

Nadia Hosein

1. Do you have or ever had children enrolled in Teaneck public schools?  
Yes. I have 2 students that are graduates- class of 2020, and 2023, and one currently in 10th grade.

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

There are 4 parts to a trustee- leader, policy maker, ensure fiscal responsibility, and advocate for both student success and the community. In addition we collaborate with the superintendent to establish the district's long-term vision, goals, and strategic priorities. Trustees also negotiate contracts with teacher unions and other employee groups.

I'm running because I care about our public schools, and our students. As an educator and a parent, I believe I have the skills and creativity needed to help our school district thrive. I see there is room for growth, in areas of communication with parents, and improving math and english competency.

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?

Different minds bring different perspectives, which is vital when coming up to a "best solution." These differences ultimately lead to a more robust solution, that in the long run will have better outcomes for everyone involved. So for me differences are not seen as challenges, but paths for a better outcome.

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

I think the BOE is doing a great job, and there is always room for growth. There are several things that the BOE has improved: 1) increased outreach to parents- especially with the hiring of Ms Connie Le 2) worked with the superintendent to improve the math curriculum- and test scores have improved.. 3) Working with the superintendent with the early college program,

Some places that can be improved are: 1) Streamlining communications with parents- our school has an app, why don't we use the app?. We all like one stop shopping. The app should be used to check my child's grades, tardies, lunch balances, communicate with teachers etc. 2) I do think the school district does communicate with parents, however we need to present information in a simpler and digestible format for parents. All our parents including ourselves are busy so we should not expect parents to go to the district website, but rather send our parents the information.

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

The biggest challenge is our school budget. Unfortunately due to inflation, rising costs in transportation and health insurance, our school district was forced to lay off I believe 8 teachers- which is a situation no school wants to be in. This is also exacerbated by the fact that the town council has chosen to put up more PILOTED apartment buildings in our town, which do not pay taxes that could go to our school district. This means that more students have to be educated with the same amount of money.

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

**By having a Culturally Relevant Curriculum that** reflects the diversity of the student body is essential. This includes incorporating diverse perspectives, authors, and historical events into lessons.

**Providing Support for English Language Learners (ELLs)**. Our Latino population has grown and is now 40% of our school district. Arabic is the second most common language spoken in our schools. We have to ensure that we provide targeted support for students who are learning English, through specialized instruction and bilingual programs.

**Offering a variety of extracurricular activities:** such as clubs, sports and arts, that ensure that students from different backgrounds can find a place where they feel valued and engaged.

**Building strong partnerships with families and the local community** is essential to understanding and meeting the needs of a diverse student population.

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

Balancing students' free speech rights with the need to create a safe and inclusive learning environment requires a delicate and thoughtful approach that respects each student's freedom of expression while ensuring that all students feel safe and respected.

While free speech is protected under the First Amendment, it is not unlimited, especially in a school setting. Students should understand that any speech that disrupts the learning environment, promotes violence, hate speech or speech that endangers the safety and well-being of others WILL NOT be accepted. These policies on speech and behavior should be clear to all students. The school must also ensure that any speech that violates these policies is addressed immediately.

I believe it is when students feel threatened or marginalized, that they "lash out". In order to prevent this our schools should actively foster an inclusive school culture. Encourage open dialogue and respectful discussion of diverse viewpoints, and foster an environment where students feel empowered to share their ideas without fear of retribution or harm.

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

Our school district already has a great restorative justice program led by the Assistant superintendent Dr Marshall Scott. Restorative justice is an approach to address conflict and wrongdoing while repairing harm and restoring relationships, rather than being solely punitive. It emphasizes accountability, healing, and community involvement, bringing together all parties affected by an incident to find solutions that are student driven. It importantly encourages personal growth for the offender and offers an opportunity to learn from mistakes. I would ensure our restorative justice program is being fully implemented in each school.

In addition ensuring that schools are actively promoting a positive school climate- like in Benjamin Franklin, where there was the initiative called “No one eats alone”. The school staff made sure that no student had lunch by themselves. It was developed to overcome the social isolation students felt post pandemic, and foster a sense of community and togetherness.

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

Parents should have a role in determining what books are made available to the student population, but this role must be balanced with the need to uphold educational standards, support Teaneck’s diverse perspectives, and still allow students access to books that promote plurality in ideas. Parent input can be done through the parent advisory committee that our superintendent has already set up. This advisory committee can send out surveys and ask parents for their input and recommendations about specific books or genres, and at the same time involve educators and administration, so that the needs of all stakeholders are met.

Parents should also have an “opt out” option so that their students don’t have to read material that the parents are not comfortable with. I believe when parents choose to send their kids to our school district then we must be respectful of their ideals and morals.

In summary, parents should play an active and collaborative role in the books our students read, but this role must be balanced with teachers’ educational goals, and not infringe on the intellectual freedom of all students.

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

The primary objective of a school District is to educate, as such I will invest primarily in academics. as such our first focus on math since many of our students have what is described as a math phobia. As we face a nationwide decline in math scores, I believe it is crucial for our district to place a stronger emphasis on enhancing math proficiency. Math is deeply integrated into every scientific discipline, and plays a vital role in developing students’ critical thinking,

problem-solving abilities, and analytical skills, which extend far beyond the subject itself.

11. What are your thoughts on the education budget?

Like Teaneck, many school districts across the U.S. faced budget challenges in the 2023-2024 school year. Largely due to the expiration of pandemic-related federal aid. The COVID-19 relief funds, including the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds, provided a critical financial boost to schools, helping them address issues like learning loss and chronic absenteeism. These funds expired by the end of September 2024. In order to address the budget I would have to see the details of the budget, and sit and discuss with the business administrator to learn if we are dealing with a deficit, and if we are, how much of a deficit we are dealing with. It's only when you know the numbers would you know how exactly to proceed.

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

When evaluating a superintendent, several key criteria are essential for ensuring effective leadership in a school district. These qualities help guide decision-making, foster a positive school culture, and support academic success for all students. One of the most important criteria is that a superintendent should have a clear vision for our district that aligns with its goals and community values. The vision should include high academic standards, academic rigor, innovative, promote digital literacy and global awareness.

Another criteria is how much foundation the superintendent is laying down for his future successors. A good superintendent understands that he is just part of the continuum of the educational landscape of a school district.

Lastly, a superintendent must possess strong financial management skills. Given so many fiscal responsibilities. Also since there are currently budgetary challenges many districts face, financial acumen is critical.

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 would continue what the board is doing to promote transparency and accountability. I do believe the board is transparent and accountable. However, I think it can work at presenting information in an easier to read format. What I mean by this, is that sometimes too much technical jargon is used which our stakeholders do not understand. One way we can address this is by having more open community forums with all stakeholders. This can be listening sessions where the board can listen to the opinions and views of parents, students and community members. This way questions can be asked, and feedback can be given in a less formal setting.

To ensure board compliance with regulatory requirements and minimize litigation costs, there are several things I would do, in addition to what is already being done. Firstly, I would ensure that I am up to date about what are the laws regarding the board- such as the Open Public Records Act, Open Public Meetings Act, what are behaviors/ actions that constitute a violation. Keep up to date with key district policies. Always engage with legal counsel when making key decisions. Lastly anyone can sue anyone,

even if the defendant is 100% right. The fact that an institution is being sued is not an admission of guilt, it is simply because an individual chooses to sue.