



Traci Mitchell

Everett School District No. 2
Director-at-Large Position 4

tracim4schools@gmail.com



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 biggest issues of Everett Public Schools right now include the following:

- 1) The state funding schedule for schools will be removing the extra amount they give for salaries given the high expense of our area. They will be lowering and limiting the amount we can collect from our local levies. We receive Federal Cares money which has supported us through the pandemic and into the coming years, but when this is gone, we will have issues if the state doesn't act.
- 2) Neither the Federal or State governments fully fund special education. Therefore, the local taxpayers spend millions each year for the services we provide by law and are a right to students.
- 3) The pandemic has theoretically led to learning losses by students. Teachers are currently performing diagnostic assessments to determine the level of each student and work towards bringing each student to or above standard.”



Question #2

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

Response: “We have a plan for addressing these issues and have embedded SEL into our strategic plan. As stated previously, we are assessing for learning loss and we know mental health issues were increased during the pandemic. We have hired social workers to assist students and their families with mental health services. We are training staff on SEL and embedding it into classrooms and not having it as a special program. We have other assessments (Panorama) and programs to help students as they return to school with their mental health needs.

We heard from students shortly after school started that they appreciate the slow start teachers were taking with academics and reviewing slowly new concepts.”

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: “We make every effort to include special education students in general education classrooms. We do not tolerate bullying and strive for inclusion. Teachers and school leadership have participated in diversity and inclusion PD and the LID day on 10/15 will have sessions at each school to reinforce these efforts. We are looking at each policy and updating the language to be more inclusive. We have also introduced a cultural awareness class as an elective at our high schools.”

Question #4

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

Response: “As previously stated, we are educating staff about D&I and it is an essential part of our strategic plan. We are looking at our discipline reports to identify problems and opportunities.

Your specific question about issues that need to be addressed is a tough one for me as I have not experienced any issues as a parent. I have heard stories as a board member. I listen to the stories and guide people to the person or program that can help them. We are engaging parents and families in a way that makes cultural awareness a routine act and not a special event. It needs to be part of our everyday life - each of us needs to see other people as human with the same rights as another. This gets to the hearts and minds of people and students come to school with what their family has taught them. We cannot control this.”



Question #5

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

Response: "I wish you could tell me. We do not appear to have a problem with levies and I hope that continues next year. It's the bonds at a 60% pass rate that means the minority of people prevent passage.

We have formed a citizen committee to help the board determine what is on the bond. It did not pass.

We are thankful for the community's passage of the 2016 bond and have North MS, Tambark Creek ES and Woodside ES to show for it. In 2022 we may go for a Capital Levy to replace many elementary schools and other projects and have a new citizen committee who will present to us shortly.

We are talking to our legislature about lowering the bond passage rate to 55% or a simple majority."

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 listen and provide responses when appropriate. This pandemic has provided an unfortunate time for people to disagree. Masks and vaccines were determined at the state level which I support. It is our responsibility to keep the students and staff safe. We are fortunate in our community that we have not had protests at our board meetings. On the board, we treat each other with dignity and respect and I am working towards responding and not reacting to things I do not agree with. We will not always agree but we must strive to understand each other."

Question #7

What are Everett School District's greatest strengths?

Response: "Our staff, PTSA and Foundation. Each of these groups works hard for each student in the district. Staff work hard to educate and provide a learning environment for students. The PTSA and volunteers provide essential support to students and staff. The Foundation helps with the unmet needs of our schools and students. We have families who trust us with their kids and I am very proud of what we do. During the pandemic the staff worked hard to figure out a virtual and then hybrid environment. We couldn't have done that without parents and families. We were ready with computers because of the 2016 capital levy and we were pushed to the limits. I am thankful for everyone involved in supporting students through the pandemic. It is my greatest pleasure to serve this district."