

## **CPPS 2011 Seattle School Board Candidate Questionnaire**

### **Sharon Peaslee, running for School Board, position 1**

1. The Seattle Public Schools population is very diverse. Our student population is 57.3% non-white, 24% have an non-English speaking background, and 14% receive special education services. Also, 43.3% receive free and reduced price meals, which is a common measure of the number of families struggling with poverty. What have you done to familiarize yourself with the needs of such families and how are you prepared to serve them as a Board member?

I've spent many years advocating for these students in relation to math education, which is where the achievement gap is greatest. I've spoken with countless parents, community leaders, district administrators in Lake Washington, Bellevue and Seattle School Districts on improving math and other curricula so that they support the learning needs of all students, including low-income, minority, ESL and Special Ed. I led communities in Lake Washington and Bellevue in demanding improvements and worked with legislators and others to improve math standards that were adopted in 2008.

Since jumping into the school board race I've expanded the scope of these conversations to include ways to meet unmet learning needs of students across Seattle—including Special Ed, Native American, LGBT, ELL, APP and more.

2. What should board members and administrators do to reach out to parents and enhance their participation in District planning and policy-making? How would you, as a board member, ensure that the district considers community input when making decisions?

Board Members must work with parents and school communities in making important decisions that impact their schools and children. I will strengthen either site councils or building leadership teams to include more elected representatives from the community and involve them in the decision making processes from inception to final outcome. I believe communities will engage to a much greater extent when they realize their input is valued and used in making district decisions.

3. What are your top three priorities that would guide your decision-making as a board director and how would you build consensus to support your goals?

1-Fund from the classroom up. This is the only way we can meet the needs of all our students. Now, too much money is being held back from classrooms and spent in ways that don't help students.

2- Improve curricula and professional development. We must provide teachers with clear, explicit teaching materials that they can use to teach all students. We must also give them the kind of professional development they need to meet diverse needs and learning styles.

3- Create many pathways to success. Our district must work for all students. We must support diverse talents, abilities, ambitions and needs. We must offer all students educational pathways that prepare them for their chosen future.

Building consensus is a matter of working with other SB directors in finding points of agreement and developing those into actionable plans.

4. What are specific ways you would seek to improve underperforming schools in the next year?

As mentioned above—fund from classroom up; improve curricula and professional development; create many pathways to success.

5. What do you think the district should do to ensure that students who are working below grade level will get early and effective interventions that will bring them up to grade level quickly?

We must intervene as soon as students start to struggle and fail. We must devote resources to effective remediation which could be: self-paced online learning in the classroom (and at home or library), after school support, summer school. This needs to be discussed and developed across the district.

6. What would you do to ensure that students who perform above grade level have access to challenging and rigorous learning opportunities?

Increase the numbers of programs throughout the district in the form of multiple pathways to success. We need to stabilize APP, strengthen Spectrum and decide what to do about ALO, which is vaguely defined and unevenly implemented. But we also need diverse pathways that accommodate students who want to specialize, accelerate or focus in singular or multiple subjects with greater flexibility.

7. Regarding standardized tests: do you think our schools are spending too much time and money on them, not enough, or just right? Please explain your answer with specific examples.

I would push to replace MAP immediately, with online programs such as ALEKS. This is a math program that would also fill the gaps of our current curricula. It's used widely throughout WA including as the assessment in state universities. It assesses continuously while teaching and without intimidation or failure. It can be used by teachers to differentiate instruction and provides much more accurate data on student learning.

8. What do you think are the most effective specific strategies for closing the opportunity gap? Please provide examples of where you think the district is doing a good job of addressing the problem (if any) and how the district could do better.

This district is failing at this. The achievement gap has grown. Over 50% of disadvantaged learners fail standardized tests and approx 30% drop out. We need early intervention; effective remediation;

differentiated instruction that supports remediation and acceleration; and many pathways to success. All described above.

9. How - if at all - would you advocate for enhanced student access to innovative and alternative programs such as language immersion, arts, Montessori instruction, or others?

I would allow for more choice in our current assignment plan, and also would push for creating more alternative pathways such as these and others. We need compelling programs in all schools and have enormous opportunity to create innovative programs in schools that are currently under-enrolled and undesirable. Engaging students with specialized programs is one of the most effective ways to improve our schools and prepare students for the futures they want for themselves.

10. Please give specific examples of ways you think our district could do a better job of teaching math and science, as well as preparing students for the job market demands for technical skills?

We need to immediately supplement all our math curricula to help students achieve proficiency in essential skills. Discovery does not lead to proficiency. Even students who do well in current k-12 math frequently end up remediating in college due to lack of proficiency. We can make this improvement most effectively by replacing MAP with ALEKS as described earlier. As soon as we can afford it we must replace all math curricula with materials teachers can use to teach all students, regardless of language or other learning issues.

We need to assure quality science without creating a one-size-fits-all program that destroys alternate pathways we already have in place. We need more STEM (at all levels) and IT (such as AOIT at Ingraham) in schools throughout the district. I would like to see a k-8 STEM program at Jane Addams. I would like to see a program that integrates arts and technology with courses in on-line game development, etc. I would push to develop such a program at Rainier Beach (and maybe Addams), which is in dire need of some fantastic programs.

We must use the Schools of Innovation initiative to create many dynamic and inspiring pathways to success in math/science as well arts, government and other areas that will engage students all the way through high schools and prepare them for their chosen futures.