

2020 GwinnettForum candidate questionnaire

NAME: Karen Watkins
PARTY: Democratic
SEEKING: School Board, District 2

1. Why are you seeking your office?

I am running for **BOARD OF EDUCATION** because I have made it my mission and civic duty to ensure our **COMMUNITY** thrives and continues to thrive. **EDUCATION** is at the **CORE** of a thriving community. As a school board member I will represent the people within GCPS District 1. I will have the privilege to help ensure **ALL** our children who attend Gwinnett County Public Schools receive a **QUALITY EDUCATION**, are **SAFE IN SCHOOL** and **FEEL CARED FOR AND SUPPORTED** by their **COMMUNITY**.

2. What do you expect to accomplish if elected?

My vision for our school system includes the following:

- Prepare **ALL** our students to achieve at high levels in **ALL** core areas.
- Produce students who are well-rounded and are prepared to work in our ever-changing world.
- Fully leverage the value our diverse school system offers.
- Enhance, develop and maintain a strong, supportive and empowering public-school community.
- Accountability for ensuring **ALL** our students achieve by **SHOWING** we are **SPENDING OUR TAX DOLLARS WISELY**.
- Direct resources/finances to the **CLASSROOM!**

- Work to improve the performance of **ALL** students, teachers, and business operations.
- Maintain **ACCOUNTABILITY** of our student's academic achievement.

3. What distinguishes your candidacy?

I am a mother with two elementary school age children in the system and no board member today has children in the school system. I feel the impacts of the decisions made by the board.

4. Pick any one issue. Expand on how you will address it.

Parents voiced concerns about the GCPS digital learning platform. Teachers have raised concerns about the platform and the inability of many students to use it effectively.

During the pandemic, it's become evident that GCPS leadership didn't listen to these concerns as the platform hasn't changed to meet the stakeholders' needs.

As a parent and an engaged community member, I know the only way positive changes will occur is if we elect school board members who'll listen to the voices of our community stakeholders and will hold our school system accountable for making the improvements our children deserve.

5. Suggest ways to jump-start the economy after COVID-19.

N/A

6. Please give a 100 word summary on your background.

I'm a Strategic Sourcing Manager for one of the world's largest commercial real estate companies. I've been in supply chain management for 15 years. I received my MBA from University of Phoenix and my BS in Biology from Penn State. I grew up in New York in a diverse household. My mother is Filipino, and my father is of Caribbean decent. I moved to Georgia in 2015, settling in Gwinnett County where I'm a mother to two daughters currently in elementary school. In 2019, I co-founded a non-profit called C.O.R., Inc that focuses on building and maintaining thriving communities.