



TEANECK DEMOCRATIC MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE
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2024 Teaneck Board of Education Questionnaire

Thank you for accepting the invitation to TDMC Forum. To provide voters with additional information, we are asking candidates to complete and return this questionnaire by September 25th. Please submit responses to TeaneckDMC@gmail.com. You will receive a separate invitation for the TDMC Forum on October 1st from 8:30 pm – 9:30 pm. We look forward to meeting you. Thanks.

Name: Seleene Lewis Wong (Bio - page 4.)

Address: 571 North ST

Please provide a copy of your bio with an emphasis on experiences that qualify you to represent residents on the town council.

1. Do you have or ever had children enrolled in Teaneck public schools? [My son recently graduated from Teaneck High School with the class of 2024, and I also have an 8th grader and a 10th grader.](#)
2. What is the role of a BOE member? [The role of a Board of Education member includes approving the school budget and ensuring resources are allocated efficiently. BOE trustees are also responsible for evaluating and hiring the superintendent, as well as actively engaging with the school community. Additionally, each trustee serves as a liaison to one of our schools, helping to strengthen the connection between the board and individual schools. Why are you running for Teaneck BOE? As a parent of 3 children and dedicated community advocate, I am running for the Board of Education because I am deeply committed to ensuring that every child in our district has access to a high-quality education that supports their academic, social, and emotional growth. My passion for teaching, community service, and advocacy drives me to run for this position so that I can help create a learning environment where every child can thrive.](#)
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? [There has not been on committee or board that I sat on that did not have a challenge of conflicting issues. However the most effective way to navigate conflicting views is by being clear and transparent in expressing your perspective. Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to share their thoughts, and try to find a neutral agreement that satisfies the group's needs. Finally, bring the focus back to the main purpose of the meeting.](#)
4. What do you think the current BOE is and is not doing well and how would you do things differently? [The BOE can take steps to increase transparency with the community, making sure that decisions and actions are communicated openly. In addition, the BOE should take the initiative to educate the community about its roles, rules, and protocols. This helps build understanding and trust, allowing parents and community members to engage more effectively with the Board's processes and decisions](#)

5. What are the biggest challenges facing our district right now and what solutions do you propose? When talking with other parents, a major concern I've noticed is the issue of teacher retention in our school district. To address this, we should focus on providing better support for teachers and fostering a positive work environment to retain quality educators. Another concern is that funding isn't being properly allocated to the areas where it's most needed. The budget should be reviewed to ensure resources are directed toward critical programs and services that have a direct impact on our students' success. Additionally, parents, coaches, and students have raised concerns about the lack of support for our athletic teams. While we proudly cheer on our talented young athletes at games, they are not receiving the financial backing they deserve from the district. One solution is for the district to apply for state and federal grants specifically aimed at supporting school athletics.
6. How will you serve all of Teaneck's diverse student population? I make it a priority to serve Teaneck's diverse student population by fostering inclusivity in all of my efforts. I have positioned myself in spaces where I can actively support diversity while ensuring everyone feels represented and included. For example, as a volunteer reader at our town's library, I carefully select diverse and inclusive books, ensuring that the reading materials are accessible to all members of our community. I also seek volunteers from diverse backgrounds to further promote inclusivity and representation. This approach reflects my commitment to embracing and celebrating the unique backgrounds and experiences of every student.
7. How would you balance students' free speech rights with the need to create a safe learning environment for all students? Free speech is fundamental to our country and community. To maintain a safe learning environment, it's essential to encourage open and respectful dialogue among students, allowing them to express themselves while fostering understanding and safety for everyone. This is 100% possible.
8. What Measures would you propose to improve the school climate and specific to creating a safe learning environment? To improve the school climate and create a safe learning environment, I would propose providing regular opportunities for open dialogue between parents, students, and school administration. Holding quarterly meetings would allow for consistent communication, where parents can help guide discussions and collaborate with administrators to address concerns and celebrate successes. Involving parents in these conversations ensures a shared responsibility in fostering a positive and safe school environment for all students.
9. What role do you think parents should play in determining what books are made available to the student population? While I am impressed with the literacy selections provided by the district, it can be beneficial to establish a committee that includes both parents and curriculum professionals to collaborate on book selections."
10. Where would you invest? And why? (academic, arts, extracurricular, athletics, etc)? *To achieve a high-performing school district, several key elements must be in place, including strong academics, arts, extracurriculars, and athletics. However, our primary focus must always be on academics. We must strive for a rigorous curriculum, innovative classrooms, and prioritize best practices in education.*
11. What are your thoughts on the education budget? With a budget of \$100 million, we must focus on how our financial resources benefit our students. By allocating funds to directly support their needs, we can enhance their educational experience. It's important to minimize waste, such as legal fees, and redirect those resources into the classroom where they are needed most.
12. What are the criteria you value most in a superintendent? A superintendent should have a proven track record of leadership and success in diverse educational environments. Their vision should have the students first while following the districts

mission. They should have expertise in conflict resolution and handling challenges related to equity and inclusion. A superintendent should understand the importance of effective communication and transparency. Also to be committed to setting high standards for the school staff. It's also important that the superintendent understands high-quality classroom practices and fosters a positive culture and climate throughout the school district. The ability to build and maintain positive relationships with various stakeholders, including families, staff, and community leaders is essential. Additionally, the superintendent should actively be engaged in the community.

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? To promote transparency, I'd suggest that each new Board of Education trustee have an orientation with the board attorney and the board secretary. It's crucial to understand the rules to avoid unnecessary litigation, which can drain our district's finances and take away from what we can provide for our students. I'd also push for regular meetings to keep everyone on the same page and ensure we're complying with all regulations.
14. What aspects of Teaneck do you value most and why? I deeply value our community's unmatched diversity, which has been recognized and celebrated on a national level. Our blend of cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives creates a vibrant and inclusive environment. As a active parent volunteer, I've personally seen this through our schools' many multicultural nights, acknowledgement of heritage months, flags that are flown high that represent PRIDE, and town-wide cultural celebrations. It's important that we continue fostering the spirit of inclusivity, as our schools reflect the beauty of our township, and our township reflects the diversity of our schools.

I have been a Teaneck resident for 9 years, raising my three children, all of whom have attended Teaneck Public Schools. I currently have a college student, a 10th grader, and an 8th grader.

In addition to being a dedicated parent, I'm deeply engaged in our community. I serve as a member of the Dr. Martin Luther King Birthday Committee, Co-Chair of the Juneteenth Committee of Teaneck, and am a mayor-appointed trustee of the Teaneck Public Library Board. I also sit on the PTA Executive Board at Benjamin Franklin Middle School, and I am the President and Founder of a non-profit organization that promotes literacy.

I hold dual master's degrees in Early Childhood Education and Special Education, as well as a master's degree in Administration and Leadership. Currently, I serve as an Educational Development Specialist for the New Jersey Department of Education, where I oversee preschool programs across two counties, supporting more than 20 school districts.

I am a firm believer in the power of public education. With over 20 years of experience as a former public school teacher, I deeply understand and value the importance of high-quality education within the public school system.

I will always be a passionate advocate for public education. I believe in our students, I believe in our dedicated teachers who make sure they are nurtured and valued. I also am committed to fostering increased parental involvement within our school community. I strongly support prioritizing the safety and addressing the social and emotional well-being of our students. As a firm believer in the adage that *it takes a village to raise a child*, I encourage the development of community programs that complement our existing initiatives, ultimately promoting academic growth in our students. As a Teaneck Board of Education trustee, I will strive for transparency, accountability, and open decision-making processes.