

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

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1. Tell us about yourself and how your experiences will make you a good candidate for this office.

I am a parent of two in the Norwood Public Schools, a sixth-grader at Coakley Middle School and a third-grader at Cleveland Elementary. 12 years ago, my wife and I moved here to start our family. Like so many others, we have come to depend on the schools not just as places of learning, but as pillars of the community which build connections and hometown pride. I believe that strong schools make a strong town, and that is why I am running for Norwood School Committee.

When I volunteered as a parent representative on the 2024 Superintendent Search Committee in Norwood, I saw that as the beginning of an effort to protect our public schools and the programs which make this such a great place to raise a family.

I have worked in public policy communications for ten years and understand that listening is a crucial part of this dialogue. I understand the need and methods to effectively communicate with parents, educators, and community members.

I have a long track record of advocating for public schools, including a position as the spokesperson for the Boston Teachers Union. During that time, BTU worked towards the passage of the statewide Student Opportunity Act and won commonsense district reforms, including a nurse in every Boston Public School. I learned the challenges and rewards of working for schools that students deserve.

As a School Committee member, I will look for responsible solutions that preserve what makes our town such a special place. I see opportunities for the Norwood Public Schools to work more closely with other town departments for holistic and efficient solutions that will strengthen our schools and our town. I look forward to working with all of you, and to hearing your ideas, concerns, and dreams for Norwood.

2. How will you comply with and/or adapt to federal changes:

- **Fiscally due to loss of federal funds?**
- **While upholding NPS mission and values?**

The mission of the Norwood Public Schools is simple: Provide each student with a comprehensive and innovative education in an inclusive, safe, and supportive environment.

Unfortunately, political realities at odds with that straightforward goal have resulted in the threat of congressionally-approved funding being withheld by the federal government.

This will likely lead to tough budgetary decisions ahead for the Norwood School Committee, and the forced elimination of the comprehensive, innovative programs that our students rely on and deserve.

We are fortunate in Massachusetts that by virtue of the Student Opportunity Act and the Fair Share Act, to some extent, funding for education can weather a coming fiscal storm. When tough times do come, I will make sure the district is fighting for every state dollar possible. I will consider district-wide, town-wide, regional, and private-sector efficiencies and solutions that can work together to maximize the benefits to our students.

My commitment to the students of Norwood will be as simple as the mission statement: keep our students included, safe, and supported. That principle will guide all of my priorities as a member of the Norwood School Committee.

3. When making budgetary decisions, how would you ensure that you fully understand the ramifications of the decisions to programs, students, and staff in the schools?

As a member of the Norwood School Community, I believe that no change affecting the district's parents, students, educators, and taxpayers can take place without us first listening to those that will have to live with the effects. That requires a listening model: reaching out proactively and providing many different forums for feedback.

As part of my current job, I oversee a help desk team of 70 customer service agents. I believe that we are successful because we prioritize listening to and seeking customer feedback, both to respond to immediate questions and also to inform future planning. I believe that public service would benefit greatly from this listening model of customer service.

Changes to schedules, transportation, special education supports, and even simple logistics can have serious impacts on the busy, working families of Norwood. Hearing from our town's families on exactly how changes may affect their lives will ensure that the School Committee would understand a holistic picture of the decisions we make.

Additionally, I believe in listening to the wisdom of those who have been there before, and those whose different perspectives can inform sound decision-making. To do so, I hope to draw upon the knowledge of other town departments like Facilities, the Library, Recreation, Public Works, Fire, and Police. Working together can keep the town and schools strong and coordinated. Finally, once a decision has been made and executed, the data will tell the story, and the School Committee, in monitoring results, should ask the questions: is this what we expected? How is performance aligning with the Strategic Plan? What is unexpected?

If budget forecasts materialize as expected, the Norwood Public Schools will have tough decisions ahead. I believe we can meet those challenges head-on, as long as we consider impacts and how they will be felt by those who must bear the brunt.

4. Are there any existing NPS policies you believe should be eliminated, or any new policies you would like to see implemented?

The Norwood Public Schools' Policy on Empowered Digital Use has not been revisited since 2015, when smartphone adoption among teens and pre-teens was in its infancy. Since then, innumerable studies have suggested a link between youth device usage and declining mental health. Additionally, the distraction that these devices cause in the classroom can be a detriment to learning. While I understand that responsible, limited use of electronic devices in a classroom setting is beneficial to interactive learning and can prepare students for careers in technology, their unrestrained use has been damaging to children. I believe Norwood Schools should consider a "bell-to-bell" ban on student cell phone usage.

Relatedly, I believe Norwood Schools should periodically and regularly revisit district policies surrounding social media usage and governance of digital communications to students. The social networking policy has not been renewed since 2014, long before every student as young as sixth grade had a school-issued Chromebook at home. I believe that Norwood educators have been restrained and responsible with their communications. However, this practice has grown without a full and periodic discussion of what appropriate limits should be, and if the use of technology in this fashion remains equitable.

Finally, policies around communications to parents and the community could be strengthened. Currently, if an issue pertains only to one school, by policy, that school is solely responsible for that communication. Norwood Public Schools should consider centralized communications resources and polices which will be more efficient and reduce conflicting information.