

Candidate: Margaret Best

Questions for School Board Candidates in District No. 1

Why do you want to be on the Edmond Public Schools Board of Education and what experiences, as either a parent, community member, volunteer, or professional have prepared you to promote a cooperative atmosphere among the rest of the Board Members?

I am running for a seat on the EPS Board of Education because I believe I can make a difference in the education of our children. Parents are those most fully in charge of their children's upbringing – to include education – that catapulted me into the belief that, in order to better direct my children's education, I should run for the school board. I want to be a voice – not only for my own children – but for every other parent who has been told they are not qualified to understand or direct their children's education.

It is my priority to provide EPS students with the best quality education where they can grow academically and socially. I advocate for schools to be fully open and "in person" learning as well as virtual option for parents who deem it necessary their child remains online. My goal is to unify and inspire policy in a respectable manner with the goal of restoring American education with a curriculum that represents our principles.

I have four children, two EPS graduates, one junior and one in seventh grade. My husband and I have chosen a hybrid model for our children's education with EPS being an excellent choice for our children over the last ten years. I have been actively involved in their schools working with teachers, administrators and other parents. It is my belief that teachers and administrators are important and should serve as a support role to parents as we work in UNITY to equip and educate the future generation of EPS students.

Parents are the ADVOCATE for their child. I am running to be a

voice for parents choosing to educate their child in EPS.

What do you see as positive attributes of Edmond Public Schools and how do you plan to promote those attributes?

In my experience and a major reason we moved to EPS was their ability to provide accommodations for children in need (504, IEP). It is imperative we continue to provide resources for these children, so that our students SUCCEED to the best of their potential. I have experience with both spectrums. My children have benefited from EPS AP classes all the way to the excellent services of 504 accommodations.

What are the biggest challenges faced by the district in the next 5-10 years and what are your thoughts on solutions to those challenges?

The continued growth in Edmond will increase the demand for more schools. EPS must be competitive in order to recruit and retain the BEST and MOST QUALIFIED professional educators to equip and educate the future generation of EPS students.

What are your top three concerns or goals that you would convey to the new Superintendent once they are named?

1 – Curriculum – How can we restore our American education? How can we improve EPS curriculum to make it more rigorous and challenging?

2 – EPS needs a committee that offers forums with parents and teachers in order to be more responsive and transparent with parents and teachers.

3 – Cares Act funds – How is EPS utilizing this money to ensure students are on grade level?

What would you propose to attract and retain high-quality teachers, administrators, support staff, and substitutes? How would you propose to attract and hire a more diverse teaching and administrative staff?

Competitive school – EPS will study other schools that are thriving and growing with a high retention of staff and learn from them if we are to compete for these positions.

Employees should be hired based on their credentials – who is the most qualified for the position?

Are you in favor of returning to in-person learning five days a week? If not, why not? How would you propose safely returning to school five days a week?

I am absolutely in favor of returning kids to in school learning five days a week. EPS should also maintain a virtual option for those parents who deem it necessary for their child to stay at home. Let parents decide the best health choice for their child.

Would you make it mandatory for teachers and staff to receive the Covid-19 vaccine in order for them to return to work at a certain date, or would you encourage employees to get the vaccination but require them to come back?

I believe teachers are essential and vital to in person education. It is the personal responsibility of each teacher and staff member to do what is best for his/her health.

Virtual learning is not going away for some families who elect their children to learn in this modality. What would you do to increase the rigor and quality of the district's virtual learning programs to make it comparable to other district's virtual programs?

School – in person and virtual – should be challenging while keeping the student engaged and focused. This should be evaluated frequently with testing and feedback from the student and parent. If EPS does not meet the criteria, then they need to look into other options. To increase the quality of virtual learning, I recommend at least three zoom classes per day where the teacher is teaching the class and communicating virtually, face to face. Every student deserves access to quality education.

How would you propose the District provide remediation to those students who prove to be behind after the 2020-2021 school year?

1 - Return to 5 day in person schedule and work together (student, teacher, specialist, counselor) THIS semester with students to stay on grade level.

2 – Provide summer school, free of charge, to any student that proves to be behind. Utilize the CARES ACT money to help fund this for EPS students.

What is your opinion of open transfers between all EPS schools? What is your rationale for this opinion?

I believe open transfers should be reviewed case by case. There should be a VALID reason for a transfer. Each child has different needs.

What steps would you consider or implement to help sports and fine arts programs succeed at a higher level than they are currently experiencing? How should monetary support provided by parents with students in these programs be utilized travel and overnight expenses, coaches' salary supplements, equipment, etc.?

EPS has had great success in their sports and fine arts programs. In my experience, the band program is exceptional and has provided students the ability to play at school events as well as compete with other bands all over the state of Oklahoma. Their performances are incredible. The new stadiums are beneficial for all the schools. The musicals that the middle and high schools perform are amazing.

However, none of this is possible without quality teachers, coaches, parental and community involvement. EPS must provide a competitive salary supplement to attract and retain quality teachers, coaches and directors. Parents cannot bear the burden of financially supporting all extra expenses. How can we collaborate with the greater Edmond community and the Edmond City Council to promote community engagement in support of EPS sports and our fine arts in order to bring in money to these programs and increase the attendance beyond parents and family? If we have learned anything from this past year - it is that we must come together as a community.