legislators who lament the fact that the state of Missouri is spending more money on K-12 education than in the past.

These strengths are significant because they are all centered on the mission of the district of providing the best educational opportunities for our students.

Jessica Barron

We have so many things to be proud of in this district! If I have to focus on only a few, one thing I am very proud of is the expansion efforts in our Early Childhood Center. Because of these efforts, parents might be able to re-enter the workforce. Additional jobs will be created for Rolla residents at the Four Rivers facility. Valuable space for incoming students will become available at elementary schools, supporting Rolla's growth through the additional housing projects that are happening within our community.

The second program of note is the CTE program at RTI/RTC. Not every student is college

bound, and students deserve the opportunity to receive workforce development training and certificates while they are still in high school. Our job as a board is to prepare every student for future success, whether they are working as a vital member of our community or studying at a university elsewhere.

Finally, RPS is so incredibly fortunate to have an outpouring of support from the community. As a member of the board and as a parent, I am continually grateful for this community and never take it for granted. Our community clearly values our schools, and it shows in the ballot box. As I have attended Missouri School Board Association Conferences and spoken with other board members from neighboring communities, it is clear how fortunate we are to have the community support and cohesiveness we have here in Rolla.

Larry Marti

As a candidate, I'd highlight three strengths our district can take pride in, focusing on our technical institute and historical reputation.

- Technical Institute and Center. From my memory back to 1983 and listening to the passion that comes from the heads of this department, I believe our technical institute stands out for its robust career and technical education programs, equipping students with practical skills for high-demand fields which are grossly underserved. Its success is evident in strong job placement rates and local partnerships, which provide real-world training opportunities. This is significant because it prepares students for immediate workforce entry or advanced study, boosting economic mobility and community prosperity.
- Historical reputation for success. Our district has a long-standing reputation as a top-tier public school system, built on decades of academic rigor and community trust. This legacy attracts families and retains talent, reflecting consistent performance in test scores and graduation rates. It's a key strength because it fosters stability and pride, giving students a solid foundation for future success.
- Community Support: The district benefits from deep community involvement, seen in partnerships with local businesses and active parent engagement. This support enhances resources—like funding for the technical institute—and reinforces a collaborative culture. It's significant because it amplifies our ability to innovate and meet diverse student needs effectively.

Matt Fridley

Rolla Public Schools has always been the leader in our area for educational outcomes. Whether

you measure success in graduation rate, testing outcomes, scholarships, or career tech education, this district has always found a way to meet the needs of our students. This success can be attributed to many factors, but one must always look to the quality of teachers, parent engagement, and support of the community as reasons for success.

Additionally, the diverse set of skills taught and the variety of educational opportunities offered by our school district are crucial to measuring success as well. The increased emphasis in career and technical education has proven invaluable to our community. Students are offered options to prepare for the workforce in fields that are in high demand. More students than ever are witnessing the importance of learning in career and technical educational programs. We are growing in areas related to health, tech, criminal justice and countless other areas. Rolla has done an excellent job of preparing students for life after school and our community is supporting this endeavor.

Finally, a strength of Rolla Public Schools has always been to be proactive in decisions related to growth rather than reactive. This proactive approach will be necessary in the immediate future as we see a huge influx in housing in our community. We must have individuals on the Board who are willing to look at the future and make decisions that are in the best interest of students going forward.