

NAME: Steven B. Knudsen
PARTY: Non-Partisan
SEEKING: School Board, District2

1. Why are you seeking your office?

I have served the students of Gwinnett for the last three years as the District 2 Representative. I have been able to help guide the district through a pandemic and a superintendent change. There is a lot of work to do and with the experience that I have there will be no lost ground as we continue to pursue excellence and close the gaps for our students in need and from the pandemic.

2. What do you expect to accomplish if elected?

First, we need to make up the ground lost to the pandemic. Parents had the choice of face-to-face or virtual instruction for their children. Virtual was not adequate for most students for a variety of reasons. A learning gap of 30-70% among our students ensued that has to be closed. Second, a behavioral gap has also emerged and we need to address that if our students are to succeed beyond high school. Third, supporting our new superintendent as he looks at GCPS from a new perspective to find ways to continue to improve.

3. What distinguishes your candidacy?

I understand the role of the board within the governance team and continuously seek to maintain it. I understand the dynamic among the diverse members of the board and how to work together for our students. I have a much better understanding of the operation of Gwinnett County Public Schools, the 11th largest district and the 7th most diverse county in the country. I have an outstanding relationship with the leadership team within the administration and in my district to help my constituents on issues that rise to the board level.

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

Since all student related issues ultimately roll up to the superintendent, the key issue I would like to address is providing what he needs and staying out of his way. This is the hardest issue for a new board. We operate at the policy level or “what” does the district want to accomplish. The superintendent is operational and “how” it gets done. It is critical, and governed by our ethics, to keep this separate and distinct. When board members are elected on “change” they can sometimes get ahead of themselves. We must guard against this.

5. What are your ideas on curbing all the many area-wide shooting?

Student safety is paramount for the board of education. While GCPS has an excellent record of creating a safe environment; limiting ingress and egress, security cameras, properly trained personnel, continuous monitoring and a detailed plan, we must remain ever vigilant. We have to be aware of the mental health of our students. We have to be able to “triage” those that are in need. We have to remain in constant contact with our parents. We have to encourage belonging among our community. We have to continuously communicate responsible behavior and the consequences that come with irresponsibility.

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

I have been around school policy for over 30 years. I worked for Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family as a public policy representative in the early 1990's. I have run a state-based policy organization and helped as many as 40 other state-based organizations on involvement in the state and local arena. I have raised four children, all who graduated from North Gwinnett High School, attended college and are successfully adulting. I have run businesses and know what is needed from those I employ. My expertise in relationship building has been of utmost importance on the board.