



AAUW Carlisle Offers a Look at Candidate Positions

Carlisle Area School District Board of Directors 2023 Primary

AAUW Carlisle continues its non-partisan voter education efforts and our traditional role in advance of CASD School Board elections with this questionnaire. Eleven candidates are on the Primary ballot.

We received responses from:

Paula Bussard, Bruce Clash, Gerald Eby, Donny Martinez, Joseph Shane, and Jon Tarrant.

We did not receive responses from:

Colleen Blume, Walt Brown, Dawn Kephart, Heather Leatherman, and Al Shine.

Questions and responses are provided below. Note that responses are listed alphabetically by the last name under each question.

CASD Board of Directors

Candidate Questionnaire and Responses

Primary Election, May 16, 2023

The Mission Statement of the CASD states:

“The Carlisle Area School District is committed to providing all students with educational and leadership opportunities to meet the challenge of personal responsibility, enabling them to become contributing members of our diverse society. The district will excel in student achievement, community engagement and financial stewardship.”

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Do you agree with this above mission statement and if not, what would you change?

Paula Bussard: This mission statement was developed through the District’s strategic planning process a number of years ago. I generally do agree with the mission statement, although I would add parent engagement as an area in which to excel. While it was implicit in that priority when approved, making it more explicit is important.

Providing all students with the opportunity to learn and grow, thus enabling them to become productive citizens, is foundational to a Democracy. Recognizing that our society is diverse, and that indeed the CASD student population is diverse, speaks to the need to offer a broad range of educational and extracurricular opportunities so that each student is able to succeed in the path they choose following graduation. Student achievement should be the priority of any public school district and the main focus of accountability for school district administration and the board. In addition, to fostering community engagement to support the students, parent engagement is also critical to fostering success for students. Finally, because school districts in Pennsylvania are predominantly funded through local property tax, it is imperative that financial stewardship be a priority of the board to assure that local funds are being appropriately used to meet both short-term and longer-term priorities in the school district.

Bruce Clash: Yes, I believe that the current mission statement appropriately states what the District is trying to do and why it is doing it. Should the time come to revamp the statement, I think it could be tweaked to add parent engagement (along with community) and adding that the educational and leadership opportunities are delivered by empowered teachers and staff.

Gerald Eby: Yes, I agree with #1.

Donny Martinez: I do agree with the mission statement of CASD, however even though Carlisle is 1% above the average requirement of graduation rate for Pennsylvania over all. It’s participation and engagement to the “give me a chance” communities groups with attendance and graduation accomplishments aren’t happening as much as it should or can.

Joseph Shane: Yes, I agree with the mission statement of the CASD since it clearly places the emphasis where it belongs, on the students. It notes that students are unique individuals, but who also live in and have responsibilities to society. The statement asserts that the school district is part of the community suggesting that relationships with all members of the community (parents, families, retirees, businesses, etc.) are essential as is wise use of taxpayer dollars. It is both a concise and comprehensive statement that can be revisited to maintain focus on core values.

Jon Tarrant: Yes, I agree with the CASD Mission Statement.

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If you agree with the mission statement, what role does each Board Member play in achieving this mission? Please be specific and give examples.

Paula Bussard: Each Board Member needs to understand the vision, mission, and priorities so that the Board holds the district administration accountable for achieving those priorities. Individual Board members can fulfill this responsibility in a number of ways, including participating in Committee and Board deliberations and advocating for specific approaches. First, as a member of the Strategic Planning Committee, I advocated for the middle school renovations to be based on programmatic needs of students. This resulted in a task force being appointed that included administrators, teachers, parents, students, community, and board members to look at the schools' strengths and weaknesses and to develop program goals that were considered as the district planned the schools' renovations. A more recent example focuses on the elementary schools. Given enrollment growth and several aging facilities, I have advocated for an approach that looks at the elementary school educational program needs and incorporates those priorities in the district's facility planning. A task force of administrators, teachers, and other educational professionals has evaluated strengths and weaknesses in the district's elementary schools. Input from parents has been sought through focus groups and surveys. I advocated for the superintendent to periodically provide updates to parents and for these to be posted on the district's website.

Bruce Clash: Board members collectively engage each year in a process of identifying goals for the District—usually driven by the comprehensive plan but some can be outside of it as well—to which the Superintendent is held accountable. These goals always have relevance to and help advance the District's mission and are finalized in consultation with the Superintendent, who can bring her own goals into the process with Board buy-in. Individual Board members can advocate for endeavors, functions or processes she/he believes would add value to how the District fulfills its mission. For example, as chair of the Finance Committee for the past three years, I have worked closely with the director of business operations to help craft an annual budget process/presentation that much more transparently conveys trends in District spending and how the District is utilizing the taxpayer dollars entrusted to it. I have also been a strong advocate for many years, along with numerous Board colleagues, in encouraging the administration to incorporate a financial literacy class into the curriculum, which will help prepare our students for "personal responsibility" in making good financial decisions. I am pleased we are now phasing in this course as a graduation requirement.

Gerald Eby: The board hires qualified Teachers and Administrators to develop and carry out the courses of study and ensure we provide funding to carry out these education programs for our students.

Donny Martinez: I believe the school boards role in the involvement to the mission statement is maximizing tax payer dollars in educational programs that offer them opportunities for contribution towards engaging in the personal responsibilities of studies and achieving success through informed and experienced staff in their fields; which is an influencing factor by the school board's ability to discern unbiasedly if the board is diverse enough to fathom a diverse societies perspective, in creating opportunities and not motivated by their political agendas of censoring or banning books, which in turn would "take away" and limit a broader view of those different to them especially in a very vastly assorted multiethnic and multicultural society.

Joseph Shane: Board Members work with the administration, teachers, and community to establish the specific framework within which the district operates while complying with Commonwealth laws and codes. Finances and curriculum are two examples where Board members have vital input.

With respect to finances, the Board is responsible for approving the annual operating budget and maintenance of reserve funds for capital improvement projects. They are also involved contract negotiations with the Carlisle Area Education Association (a.k.a., the union) and must help to establish salaries, stipends (e.g., coaching and other extra-/co-curricular activities), as well as attending to pension obligations. Board members are obliged to understand these issues so that they can make responsible financial decisions using local taxpayer dollars which are largely responsible for district funding as state contributions have steadily declined in recent decades.

With respect to curriculum, Board members help to oversee and approve curriculum, but they neither directly write nor enact standards for student understanding and achievement. This is the responsibility of the teachers and administrators in partnership with the State Board of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. As with finances, Board members are expected to understand these processes to give district personnel the support and respect they have earned and deserve.

Jon Tarrant: Each board member works collaboratively with the others and the superintendent as a "Committee of Ten" to achieve the objectives of the mission statement. We approve curriculum, provide opportunities for student engagement in the school and community, and develop and approve budgets.



Considering the mission statement, what role do parents play in helping their school children succeed?

Paula Bussard: The key to any student's success is support from the parents. When education is valued in a family, a child is more likely to succeed academically. That said,

parents are often very busy raising their children and in their workplaces. It becomes imperative for a school district to make sure that parents can easily engage in their own children's education, as well as be able to provide input on district policies and other issues. The primary linkage for parents is the school principal and their child's teachers. The board supports each school in engaging in active communication with parents and families and creating positive opportunities for parent engagement in their children's education.

Further, the board has established policies to enhance parent engagement through the flexible scheduling of parent teacher conferences, including evening hours and, when needed, conferences through Facetime or Zoom. The district also has adopted PowerSchools, which allow parents to track their child's academic progress and attendance.

There are also other linkages with parents that the board has made a priority, including posting all district policies and curriculums, making special education information and forms accessible and posting all email and video communications by the superintendent to parents on the district website.

Bruce Clash: Parents are, of course, a child's first and most important influence. In an ideal world, a parent(s) can provide a safe, stable and nurturing home environment for their child(ren) where they are regularly read to and raised in manner that develops an excitement for learning before their children enter school, which is then further fed as a child advances through grades K-12. Parents in elementary school ideally attend parent-teacher conferences, confer with teachers when special challenges are identified, help children with homework and lesson material and take an interest in what their child experienced during the school day. In middle and high school, parents can help their children through the emotionally challenging times that come with adolescence and finding their way in the world, as well as with the increased academic rigor. Parents with concerns should have a partner in their child's teacher and principal to help their child get and stay on a path to success. But of course, the ideal I've just described is not a reality for many families for reasons unique to each. Teachers, administrators and other specialists actively try to engage parents to help them meet their children's educational and developmental needs.

Gerald Eby: Be involved in their child's education and talk to their child's teacher and if necessary the administrators and School Board.

Donny Martinez: I think the roles parents play in helping their school children's success depends on their communication with their child's school staff that cannot just hear and see but relate to their concerns in an informative manner. According to the "Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine" get parents involved by fostering the value of positive mental health environment in schools— by educating them about signs of distress, how to get help for their child if they think they are struggling and not talk down or undermine their ability to parent— but suggest ways with instruction of whom and what resources from where and how to ask or for help at their level of understanding or pace of processing and how to navigate, and when they should keep up with child's sleep schedule and avoiding excessive screen time before bedtime etc. As a father to a new born and a stepparent to a boy with special education needs that's

enrolled in one of the Carlisle elementary schools; I can attest to the maxim of “it takes a village to raise a child”. Parents must take initiative to ensure their child has the tools or opportunities to grow and succeed.

Joseph Shane: Parents and guardians are potentially the most important factor in children’s success. They provide for the material and emotional well-being of the students without which enduring learning and positive school experiences would be challenging, if not impossible.

In my view, the mission statement includes the shared goals of families, community, and the school district. Teachers, administrators, and other school personnel are highly trained and experienced individuals who are given the profound responsibility of helping nurture and educate district youth. They cannot meet this core goal of public education without the input and insights of parents and guardians.

Jon Tarrant: Parents play the initial and essential role in students' development. Parents' values, sense of responsibility, self-discipline, empathy, and curiosity nurture their children at home and are reinforced at school.



Who should determine what courses are taught in school and the content of those courses? What is your understanding of the respective roles of the board, administration, teachers, and parents on shaping the curriculum?

Paula Bussard: Determining which courses are required for students and the content of those courses reflects a balance between meeting state requirements under the Pennsylvania Department of and locally determined curriculum.

Recommendations for courses and curriculum are under the purview of district administration. Typically, courses, curriculum, and textbook selection are developed by a committee of teachers, department chairs, and district administration. Course, curriculum, and textbook recommendations are made to the school board which has the final authority to approve the courses offered, the curriculum taught, and the textbooks used in schools. These recommendations are first made to the Board education committee which reviews the recommendations in detail before advancing actions to the full Board. Course and curriculum recommendations are all posted at least several days before a committee meeting. Textbooks are presented at a committee meeting and are available for viewing at the District office.

Periodic parent and student surveys are used to assess interest in new courses or feedback on existing courses during a curriculum review. These insights are extremely important to assessing needed changes to courses, the curriculum, and/or textbooks. Parental input is important to shaping courses and curriculum that will engage children to succeed academically.

Bruce Clash: The courses taught in school are determined by the administration-teacher partnership. They are the education experts and are very cognizant of state standards, academic resources, changing information in their fields and are constantly reevaluating what skills students need to master to put them on paths for success in today's challenging world. Curriculum rewrites/refreshes are done by teacher-driven committees that evaluate all of the above to make classes more engaging and relevant to today and tomorrow. The chair of the department that has undertaken a curriculum rewrite or is proposing an entirely new course brings a fully developed proposal to the Board for final approval. Parents have full access to the curriculum on the CASD website and are always encouraged to talk with their student's teachers to learn more specifics and to communicate with administrators with additional questions or concerns.

Gerald Eby: The School administrators, working with the teachers, develop the course of study. present them to the School Board for approval with input from parents.

Donny Martinez: I believe the District board members and school administration should be responsible for providing instructional leadership and developing, implementing, and evaluating district and school systems and policies. District superintendents and central administration should make important decision that impact all staff. They can encourage and advocate for school climate improvements through the school board's mission, training priorities, and promotional activities. Within each school, the principal plays a central role in guiding teachers and supporting staff. When teachers and staff are supported, students are supported. Therefore, Board Members and school administrators need to be conscious of staff well-being, burnout, and promoting a positive and healthy culture in the schools. Integrating trauma-informed responses and cultural competency while building relationships with staff interactions will greatly influence the student-staff dynamics.

Joseph Shane: As alluded to previously, curriculum and assessment standards begin at the state level with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the State Board of Education. School districts are then responsible for adapting the curriculum across the PK-12 continuum. This happens at the Board level with curriculum committees that can include parents and community members.

I can use a specific example based on my background in science education. Pennsylvania's Academic Standards for Science and Technology and Environment and Ecology are currently being revised using a national framework called the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) which were based on years of input from multiple professional societies. Groups of teachers from around the state formed committees to review the NGSS and to write specific, grade-level standards to guide teachers' work. School districts take this one step further and involve the Board for oversight and approval.

So, course content begins with professional societies who best understand the nature of and changes to their disciplines (e.g., science, ELA, social studies) and ends with district and Board oversight and implementation.

Jon Tarrant: The state determines some of the traditional expectations for grade levels. Initially, at the local level, curriculum development is the responsibility of elementary classroom and secondary departmental teachers. It is then reviewed by elementary and secondary curriculum directors, and then, the entire board. Parents and students may request the addition of new courses at the secondary level, and when there is sufficient interest and available staff, courses may be added. Both students and parents have opportunities to have input in and evaluation of courses, but the actual construction is the responsibility of professional educators.

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CASD is one of a small number of districts in Pennsylvania that has its own career and technical education program (CTE) enabling students to take at least one or more CTE courses or complete a CTE course of study. AAUW Carlisle supports CTE with its Trailblazer Awards. What more should be done to ensure that everyone who graduates from CASD is either college or work ready?

Paula Bussard: Since 2018, public schools in Pennsylvania have to adhere to state Career Education and Work Standards focused on career awareness and preparation, career acquisition (getting a job), career retention and advancement, and entrepreneurship. These standards are embedded in elementary, middle, and high school curriculums so that students gain a broad exposure to careers, how to get a job, opportunities for advancement in careers, and entrepreneurship.

In Carlisle's Career and Technology Education (CTE) program, students at the high school level are able to fully enroll in CTE classes, typically achieving certifications before graduation that enable a successful transition to the work force, or are able to take CTE courses as electives, helping to shape their post-secondary educational goals. All high school students are able to participate in co-op where they spend a portion of time at an area organization or business aligned with their career goals.

As part of the superintendent's priorities established by the Board, the district is in the process of evaluating how to make the development of career paths more concrete for all students and to create connections for all middle and high school students in understanding the relationship between the education process and success beyond high school.

Bruce Clash: The theme of preparing every student for post-secondary success was carried from the previous District Comprehensive Plan into the current 2022-2025 Plan. Career exploration is squarely a priority and now begins in the earliest elementary grades as developmentally appropriate and continues right through high school. More than 50 percent of our high school students take at least one course from the CTE options and are thereby exposed to materials and fields of study not available in many other school districts. Additionally, CASD has recently undertaken a major revamping of its K-12 counseling structure and functions with a significant focus on ensuring all students are on paths beginning in elementary school to be college or career ready upon graduation. The focus on career exploration in the CASD comprehensive plan and the restructuring of the counseling functions should yield increasing results as students at each grade level experience these improvements.

Gerald Eby: Continue to support the {CTE} following best practices and input from our advisory board.

Donny Martinez: We need to think broader by taking the CTE program and expanding further. We have been for decades using the concept of preparing for the 20th century education paradigm, it hasn't evolved in preparing further than that except incorporating the internet to it. Which at the turn of the century was important to emphasize for the development of the 21st century, however the only standard it created was perpetuation of "if you weren't born into wealth or civically engaged families— you were prone to work in a factory, on a farm, or join the military and any various form social stratification food industry production line. And our education systems been married to that. Teaching us WHAT to learn (math, science, history, reading/writing) all things we can find online or by downloading an app nowadays. Our greatest value in this world is really our creativity to process information or discovering there is more than one effective style of teaching and learning (like there are 8 different types of intelligence according to Harvard Psychologist Howard Gardner). We must cultivate and develop the knowledge or acquire the skills with fresh perspective or new voices with modern techniques and ideas.

Joseph Shane: With respect to college readiness, I know that CASD has excellent academic programs. I have personally known many Carlisle graduates from my 18 years as a Professor at Shippensburg University. There are numerous academic pathways in the district to help students thrive in higher education and explore opportunities that they never imagined.

However, I also know and understand that a four-year college or university degree is not the best option for every student. I experience this on occasion at Shippensburg with some students who are not sure why they are there.

CTE programs can provide valuable experiences to help students recognize that other options exist. Workforce development is also a function of public education which would require input from local businesses and industry organizations.

Jon Tarrant: Both CTE and academic programs at Carlisle are rich and varied. AP courses and CTE programs are frequently added. Constant revision and improvements keep them strong.

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Considering that 66% of CASD's budget relies on funding from local sources, primarily property taxes, as a school board member, how will you balance the need to provide a quality education and appropriate facilities with the need to be fair to tax-paying citizens when considering the annual budgets and longer-term facility spending?

Paula Bussard: This is a great challenge for school boards, given that the state is an unreliable funding partner. State funding has not kept pace with inflation and the state ceased providing funding for public school construction or funding for any portion of statewide cyber schools, putting greater burdens on local property owners.

The majority of expenditures are focused on instruction—teachers and other staff. As a board member, I continually push to make sure the district is as cost-effective as possible in construction, utility use, purchasing supplies, managing information technology, and health benefit plan design.

Prudently saving for major capital expenditures and having reserves to address extraordinary costs that may occur is important. Doing so means CASD has to borrow less and does so at a lower cost than many school districts.

Fiscal responsibility of a school district reflects the overall economic health of the community. Families seeking to purchase homes will be looking for a strong school system and businesses looking for employees will be seeking educated workers. These factors come into play as a board strikes the balance between what is needed to operate a high-quality school system and the community's ability to afford property taxes.

Bruce Clash: Setting the property tax rate with each budget cycle is one of the most difficult decisions Board members make annually. As a pure education advocate, increasing property taxes to the maximum rate allowed by the Act 1 Index would be an easy decision. But as an elected official needing to balance the burden and fairness to taxpayers with the resources needed by the District to maintain and grow our educational program, meet rising costs and competitively pay teachers, staff and administrators, the decision is not so clear cut, especially as many homeowners are struggling to make ends meet. In the eight budget cycles so far during my school board tenure, I have voted to raise taxes to the maximum allowable about half the time, and under the maximum.

the other half, decisions that are based in part on upcoming needs, forecasted deficits, previous year surpluses and other factors.

Gerald Eby: Continue what we are doing to make up for the State's underfunding of education.

Donny Martinez: The way I would balance the need to provide a quality education and appropriate facilities with the need to be fair to tax-payers when considering the annual budgets and long term facilities spending is by reviewing the data of every supplied individual budgeting stream then deduce how effective and efficient it's been then determine how to improve and better it or allocate to generate a more innovative and substantiate channel of maximizing fellow taxpayers dollar more productively. And off topic but relevant exposition to how I would have no issue reviewing line by line because in 2021 when I completed my Greater Harrisburg Realtor Association credit I rewrote my 700 page textbook for my friends daughter who was interested in pursuing real estate informing how and what the instructor would discuss from the book for the State and National tests.

Joseph Shane: I freely admit that school finances are not my area of expertise. I am aware of both of the decline in state funding as well as the largely fixed personnel costs for salaries, health care, and pension benefits. Based on my years in Carlisle and on conversations I've had during campaigning, our community understands this fiscal conundrum.

As with any educational organization, hiring and retaining the best teachers and administrators is a top priority which is particularly challenging at present with a declining number of people seeking careers in education. CASD must remain competitive with overall compensation packages.

I would place emphasis on annual hiring of high-quality teachers and administrators while maintaining healthy reserve funds to account for long-term facilities planning in order to minimize the need for fairly high interest loans. Balancing immediate personnel needs and long-range facilities planning, to me, seems like a reasonable starting point.

Jon Tarrant: Voters need to encourage their state legislators to revise funding at the state level (which the courts recently found to be unconstitutional) to achieve more equitable funding. There also may be better forms of taxation than property taxes. The state's contribution to public education has been lower than mandated for years. Planning for long term population growth and facilities is currently underway.



Social and emotional issues can impact a student's learning. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that teen girls are experiencing record levels of persistent sadness or hopelessness – a 60% increase since 2011. What do you think CASD is doing well in this area and what specific suggestions do you have to enable CASD to respond to this mental health crisis?

Paula Bussard: The Carlisle Area School District has long recognized that children may be affected by many outside issues that impact their ability to focus and learn. Having a cohesive and strong guidance counseling program has been a priority of the board and the newly hired guidance counselor supervisor has been focused on strengthening the guidance counseling program as well as other resources needed to help students achieve their full potential.

Each school has a student assistance program of trained teachers and administrators to help identify students in need and to help the student and their families access appropriate services within the community. Further, through the Partnership for Better Health and other community human service organizations, CASD has been able to offer students at all levels with access to services that help with student emotional well-being, belonging, and mental health needs.

Bruce Clash: Like schools in Pennsylvania and across the country, CASD too has seen a significant increase in mental health issues and needs throughout the study body. Our District has stepped up to help meet these needs by hiring several new positions including emotional support counselors, a homeless and at-risk counselor, behavioral specialists, elementary special educators and contracted with additional psychologists. As a Board member, I recently supported a complete overhaul of the CASD counseling department affecting all grade levels. Some of these positions were hired with one-time federal COVID relief funds, and we are committed to maintaining these positions by gradually building them into our general fund budget.

Gerald Eby: Continue to expand our counseling department.

Donny Martinez: What I think CASD is doing well in their initiative in this area is partnering with Care Solace. Some suggestions I would like to enable CASD do better in response to the mental health crisis is anything from encouraging self-esteem by reinforcing a positive learning environment where students feel safe taking risks and making mistakes. Teachers can help students develop a sense of accomplishment by praising their efforts, not just their successes. Provide staff basic overview of mental health and techniques to use when discussing mental health; this can help give teachers a foundation of knowledge to feel more comfortable in discussing these topics with students. Some methods may include mindfulness exercises and relaxation techniques.

I would suggest replacing Detention with Meditations; replacing punishment with mindfulness programs apart from ROTC style initiatives have shown remarkable results. Take the success story of Patterson High School in Baltimore, MD, where after one year of implementing the

mindfulness program, suspensions and altercations decreased by half!! Incorporate social and emotional learning into your school curriculums; offer extra credit opportunities for kids struggling to take home activities or lessons related to social emotional learning such as self-help books and mindfulness techniques.

Joseph Shane: Social and emotional well-being are foundational to learning as any educational psychological perspective will attest. Quality education addresses the whole child and not only academic achievement. All teachers and administrators are aware of this holistic approach and understand that teaching far exceeds the content expectations of their respective disciplines.

Given that my wife and I do not have children, I am not familiar with specific mental health services beyond school counselors which I can only imagine must be an overwhelming job at present.

I would support collaborations with or hiring of social work professionals to assist school educators in addressing crises such as the one noted for teen girls. Serious and chronic issues such as persistent sadness, alienation, and hopelessness require professional input. There is certainly an abundance of mental health professionals in the Carlisle area that could be of great assistance.

A quick perusal of the CASD website shows a service called Care Solace which helps students and families connect with mental health professionals. Perhaps something more integrated with the daily functioning of the district and schools is worth considering.

Jon Tarrant: The CASD has recently hired a Director of Counseling and instituted an elementary and secondary Counseling Advisory Committee of which I am a member along with 25 parents, mental health experts, and community stakeholders. We hope to support our students' emotional growth and stability as they learn.



CASD educates approximately 5000 students. According to US News and World Report, 36% of these students come from economically disadvantaged households. What are your thoughts on how CASD should approach improving its elementary education programs to address the varied resources and needs of all students?

Paula Bussard: Addressing the needs of students from economically disadvantaged households has long been a priority for the school board. Four of CASD's elementary schools are Title 1 schools under federal laws and have very active programs of parent engagement, such that the vast majority of parents in these schools are participating in special programs designed to help the parents

support their children's education successfully. In addition, CASD has allowed area early child education programs into each of its Title 1 schools so that a Pre-K classroom exists in each Title 1 building.

Other innovative programs offered across the district include offering breakfast in the classroom that has increased participation of children in eating breakfast and working with Project Share to distribute weekend meal/food for the neediest of our families through the schools. CASD also has added reading specialists, interventionists, and behavioral specialists to support all of the elementary schools as student needs dictate. The district is continually assessing academic performance and student needs as it shapes the services and programs offered in elementary schools to address the varied needs of all of our students.

Bruce Clash: Unfortunately, 49.6 percent of students in the current 2022-2023 school year live in low-income families, a number that has been steadily rising since 2011. For the past four years, I have been a champion for the Reimagining the Elementary Program project in our District, which is finally being conceptually rolled out to staff, parents and the general community after the pandemic consumed all the oxygen for new initiatives. The significant housing developments in the northern part of the school district will soon put enrollment pressures on some elementary buildings that are at or close to capacity. The Reimagining project envisions possible new configurations of students that will provide for more equity and efficiencies in delivering reading, emotional and other support services to all students who need them. In addition, class sizes in the lower grade levels could be better balanced.

Gerald Eby: We are developing plans to make changes to our Elementary Education program next school year.

Donny Martinez: The 36% of students that come from economically disadvantaged households, from how many of them are the 12-13% that don't graduate. We share and show statistics of the average graduation rate but hide the embarrassing metrics of how that 1/3 of those 36% who drop out and fall through the cracks of negative stigma in becoming stereotypes by their peers and our society that claims to be inclusive and welcoming, only to demonize in not understanding or giving them a chance as we don't know their emotional and economic struggles at home. I believe the best way to approach in improving the elementary education programs is to address what resources can be allocated to the needs of those various family; CASA is a good example, but if you don't look, sound or relate first hand in being from the path and walking a mile in their shoes how much is good intentions and motivates executes poorly and what percent is punctual? We need more than just well-wishers and hopeful saviors with positive thinking, we must have relatable understanding folks who they can identify with. One idea would be early detection in attendance or how the homestead structure is set up and maintained, because it will be repairable early stage and more difficult further on from repetition of uncorrected behavioral issues.

Joseph Shane: Schools are one of the means through which economic disparities can be addressed via, for example, subsidized nutrition programs during the school year summer. I am pleased to see that the CASD has clear guidelines for these programs. Ensuring that elementary

students from economically disadvantaged homes obtain early and consistent access to these services is vital.

Additionally, if elementary students come from homes where parents and guardians might not be aware of all of the academic pathways available to their children, advocacy training would be another area to consider. More family engagement from the beginning of school is also essential.

Jon Tarrant: Free and reduced meals and Pre-K programs at Title one schools could be expanded to all elementary schools. Distributing donated clothing and other support for homeless students are all ongoing successful programs.



What are the strengths of CASD? What are its weaknesses? What should the district do to address its weaknesses?

Paula Bussard: The biggest strength of the Carlisle Area School District is an extremely dedicated teaching and administrative staff that believe in the potential for each child to succeed. Carlisle has had a lower-than-normal teaching staff turnover, and this reflects the commitment of our teachers to the Carlisle students. Carlisle teachers and administrators actively engage in analyzing data and student performance and using professional development to support educators in being as successful as possible. Another strength is the culture of the school district that is welcoming to all 5,200 students. With an influx each year of approximately 400 children from the Army War College students, including international students, this is key to being able to quickly assess student needs and to engage the student successfully in learning.

The main weakness for the school district is the financial pressures that come in a school district Carlisle's size with a student population that is predominantly from economically disadvantaged households. Because of inadequate state funding, the school board has to establish priorities carefully with an eye to those that will support all 5,200 students the most effectively within the district's fiscal and available human resources.

Bruce Clash: CASD continues to offer a well-rounded education that is ripe with opportunity both in and out of the classroom. We offer a full range of athletic and extracurricular sports and have a robust music department offering choir, band, orchestra, and the annual musical. Other extracurricular opportunities like Big Brothers/Big Sisters, academic quiz bowl, e-game competition league, comedy performers (and the list goes on) are led by dedicated teachers who want students to have opportunities in their formative years. We are extremely proud that CASD has one of only about a dozen comprehensive high schools in Pennsylvania that has an in-house career and technical education facility that allows students to be certified with immediately employable skills. Many students are placed in co-ops where they gain direct experience with local employers. We have an incredible body of teachers, staff and administrators who are passionate about the well-being of our students and providing them

with a strong educational foundation. Our curriculum is cutting edge and constantly being revised to ensure that what students are learning is best preparing them to be engaged, productive and successful citizens. Weaknesses include the current elementary programming that is in process of being reimagined as I explained above. Regular and detailed communication with parents and families has been an ongoing weakness, but new Superintendent Colleen Friend has made great strides in addressing and dramatically improving this area. Communication with the Carlisle area community has been somewhat lacking as well. The District has embarked on being more intentional with social media, its website and engagement with The Sentinel to share with the community all the great things that are happening with students in the District.

Gerald Eby: Implement the changes to our Elementary education program and continue to expand the counseling department.

Donny Martinez: CASD's greatest strengths are its motto of being inclusive, its weaknesses are not having a better diversified workforce in addressing their wishful and hopeful outlook by mediocre or poor outcomes and lacking the qualities of diversity!

Joseph Shane: The academic programs leading to attendance at four-year colleges and universities continue to be real strengths of CASD. I am quite impressed with the increased emphasis on career and technical education to diversify students' options.

Community relations via the superintendent and school board also appears to be excellent with an up-to-date website, periodic newsletters, and opportunities for public comment at Board meetings and via electronic correspondence.

In my conversations with parents and families over the years, at least two issues have arisen that are worth investigating and improving: special education services and programs for gifted students. I imagine that this has much to do with lack of state funding than any oversight on the part of CASD.

Jon Tarrant: Carlisle schools meet the needs of a wide variety of students. CASD has a remarkable administration, faculty, and support staff. The public is supportive of our schools, and the non-partisan school board is highly organized and well-functioning.

Hiring and retaining faculty and staff will become more difficult given the declining numbers of college students in education programs. Population growth in parts of the district and decline in others makes balancing class size in elementary schools difficult, and this is currently being addressed. Small factions of anti-public education groups would like to takeover school boards both nationally and locally with their own political and sometimes religious agendas, while our mission as a public school system is to support and educate all students of any background.

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What in your background and experience makes you well qualified to serve on the CASD Board?

Paula Bussard: In addition to currently serving on the Carlisle Area School Board, I volunteer in a second-grade classroom at LeTort Elementary School, helping the teacher with language arts instruction in one-one-one and small groups. I am also a CASA (Court-Appointed Special Advocate) for children in the foster care system. I have a long history of community volunteer experience with youth sports organizations, orchestra boosters, PTOs, and the American Cancer Society.

My husband and our three sons, one with special needs, are graduates of Carlisle High School. Having lived in the greater Carlisle area for many years, I do understand the boroughs and townships that are served by the school district, community organizations, and area businesses.

My career in health care advocacy provided me with extensive experience working with elected government officials, community and business leaders, community groups, volunteers, and members of the public. My work experience also provided me with leadership and governance knowledge and skills. This has helped me to be an effective listener and advocate for students, parents, teachers, and taxpayers within the Carlisle Area School District.

Bruce Clash: It is my privilege to have served on the CASD school board for the past eight-and-a-half years, which gives me a longer-range view of district operations and insights that help inform my service on the Board. Several past service experiences have helped make me a sensible and collaborative Board member. While in Maryland in the 1990s, I was appointed by the Secretary of Transportation to serve on and chair the Maryland Rail Commuter Advisory Committee, which advised transportation officials on passenger service and safety issues. As an elected homeowner's association president when living in Maryland, I was a liaison with the broader community and dealt with quality-of-life issues and thorny neighborhood disputes. I currently chair the Pennsylvania Children's Trust Fund, which awards grants with public dollars to entities that help prevent child abuse and neglect. In all these capacities, I have grappled with public issues and worked collaboratively with fellow appointed or elected members serving with a common purpose.

Gerald Eby: I graduated from CASD, served in The Army as an officer in the corp of engineers, and worked in the private industry my whole life.

Donny Martinez: My background and experiences that qualify me to serve on the CASD Board is my strong desire for stewardship to others like for example being part of the collaboration with Carlisle Borough for appointing the panel for the seats of Carlisle Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I've also had a variety of mentors ranging from Carlisle first black mayor Mr. Timothy A. Scott to even local religious leaders like Pastor Dr Michael Eskridge, it takes effort and wisdom to develop these relationships. Which I incorporated in my involvement with my community from various nonprofits in hopes to see progress by my willingness to get out of my comfort zone and to build better relationships, especially when I volunteered in the REACH USA program under

Jason Reed with various backgrounds kids of all cultural and social economic class backgrounds, but also engage variety of participating parents with different skill sets, strengths, point of views, and interests. I have cultivated communication skills not just from my time as a community volunteer and working in logistics with friends, neighbors and parent or guardians of kids that are in school— so I know the ability to express ideas, to assume leadership, and to prompt enthusiasm amongst people to engage. So in conclusion I've spent time and energy to stay informed of not just current events of fiscal policies, but local events where in 2017 and 2019 I hosted Carlisle's Amani Festival; which taught me that decision of how and what we do things should be based on the best interests of the community, individual constituents or single interest groups like Barb Gleim's mentored, endorsed and sponsored Team for Change (Dawn Kephart, Heather Leatherman, Al Shine, Colleen Blume and Walt Brown) who expressed personal ambitious aspired by their affiliations to Moms for Liberty and DeSantis diatribes.

Joseph Shane: I am a former high school chemistry teacher and I currently teach chemistry and train science teachers at Shippensburg University. Many of my former students are science teachers in CASD and the surrounding region. I supervise student teachers and I have come to know and respect many excellent mentor teachers over the years. I have a B.S. in chemistry (University of Delaware) as well as an M.S. in chemistry and Ph.D. in science education (Purdue University).

Thus, I have both academic training and practical classroom experience that I believe will be valued assets for the CASD Board.

In closing, I owe much of my life and career to public education and I view serving on the CASD as part of my public service as an academic.

Jon Tarrant: My career as a teacher and Certified Educational Planner me a unique understanding of students and schools. Currently serving on the school board has given me an understanding of appropriate governance that best supports our students and faculty and prepares our youth to graduate and become productive, informed, independent members of our community.