

What are the most pressing issues facing your school district?

Finances, legislative mandates, communication are three important issues. The board needs to engage constituents with the goal of living within our means, while still providing an excellent education for our students and continuing to enrich the standing of the community. State legislation and mandates remove funding from the schools or demand changes without financial support. This puts the onus of funding on the taxpayers, who the board must involve in the discourse. Educators need to provide educational expertise. The board needs to combine constituent groups to obtain the best solutions. Strategic planning will help with this.

What specific experience makes you a good fit for a seat on the board of education?

The next board will face significant challenges due to many forces pressing upon education in Illinois. These challenges will directly impact our educational programs. Success will require conviction and guidance. My many years as a teacher, administrator, and lifelong resident of the district have provided me with a deep desire to advocate for the district's many stakeholders. My experience serving on the Board has provided me with the perspective and knowledge needed to get things done. These are exciting, yet challenging times, and they demand a clear vision. Teachers, parents, community members, and students can trust in Joyce Easter Fitch.

What is your stance on common core standards and parcc testing?

Common Core and PARCC testing are initiatives mandated by the Illinois legislature. These are unfunded mandates with a penalty of losing our state aid if we do not comply. Funding should have been supplied by the state for the technology needed. The timeline to implement has been aggressive and there is little understanding of what data PARCC will provide to help educators and parents. PARCC tests take twice the time of the previous state assessment, which impacts student-learning time. Critical thinking skills and problem solving are needed, but the focus on PARCC has detracted from the values of common core.

How do you balance the educational needs of the students with the economic challenges facing the taxpayers?

The balance needs to have the constituents as integral pieces of the decision. Mandates have to be met because they are tied to our revenue, but there are factors that need input from staff, parents, community and students. These decisions tend to be about basic educational values, and the board needs to have a deliberate and regular dialog with stakeholders when determining how to balance needs with funding. The board stewards taxpayer money with the goal of excellent education for our children. It is critical to be open, transparent and accountable to the taxpayers.