

**Teaneck Democratic Municipal Committee**  
2024 Teaneck Board of Education Questionnaire

**Kevin Gibbs**

**1. Do you have or ever had children enrolled in Teaneck public schools?**

*While I do not currently have children in the Teaneck Public School system, I am a proud product of it, having been a student up until the completion of my sophomore year of high school. My experiences there have shaped my deep understanding and appreciation for the quality education the district provides.*

**2. What is the role of a BOE member? Why are you running for Teaneck BOE?**

*A member of the board of education is essential to directing a school district's course since they establish rules, approve budgets, and make important decisions that affect the standard of instruction. The BOE members are in charge of making sure the district's schools are run effectively and efficiently, with a major task of hiring and evaluating the superintendent, who oversees the day-to-day operations of the schools. They are also responsible for setting educational policies, managing finances, and making sure resources are allocated efficiently to meet the district's goals.*

*In order to ensure that the education given meets and exceeds state requirements and takes into account the different needs of students, including those with special needs, I am running to become a member of the Board of Education. In addition, I would adore becoming an advocate for public education, acting as a liaison between the community and the school district and interacting with the public to share choices and solicit input. Through these initiatives, they will guarantee that the district is well-managed and sensitive to the requirements of the local population, as well as helping to shape the educational experience that Teaneck offers its pupils.*

**3. Tell us about a time where you worked through a challenge with a team of people who did not agree on the best solution. How did you navigate conflicting views? How did you resolve the challenge?**

*Making educated and fair decisions as a university senator requires interacting with people who have different opinions. In particular, there was a moment when I had to resolve a conflict with a group of people over how to allocate money in order to overcome a hurdle. When individuals have a common interest in particular organizations, their judgment is frequently affected. In this case, being aware of other people's perspectives enables you to take into account a variety of demands, creating an environment that is more inclusive and represents the larger university community. You may critically assess the advantages and disadvantages of different arguments by looking at viewpoints that may not coincide with your own. Then, you can use logic and reasoning to determine the best course of action. In addition to producing more*

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*deliberate and long-lasting answers, this strategy fosters trust and consensus, guaranteeing that choices are made with everyone's best interests in mind—even in the face of controversy.*

**4. What do you think the current BOE is and is not doing well and how would you do things differently?**

*The two things that I think the board of education is not doing well are asking administrators, staff, and teachers for input when making decisions and communicating in a transparent manner. I can support the creation of regular communication channels that inform all stakeholders about significant decisions and developments within the school district in order to increase communication transparency and actively seek input from administrators, staff, and teachers in decision-making. This can entail starting a monthly newsletter, providing updates via digital channels, and holding public forums that promote candid conversation. I can also suggest setting up focus groups or advisory committees so that staff members and educators can add their knowledge and perspectives to the decision-making process. I may make sure that their opinions are not only heard but also seriously taken into account when developing policies and projects by organizing questionnaires and feedback sessions. By taking these actions, the district will create a more cooperative atmosphere that promotes shared accountability and trust, which will ultimately increase the Board of Education's overall efficacy. On the other hand, the board of education is succeeding in having members who are willing to help locals deal with issues.*

**5. What are the biggest challenges facing our district right now and what solutions do you propose?**

*To combat the challenges facing the Board of Education—namely, teacher and staff satisfaction, lack of investment in extracurricular activities, cuts to resources, and the safety and security of students—several strategic solutions can be implemented. First, enhancing teacher and staff satisfaction can be achieved by conducting regular feedback surveys, investing in professional development opportunities, and recognizing their contributions through appreciation programs. To address the lack of investment in extracurriculars, the board can allocate dedicated funding, seek community partnerships for sponsorships, and encourage volunteer involvement to enrich offerings. In response to cuts to resources, advocating for increased funding from local and state governments, actively pursuing grants, and prioritizing budget allocations to essential materials are crucial steps. Finally, ensuring student safety and security requires the development of comprehensive safety plans, the provision of mental health resources, fostering a positive school climate, and engaging parents and community members in collaborative safety*

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*discussions. By taking these actions, the Board of Education can create a more supportive and effective educational environment for both staff and students.*

**6. How will you serve all of Teaneck's diverse student population?**

*In order to be a successful and constructive leader who serves all populations regardless of their color, gender, religion, or ethnicity, one must value diversity and encourage inclusivity in all facets of leadership. This entails making sure that choices and policies are just and equal while also acknowledging and appreciating the distinctive viewpoints and experiences of each group. Regardless of background, a leader must aggressively combat prejudices and seek to foster an atmosphere where everyone feels valued and empowered. A leader may develop trust and encourage others to embrace inclusivity by encouraging open communication, paying attention to the needs of each individual, and setting an example for others to follow. In the end, this kind of leadership not only honors diversity but also brings people together around common ideals of cooperation, empathy, and respect.*

**7. How would you balance student's free speech rights with the need to create a safe learning environment for all students?**

*Balancing a student's free speech rights with the need to create a safe learning environment starts by acknowledging their feelings and ensuring they feel heard. This approach fosters trust and opens lines of communication, allowing students to express their thoughts and concerns openly. When students feel validated, they are more likely to engage constructively in discussions about sensitive topics.*

*Once their feelings are acknowledged, it is essential to direct them to appropriate resources, such as counselors or advocacy groups, where they can further express their views and receive support. This not only affirms their voices but also emphasizes that their opinions are valued and respected within the educational setting. Additionally, schools should provide clear guidelines on how free speech can be exercised responsibly, helping students understand the boundaries that protect both individual expression and the overall safety and well-being of the community. By fostering an environment where open dialogue is encouraged and support is readily available, schools can effectively balance free speech rights with the necessity of maintaining a safe and inclusive learning atmosphere for all students.*

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**8. What Measures would you propose to improve the school climate and specific to creating a safe learning environment?**

*Establishing a secure learning atmosphere is critical for the development and well-being of students, as it permits them to concentrate on their studies without hindrances or anxieties. Schools need to provide a respectful environment, enforce anti-bullying regulations, and set clear behavioral expectations in order to do this. By fortifying school buildings, holding frequent safety drills, and equipping emergency response teams with the necessary resources, physical safety may be guaranteed. Support for students' emotional and mental health is also essential; having access to tools and counselors can help them manage their stress. Encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion guarantees that every student feels welcomed, and fostering strong bonds between students, faculty, and staff fosters a sense of trust and community. Additionally, anti-violence programs and zero-tolerance policies for weapons, combined with a focus on health and wellness, contribute to an overall environment where students feel secure and empowered to thrive.*

**9. What role do you think parents should play in determining what books are made available to the student population?**

*When it comes to choosing books for their children, parents should be supportive and have a proactive say. They should work with teachers, librarians, and school administrators to make sure that the books represent a variety of viewpoints, are age-appropriate, and support academic objectives. They can address any reservations they may have about particular materials and provide feedback on what represents the values of the community. However, in order to ensure that all students have access to a wide range of ideas and opinions, this involvement should respect the need for intellectual freedom. Instead of placing boundaries, parents should encourage their children to have open discussions, develop critical thinking skills, and read literature that expands and challenges their worldview. In this capacity, parents support the development of a well-rounded and stimulating learning environment while also upholding the rights and needs of the larger student population.*

**10. Where would you invest? And why? (academic, arts, extracurricular, athletics, etc)?**

*The Board of Education should invest in academics, athletics, performing arts, and extracurricular activities because a well-rounded student is one who not only excels in academics but also develops critical life skills through diverse experiences. Academics provide the foundation for intellectual growth, while athletics promote physical health, teamwork, and discipline. Performing arts foster creativity, emotional expression, and*

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*confidence, and extracurricular activities allow students to explore interests, build leadership skills, and cultivate a sense of belonging.*

*By investing in all these areas, the Board can encourage broader student participation, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to engage with activities that resonate with their interests and strengths. This holistic approach enhances knowledge and personal growth, empowering students to develop a wide range of skills that prepare them for future success in both professional and personal endeavors. It also promotes increased engagement in school life, fostering a positive and inclusive environment that benefits the entire community.*

**11. What are your thoughts on the education budget?**

*The Board of Education has substantial opportunities and duties with a \$127 million budget. On the one hand, it permits large expenditures in critical areas that are essential for fostering student success, such as extracurricular activities, athletics, technology, school infrastructure, teacher compensation, and academics. A budget like this can help with programs that cater to the various requirements of students, enhance available resources, and encourage creativity in the classroom. Additionally, it leaves space for improving support services, which are crucial for guaranteeing equity and inclusion. Examples of these services include mental health programs and special education resources.*

*But overseeing a budget this magnitude calls for thorough preparation, openness, and responsibility. Spending that directly helps students must be given top priority while upholding economic responsibility to taxpayers. To make sure the budget represents common values and objectives, the Board should include stakeholders and the community in decision-making processes. In order to make sure money is being spent wisely and that long-term sustainability is taken into account, especially when educational needs change, regular evaluations and assessments should be carried out.*

*Ultimately, with strategic management, a \$130 million budget can help build a high-quality, well-rounded educational system that supports academic achievement, personal growth, and community engagement.*

**12. What are the criteria you value most in a superintendent?**

*A superintendent of schools in a culturally diverse and developing town should possess several key qualities and characteristics to effectively lead and support the community:*

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- *Cultural Competency*
- *Strong Communication Skills*
- *Visionary Leadership*
- *Commitment to Equity*
- *Collaboration and Community Engagement*
- *Adaptability and Flexibility*
- *Empathy and Emotional Intelligence*
- *Integrity and Transparency*

*These qualities ensure that a superintendent can effectively lead a culturally diverse school district, fostering an inclusive and dynamic environment where all students have the opportunity to thrive.*

**13. If elected, how will you promote transparency and accountability for yourself and fellow board members? How do you plan to ensure board compliance with regulatory requirements to minimize litigation costs?**

*I pledge to uphold open and honest communication with all parties involved in order to foster openness and accountability for myself. I also promise to make sure that choices and actions are taken in accordance with legal standards and norms. Even though I aim for perfection, I understand that things won't always go as to plan. When errors are made because they are unavoidable, it is my duty to admit them right away, act right away to make things right, and see to it that procedures are followed to keep them from happening again. Building trust and demonstrating my dedication to growing from mistakes and maintaining the highest standards of integrity in all I do are my goals, and I hope to achieve these goals by promoting a culture of ethical leadership and continual growth.*

**14. What aspects of Teaneck do you value most and why?**

*I cherish Teaneck, New Jersey's variety, community, connections, and possibilities because it is a microcosm of what makes society robust and dynamic. Teaneck's abundance of cultural and ethnic diversity promotes an inclusive atmosphere where disparate viewpoints and life experiences converge to build a more resilient and caring community. Partnerships between local businesses, residents, schools, and organizations show a common dedication to development and advancement, facilitating mutually beneficial collaboration. Furthermore, the town's potential for further social and economic growth gives rise to a feeling of hope and opportunity for the future. Because of its special fusion of community, diversity, and cooperation, Teaneck is a location where*

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*everyone can prosper and make a significant contribution. Teaneck is a leader that has demonstrated its ability to lead at a national level.*