



Hanover Township Education Association

Presents its second annual

Board of Education Candidates Guide

Last month, the Hanover Township Education Association (HTEA) sent out a questionnaire to all candidates running for seats on the Hanover Township Board of Education.

The following excerpts reflect the responding candidates' answers to some of the questions posed in the questionnaire. This information is intended to provide a synopsis of the responses and, in no way, is intended to be a complete representation of a candidate's full thoughts on the issues. To view all 14 questions and the entire responses of the candidates, please visit <https://hteaonline.org>.

Our community deserves to have board members who will respect its staff, as well as promote a quality education experience for our children and our community's schools. We're grateful to the candidates who took the time to engage with and respond to district stakeholders.

1. What do you think are the three most pressing education issues that the Hanover Township Board of Education must address and how would you go about addressing them?

1. Refocusing the Board of Education away from litigation and on educational programs.
2. Closing the COVID gap in Language Arts Literacy & Math and strengthening instruction to meet the rigorous standards of our state.
3. Retaining our high caliber staff and attracting new highly qualified staff members to fill openings that arise in the district.

— Christina Dunne

Ensuring safety for students and staff through infrastructure and operations improvements, improving testing scores following Covid, and returning Hanover Township School District to its former image of excellence. I will work earnestly with all members of the Board to ensure all decisions are made only after careful consideration of all parties with standing and strictly through the lens of the Code of Ethics. Instead of spending extraordinary amounts of money on preventable litigation, I will push to pursue spending on infrastructure improvements, education programs, staff acquisition and retention, and counseling services.

— Brian Gibbons

Hanover Township has always been known for its excellent educators and staff. There is already a teacher shortage throughout the country, and Hanover is struggling to retain and acquire high quality educators. The negative light shown on our community has caused potential teachers and staff to pass us by. I would work to restore Hanover's positive reputation by avoiding unnecessary litigation and refocusing our Board on issues that affect Hanover students, teachers, and parents.

A major concern that needs to be immediately addressed is our budgetary spending. Our current Board has gone well over budget with legal fees, and we anticipate this to only increase as they continue with litigation. I would stress to the Board that going against State Law and the Rules and Regulations of the State Board of Education is not fiscally responsible or ethical. Regardless of their beliefs, the Board's role is to meet the needs of all children. Overspending on legal fees only hurts our children. This money should be used to provide training to our teachers and staff that would benefit all students.

My final concern is with how the district assesses and implements their curriculum. After speaking to numerous parents, teachers and staff, I feel the district's curriculum needs to be evaluated more frequently to ensure our students are being provided with the most up-to-date, evidence-based, and data-driven curriculum. We also need to provide staff with meaningful professional development to help with its implementation. As a Nurse Anesthetist, I want to be sure I am providing my patients with the most effective and safe care possible. I must stay on top of new techniques, technologies, and research to achieve this goal. Our district should be finding out what curriculum, programs and technologies will be the most effective for our students.

— Karen Mascolo

(Christopher Mattessich, Bill McCabe and Michelle Stricchiola formally declined our invitation to participate in the questionnaire.)

2. What do you think the district's budgetary priorities should be? Please explain.

Budgetary priorities should be on academic programs, SEL, mental health for children and staff, and making sure the schools are as safe as possible. It should not be on lawsuits. Let's spend our money wisely and continue to strive for academic excellence and wellness for all.

— Christina Dunne

The budget should prioritize paying for security and target hardening. Without fundamental safety and security, all other objectives are compromised. Additionally, money should be allocated to secure highly qualified teachers, administrators, and counseling staff. Furthermore, money should be directed at academic programs, training, and SEL instruction.

– Brian Gibbons

The district should be prioritizing their budget on safety, strengthening the curriculum, providing training for our teaching staff, supporting SEL, and improving school infrastructure. It should not be prioritizing a political agenda that is not affecting Hanover Township. As a taxpayer, it is disheartening to know that public money that could directly benefit students and teachers is being recklessly spent on unnecessary litigation and fighting culture wars.

– Karen Mascolo

(Christopher Mattessich, Bill McCabe and Michelle Stricchiola formally declined our invitation to participate in the questionnaire.)

3. What kind of positive initiatives would you like to see put in place to help support the teachers and support staff in Hanover Township?

I feel it is crucial to create a positive school culture. This can be accomplished by recognizing and celebrating students and teachers' achievements and successes. (Bee Meadow School is already doing a great job with this.) I think teachers need to feel valued and respected for the expertise they bring to the table. I think these positive successes should be shared in school newsletters to parents, in newspaper articles to the community, and in Board of Education presentations.

I think we also have to place an emphasis on emotional wellness for not only the children but the staff. It is important to provide support for all. We are living through a stressful period of time where we have had to adapt to many changes and challenges. We need to focus on the positive. Often, the best way to do this is to help each other. I think volunteerism is a great way to accomplish this with community outreach to seniors, veterans, and those in need.

– Christina Dunne

Programs on culture building and behavior modeling to create a warm and welcoming school environment for students. I would like to see improved wellness and SEL training for staff and teachers and hope to build on the PTA teacher appreciation week and the high-five program for recognizing excellent teachers.

– Brian Gibbons

The PTA already does a wonderful job highlighting our teachers and staff during Teacher Appreciation Week and the BMS PTA High Five Program. Another way we can support our teachers and staff would be to offer Professional Development about wellness. Team leaders could schedule a staff meeting dedicated to wellness. As a State Peer Advisor, I have given similar presentations to colleagues with positive results.

– Karen Mascolo

4. Do you believe that Hanover Township's teaching staff is adequately trained, supported, and collaborative? Why/why not?

As teachers we are constantly honing our craft and learning how best to meet the needs of our students. Opportunities for training are important both in and outside the district. It should be encouraged and supported by the administration. I also feel that collaboration is important, and teachers should have opportunities to share and work with their grade level colleagues. I anticipate that training will be needed to implement the new reading program. I also think it would be helpful if the parents are given a workshop on the program and shown how they can assist with their child's progress.

– Christina Dunne

This is something I hope to learn more about moving forward; however, from what I have already seen, Hanover Township teaching staff are outstanding. I enjoyed participating in two tours of Outdoor Education and got to meet many members of the teaching staff and administration outside of the in-class school environment. I found their character and passion for education to be unrivaled. Furthermore, I am a firm believer in continuous growth; therefore, I would like to see additional enhancements around curriculum programming to challenge students more, specifically in the areas of math, science, and writing. I would also like to ensure teachers and staff are receiving adequate training to identify behaviors that may lead to crisis or violence.

– Brian Gibbons

I believe Hanover Township has some of the best teaching staff in the country. While they are well trained, supported, and collaborative, there is always room for improvement. Children are constantly changing, and we have an obligation to keep learning and growing so we can meet them where they are and best support their academic, social, and emotional needs. We should be using the budget to provide educators with the tools to meet the needs of all students. Much has changed since I was a student in Hanover, so we must stay up to date on the most effective programs and tools to help our staff. Listening to the needs of our teaching staff and implementing positive changes will help them feel more supported. Encouraging frequent opportunities to collaborate and share ideas with educators with different backgrounds will allow for more growth.

– Karen Mascolo

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