

Deborah Sweaney on Issues facing the Carlisle Area School District

Our Most important issue:

The most important issue for the Carlisle Area School Board is to ensure equal educational opportunities for all of our District's 4,800 students. With this mission in mind, the board must work with school administrators to develop goals and strategies and approve the annual budget. CASD must be a wise steward of the district's money, implementing today's plans while keeping an eye on future needs, changing demographics, and mandates from Harrisburg and Washington. It is a difficult and complex job. It is crucial that the school district rise to this challenge. Board decisions affect not only our pocketbooks but the future of our community and its children.

Why Deborah Sweaney is the Best Candidate:

My husband and I chose Carlisle for our retirement years and found a welcoming and caring community. It has become my home. But, a strong community requires committed, responsible, people. Since I believe that schools are a community responsibility, the Carlisle Area School District must be my responsibility. I have skills, knowledge, and experience to bring to the tough decisions facing CASD as we strive to educate our children and to do so in a fiscally responsible manner. I retired as a manager from FDIC, run a small business, know the value of a dollar, can read a budget, chair a committee meeting, and appreciate the process of working with others to achieve goals. I have been in the classroom as an adjunct professor, know teaching is hard work, and am dedicated to the mission of educating our children. I am inspired by our community's past, love living here in the present, and know that its future is in our children.

The Role of the Carlisle Area School Board

On November 5th, the residents of the boroughs of Carlisle and Mt. Holly and the townships of Dickinson and North Middleton will elect four school directors for the Carlisle Area School District. They will join five other board members to work together for our community.

Decisions regarding public education are shared by teachers, school administrators, and an elected volunteer board of nine directors. Each group has a unique role to play. It is a three-legged stool requiring that each leg be strong, support the other two but also hold the others accountable.

The school board is your elected voice in this system. It works with the administration to develop goals and strategies and approve the annual budget for a district serving over 4,800 of our children. It is a complicated process made harder by the inability of our representatives in Washington and Harrisburg to address problems whose solutions depend on their decisions. It is crucial that the school district rise to this challenge. Local board decisions affect not only our pocketbooks but the future of our children.

In Pennsylvania school board candidates appear on the ballot under a party affiliation. So that decisions on public education can be non-partisan, candidates are allowed to cross-file. Depending on the results of the spring primary election, ballot listings in November do not always reflect a candidates' party registration. For example, Anne Lauritzen and I are Republicans, but you will find our names on the Democratic side of the ballot. However, our children are not a partisan issue. Children in Carlisle come in various skin tones but the last time I looked none of these tones were red or blue.

I encourage you to come to Candidates night on October 22nd at the Bosler Memorial Library, when the League of Women Voters will be putting questions to all six candidates. I will be joined by the five other candidates to answer your questions. It is your chance to hear from each of us. For my part I welcome this opportunity to let you know that I am an experienced manager who knows the value of a dollar, someone who has been in the classroom and knows teaching is hard work, and above all else is dedicated to the Carlisle community and its children.

It is the Mission that is Important (printed August 27, 2013 in the Sentinel)

The Carlisle Area School District's schools officially began the 2013-2014 school year on Aug. 26.

We have to drive slower by Mooreland Elementary School in the morning while school is in session. In the coming months, first-graders there and at the other five elementary schools will be learning how much fun it is to read.

At Lamberton and Wilson, middle school students are working around construction. Already, this disruption is resulting in better facilities to serve the growing student population.

In Kevin Wagner's high school history classes, students are beginning to think about their National History Day projects. Freshmen and their teachers are exploring the potential of their new laptops and older students can now enroll in the Health Career Academy. The Thundering Herd gridiron team is preparing for their first game on Sept. 6.

I realize that it is now time to think about the general election for the district school board. In just over two months, everyone in the district can support our children by voting for school directors.

May's primary happened in the middle of heated debates about tax increases and budget issues. There was little discussion about the mission: educating our children.

Money is the tool that helps us fulfill this mission. It allows us to pay our teachers, maintain facilities, and offer opportunities for our kids. The school district must be a wise steward of our money. Funds are limited, and we know tax increases affect us all in these difficult economic times.

We cannot evaluate programs by their intent. Once decisions are made the school board must continually monitor results to ensure that the desired outcomes are realized.

I am excited about the increased use of technology as an educational tool, but let's keep an eye on it and make sure that its promise is realized. I wholeheartedly endorse the district's partnerships with HACC, the Carlisle Regional Medical Center, and many of our civic organizations. I would love to see even more community involvement with the school district.

I can think of no better use of my energy than to work for this mission. For this reason, I decided to run as a candidate for the Carlisle Area School District board. I thank everyone who supported me in the primary. I wish for each student and teacher a great school year and look forward to the fall election.

Not Just for the Voting Booth (printed June 7, 2013 in the Sentinel)

I want to thank those in the Carlisle Area School District who supported me in the recent primary election for school board. I am thrilled to be on the general election ballot in the fall.

I am committed to public education. I firmly believe that public education can be the great equalizer.

The district does provide opportunities for all our children but in our imperfect world there are areas where we can strengthen these opportunities. I am proud to live in such a caring community.

The district has partnered with civic and educational programs such as National History Day, the Audubon Society, and Project Share to expand opportunities for children. This summer I will volunteer for the Summer Program for Youth.

Even in such a caring community, children can fall through the safety net, and this recession has hit many young children hard in Carlisle. Our tenuous economic times have put an additional burden on teachers.

I recently met with the principal at Mt. Holly Elementary school who told me that in many households in Carlisle. Work schedules do not allow both parents to be in the home at the same time.

I want to explore ways in which the community can further support children, parents and teachers through expanded tutoring and reading programs.

The primary election occurred in the middle of heated debates about the district budget and a tax increase. Money is important. It is the tool that allows us to pay teachers, renovate and maintain buildings and provide security to keep our children safe.

Tax policies affect people's lives. The school board must use money wisely. I do not agree with all of the board's decisions, but I never question their motives. I know that the current school directors spend many hours as volunteers. Their commitment is truly to be commended.

However, district and our great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have fallen short in long-term planning. Budget issues are complex and the lack of responsible action in Harrisburg greatly complicates the school district finances.

Every Pennsylvanian should be demanding that our state legislature deal with the looming pension issues. These issues will only be addressed through hard work by our elected officials, not by rhetoric during a campaign.

Carlisle residents cannot only become interested in what is happening in our schools once a year in May when our pocketbook drives the discussion. Our children are a year-long concern. They deserve more attention than just a check-mark in the voting booth.

As an outsider observing our current school board, I find much to be praised even while I recommend new planning and budgeting processes. I do wish for increased communications between the board and the community. We just do not hear of the wonderful work that is being done by the board, our teachers, and our children.

The district does not just educate our children once a month but all year-long. Let's pay attention to the school district outside the booth. We owe it to our children.