

Candidate: Lee Ann Kuhlman

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 have been committed to education since graduating from the University of Oklahoma in 1972. I began my career as a Home Economics teacher in Norman, OK, at the junior high that I had attended, and opened Longfellow Middle School. A move provided the opportunity to work for the Dairy Council, training teachers to teach Nutrition Education. As a parent, I was PTO President at Chisholm and actively involved in my children's schools. I also served on the Parent Advisory Committee. In 1996, I was hired as the FACS teacher at Central Middle School where I taught for 14 years. Upon retirement, I had a desire to utilize the experiences I had gained and ran for District#1 School Board Representative. I have served in that position for the past 10 years.

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

EPS has been recognized as a state and national leader in the field of education. The opportunities offered to students are unequalled. Students are provided with a variety of classes to empower each to be productive individuals in a changing society. That might sound like a philosophy, but it is backed by the offerings and the guidance given. Our partnership with Francis Tuttle Vo-Tech, provides students opportunities to be auto mechanics, nurses, plumbers, and electricians. It allows students who are not on the college-track to not only succeed, but to be successful in their career choice. The arrangement with The University of Central Oklahoma allows student who are college-bound to obtain college credit while still enrolled in our high schools. I believe it is our obligation to spread the word through participation and acknowledgement of our students' achievements utilizing verbal communication, as well as social media.

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 Edmond Public School District will face many challenges in the future. One of the primary concerns is the continuing growth of the district. Currently, the growth averages 400 students a year. This requires additional facilities, as well as an increased number of teachers. The passing of bond issues is historically unprecedented. Without this money, it would be impossible to meet the demands for additional facilities. The need for teachers grows every year. Oklahoma is behind surrounding states in teacher salaries. It will be important to seek legislation to improve the incentives to draw additional teachers.

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

The need for community support through communication will be invaluable to the passage of upcoming bond issues. Currently, many are unhappy with the district's A/B schedule. Voting against the bond issue may be seen as a way to voice their dissatisfaction. However, voting down a bond issue only punishes the students. Another concern is the teacher shortage. Without teachers, class sizes cannot be reduced. It will be a priority for our new Superintendent to advocate at the legislative level for competitive pay for Oklahoma teachers. Finally, it will be important to address the inequity of the funding formula as it is applied to the districts in Oklahoma. Edmond is underfunded substantially, compared to other districts. OKC receives \$10,447 per student; Putnam City receives \$9,133 per student; Edmond receives \$8,267.

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?

Today, it is difficult to attract and/or retain teachers, administrators, support staff, and substitutes. There are several reasons for this. It is difficult to compete with industry jobs and their salaries. However, our efforts to keep class sizes lower and continue to demonstrate the value of these individuals will go a long way. Recognition of individuals as Teachers of the Year and Support Employees of the Year are two efforts to validate the work each individual is doing for our students and our community.

To hire a more diverse teaching and administrative staff requires applicants who have those qualities. I believe that goes back to offering salaries that are more competitive. Increased benefits are another source that could attract additional applicants.

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?

Of course, I want our students to return to in-person learning five days a week. The issue is returning our students as safely as possible. The CDC recommends wearing masks and social distancing. With our enrollment and class sizes, it is impossible to maintain the social distancing. With the rollout of the vaccine and teachers being given priority status, I believe the return to school will be soon. I was told we will be able to vaccinate 2000+ teachers in a day and a half, if we can get the vaccines. The safety of our students, teachers, staff, their families, and the community is my focus.

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 do not believe mandating teachers and staff receive the vaccine is possible. It is important for as many individuals as possible to receive the vaccine in order to minimize the spread of the Covid-19 virus. It is an individual's choice.

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?

Virtual learning is here to stay. It will be necessary to have VE teachers trained to assure the quality of the program is sustained. I believe the district can and will do a better job of meeting the needs of Virtual students. VE was implemented as a necessity to meet the needs of students or parents who were not comfortable with in-person learning. The district has had to adapt quickly, but will continue to improve.

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

Remediation will be important in the coming year. Through evaluations and tests, students who are behind will be identified. I do not believe there will

be as many students as others believe. Many students have had success with the A/B schedule, as well as VE.

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

I am not in favor of open transfers. The district has worked diligently to equalize the enrollment and opportunities of our schools. Open transfers would allow students to transfer for any reason. This could include being a part of a better athletic team or a desire to be with friends. It is important to maintain the quality of each of our schools.

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.?

I believe our sports and fine arts programs are very successful. Some districts might be more successful in competition because they only have one high school. However, we want to provide more opportunities for more students. Currently, we have athletic teams compete at the levels referenced, and they are successful. Our students in our fine arts programs have seen success and advanced to national competitions. Many of our students have received scholarships to continue their education at the college level.

Monetary support is difficult to address. In our district, parents play an instrumental role in the success of our programs and are essential. However, I believe additional expenses should be covered by fundraising. It is important that every participant know that they are fairly evaluated and their success is not associated with the ability of their parents to donate to things such as a Coach's salary.