



## Caroline Mason

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Director-at-Large Position 3

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### Everett PTSA Council Written Candidate Forum – General Election: November 2, 2021

#### Background

In October of 2021, the Everett PTSA Council invited all four school board candidates to participate in a written candidate forum. All candidates were asked to respond to the written questions. Three of the four candidates submitted responses.

#### Disclaimer

Everett PTSA Council is a non-partisan organization that does not endorse candidates. Candidate responses are exactly as submitted. Everett PTSA Council does not make corrections of any kind or verify statements of truth or fact.

#### Other Resources

To learn more about some of the topics covered, see the following websites:

OSPI School District Report Card: <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/100083>

OSPI Learning Standards: <https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/learning-standards-instructional-materials>

Public Disclosure Guidelines for Schools/Campaigning: <https://www.pdc.wa.gov/learn/guidelines-school-districts>

#### Question #1

What are the biggest challenges facing Everett School District right now?

**Response:** “The most immediate challenges are around keeping students and staff safe in our schools and responding to the social-emotional, academic and equity impacts caused by the pandemic. Longer term I believe we need to reduce overcrowding, especially in the elementary grades which are 800+ students over permanent building capacity, and continue modernizing our educational programs with high school career pathways that prepare more students for the jobs of tomorrow.”



**Question #2**

How can schools best address both the academic and mental health needs arising from the pandemic?

**Response:** “The Everett school district began the school year by using the first five days to inventory and support the social and emotional needs of students. Given students had not been in a classroom for over a year, acclimating or introducing students to the routines of a school day and understanding their emotional state after higher levels of isolation and virtual learning were critical before delving deeper into academics. As we move forward more one-on-one tutoring and instruction will best support those who have fallen behind. I also believe we learned a great deal the past 18 months about how to productively use technology to increase student results, which can now be integrated into the classroom learning environment.

The district is also using federal relief dollars to address academic and mental health needs. For example, three social workers were hired, a new position in the district, and additional hours were funded for teachers and staff to provide out-of-classroom academic support. The school board has been monitoring how these funds are spent to ensure the priority remains in supporting students and their needs, whatever they may be.”

**Question #3**

We are seeing more conversations about Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in our community. How will you encourage educators in the Everett School District to adapt their teaching practices to be more inclusive of special education students? How will you measure progress and promote accountability for all aspects of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)?

**Response:** “In the past several years I have seen a significant shift in our district’s focus on DEI, including the hiring of a Director of DEI to oversee the assessment and implementation of DEI initiatives districtwide. The current superintendent Dr. Saltzman supports push-in strategies for special education students and professional development that teaches instructional strategies that support a wide range of students including Multi Language Learners. Schools are also celebrating and supporting their diversity more through Multicultural Nights and more inclusive parent engagement. As a school board director, I have had the opportunity to support these initiatives and make sure these programs are funded.

School board directors monitor progress through a variety of measures including the academic achievement of different groups of students and whether we are making progress in closing the “achievement gap”; reports on the progress and improvements to the special education program and other programs that support rigorous academics for underrepresented groups; and advocating at the state level to fully fund special education and other district programs and partnerships that advance DEI.”

**Question #4**

What are the issues that need to be addressed to provide racial equity in the schools?

**Response:** “After the learnings from the summer of 2020 and the realized need to adjust curriculum and instruction to be more inclusive for all students, Everett Public Schools worked with the John Hopkins Institute to conduct a curriculum review and analysis to ensure instructional materials represent our students and the history we share. The results showed the adopted curriculum provided a good foundation but needed augmented materials to provide a complete history. The goal is to have materials that offer students multiple perspectives on a topic, then promote inquiry, critical thinking skills and discourse to advance their knowledge and understanding on a wide range of topics.

Professional development for teachers and staff is a critical piece. On October 15, the district hosted a districtwide learning day to discuss, learn and promote equity and diversity in our schools. To ensure equity isn’t a “one and done” topic, and in developing the new district strategic plan, equity was a top priority for the board and is now woven into every aspect of the plan’s priorities.”

**Question #5**

How would you convince voters of the need to pass bonds and levies for the district?

**Response:** “I believe when voters understand the disparity between what state and federal funding provides school districts and what programs are not covered, the additional funding is not seen as extra but instead necessary. Examples of this include summer school, additional staff to support classroom instruction for students who need extra help, after school clubs and activities, high school career pathway and internship programs, building more classroom space for our growing district and upgrades to aging schools and facilities. The Everett school district continues to grow in student population and the number of students currently far exceeds school building capacity, which means over 140 portable classrooms districtwide.

Communicating these needs to voters can be a challenge and the district continues to make gains in the use of technology and partnership with families, a benefit that came out of remote learning. I continue to look for new strategies and opportunities to share the needs of the district with voters who are no longer directly connected to schools. Having co-chaired the citizens bond and levy committee for many years, working to pass these measures is a special priority and passion of mine.”

**Question #6**

What will your strategies be to work productively with your board colleagues and members of the public whose ideas are different from yours?

**Response:** “I believe it is important to have a variety of perspectives and different backgrounds on a school board. I have personally learned a great deal from my colleagues and when we don’t agree on a topic, we do so respectfully and professionally. The purpose of a five member board is to collaborate and find the best solution given a variety of input.”

**Question #7**

What are Everett School District’s greatest strengths?

**Response:** “It’s people. We have many great programs to support a variety of students from those learning English for the first time or have higher social-emotional needs, to those who need services beyond the school day. At the end of the day, it is the teachers, staff and administrators who make the biggest impact in a student’s life. I am fortunate to work alongside so many dedicated, passionate individuals who believe that education, along with the proper support and a little compassion, can create the best possible outcomes for every students.”