

# VOTER GUIDE

## In May, School Board Candidates Will Ask For Your Vote: **Here's Why Your Vote Matters**

### What School Boards Do

- Submit a proposed school district budget for local voters to approve. School Boards' power over school budgets is especially critical. **Boards have the power to design a budget that not only prioritizes academics but also social and emotional learning, civic engagement, diversity and inclusion, and physical and mental health.**
- Hire, fire, and work closely with the district superintendent.
- Approve curriculum, including books.
- Adopt the Code of Conduct which lays out behavioral expectations for students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors and explains students' rights when facing school discipline. **These policies have a major impact on the school climate and the school-to-prison pipeline, student privacy, and the ability of all students to thrive at school.**
- Board members are supposed to be responsive and representative of the community. They set the direction for the district, but they are not involved with the day-to-day operations of schools.
- Hold regular public meetings including hearing public comment. The vast majority of the board's votes and discussions should happen in public. Board members can decide when to allow public comment and can set parameters on the topic and impose time limits.

### Ask Where Candidates Stand on Important Issues:

#### DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

The Supreme Court has written that “America’s public schools are the nurseries of democracy.”

Young people must be taught to think critically, to ask questions, and to dive into the complexity of our social fabric and grapple with issues such as racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and what it means to live in a pluralistic society.

There is a backlash to these ideals that is anti-democratic, anti-truth, and violates the responsibility of our schools to provide an equitable and inclusive education for all students. We must recognize that a robust educational experience should involve a full exploration of America’s past, even the facts that make us uncomfortable and paint a less-than-rosy picture of American history.

#### *Ask candidates:*

Do you agree that an important goal of public education in a democracy involves preparing young people to succeed in a complex and pluralistic society?

Will you support teaching children to negotiate the “marketplace of ideas” and to separate fact from fiction?

Do you support the academic freedom of educators?

Are you willing to support conversations on difficult subjects such as race or gender or sexuality, so all students feel welcome?

Do you support a culturally responsive education, which can include an honest exploration of racism and bigotry? Are you aware that a culturally responsive education is linked to a range of positive outcomes, including increased graduation and attendance rates and better grades?

Will you oppose the banning of books or other materials from school libraries based on content?

### TRANSPARENCY

*Ask candidates:*

Will you support and encourage **public comment** at school board meetings? What kind of limitations would you consider imposing on public comment?

How will you encourage communication between the school board and the community?

How will you make school board meetings safe and accessible for parents and students to participate?

### PRIVACY AND SURVEILLANCE

*Ask candidates:*

Do you think there should be cameras – including those equipped with facial recognition – in schools to monitor who is in the building?

If yes, are you aware that facial recognition technology is notoriously inaccurate and is currently **banned** by the state of New York for use in schools?

Do you think there should be metal detectors in schools? What impact do you think passing through **metal detectors** and being searched has on students?

### SCHOOL SAFETY

*Ask candidates:*

What do you think is the proper role of **police officers/school resource officers** in schools?

Are you aware of the school-to-prison pipeline? How do you think school resource officers contribute to this problem?

How will you ensure that our schools are supporting all children's right to learn?

How do you think our schools would be different if there were **more social workers** and guidance counselors? Will you support increasing funds for behavioral health services?

Do you think there should be zero-tolerance for harassment or violence in our schools? Have you ever considered restorative justice programs instead of zero-tolerance policies?

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

*Ask candidates:*

Are you familiar with the **NYS Board of Regents DEI Framework**? If so, what will you do as a board member to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in our schools?

There have been **attacks on school curriculum** and classroom instruction. How will you ensure that our schools accurately teach history?

Are you familiar with the **Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)**? If so, how can we ensure that all students regardless of race, gender, sexuality, religion, or ability feel safe in our schools?

Are you familiar with the **Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA)**? Do you have any concerns about allowing students to use the restroom or locker room that is consistent with their gender identity?

Have you reviewed **Office of Civil Rights data** on our schools? Do you have any thoughts on how to address the racial disparities in our district?

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**School boards play an important role in shaping the education that millions of young New Yorkers receive. Let school board candidates know where you stand on the issues, and how they can earn your vote.**