



Hanover School Board Candidates

Q & A for School Board Contest

February 25, 2009

CANDIDATES FOR THE TWO 3-YEAR TERMS:

JOHN CHAMBERLIN: BA Dartmouth, MA Columbia University Teachers College, MA Kings College London. Retired 1999 from the CIA. School Board Member since 2002. Have been on the Building, Fields, Negotiating and Communications Committees

Q1: How to measure ‘success? Is this important?

It appears to be almost impossible to do this without the use of clichés, but here goes. The only valid measure of a school's success is its students. By any of the traditional measures – test scores, college acceptances – our students are exceptional. Perhaps equally important, for the past few years our athletic teams have been cited for exceptional sportsmanship. My kids are long out of school but the students I have met in the course of my school board activity are well-spoken and have well-developed senses of humor. So it appears we are producing not only strong scholars but good human beings. Is this important? I remember seeing a film clip of Hubert Humphrey talking to a group of Minnesota farmers. His contention was that any farmer worth his salt knew that the quality of a farm was determined by how much you put into it and that an equal investment in education was necessary if society was to remain strong.

Q2: When having to make drastic cuts in the budget, what do you think are the most important things to retain in the school program?

I don't accept the premise that we have to make drastic cuts in the budget. You get what you pay for. This year the Board has worked hard to produce as frugal a budget as possible without making drastic cuts. We have even cut a couple of teacher and educational assistant positions. During these hard times we have to continue to seek savings that do not change the basic character of our good schools. However, we must not cut many, if any, more teaching positions. Good teachers are the heart and soul of a good education and of our excellent schools.

JOHN LOFTUS: John Loftus is an attorney with the Decato Law Offices in Lebanon, New Hampshire. He primarily practices in the areas of Family Law and Civil Litigation in both New Hampshire and Vermont. John is also a certified marital mediator with the State of New Hampshire and provides private mediation services and is a contract mediator with the New Hampshire Judicial Branch. He received his undergraduate degree in economics from the George Washington University, Washington D.C. in 1988, and a law degree from the John Marshall Law School in Chicago in 1997. After graduating from law school, John was an associate with a general practice firm in Keene, New Hampshire for five years. John has also been an adjunct faculty member at Franklin Pierce College since 1997, teaching in the paralegal and business programs. John's principal contributions outside of his practice have been with regard to children, where he was President of the Board of Trustees of Cedarcrest, Inc. and Vice-Chairman of the Chesterfield School District, Chesterfield, New Hampshire. He is past-president of the Keene Elm City Rotary Club and is a Paul Harris Fellow. John is married to Joan Loftus who is a professor at Colby Sawyer College. John and Joan have three (3) children; Tatiana, age 11 in 6th grade RMS, Isabel, age 9 in 3rd grade Ray School and Jack, age 7 in 1st grade Ray School.

Q1: How to measure ‘success’? Is this important?

In my opinion, the measure of success of a school district can best be stated by a quote from the Ratio Studiorum, the document that formally established the system of Jesuit education in 1599, “The development of the student's intellectual capacity is the school's most characteristic part. However, this development will be defective and even dangerous unless it is strengthened and completed by the training of the will and the formation of the character” Success of a district is measured by its duty to develop a child's intellectual capacity while at the same time providing the child with a safe educational environment that promotes an understanding and accountability of self as it relates to others and to the world. Success is not easily quantified, but may be measured by whether a student has been provided the educational skills to solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.

Q2: When having to make drastic cuts in the budget, what do you think are the most important things to retain in the school program?

When considering budget cuts, preserving a classroom environment that allows for every student to have an appropriate level of attention and instruction necessary for academic success is critical. This is the most important attribute to retain in the school district.

GORDON SPAETH: I have spent the last fifteen years living, working, and studying in Hanover and the Upper Valley. I came to Hanover in 1993 to attend Dartmouth College and received my degree in Chinese language and literature. My wife and I have two children for whom I am the primary care giver. I have spent most of my professional life teaching Chinese language for the Rassias Foundation and coaching track and field both at Hanover High and Dartmouth. I spent five years as Head Indoor Track Coach for the High School and six as Assistant Outdoor Coach. Last March, I was elected to fill the remaining year of a three-year term on the School Board. An important goal for me was to see the foreign language offerings throughout the school district improved and expanded. I have become more familiar with the operating procedures in the district and hope to use that experience to improve the quality of the schools we have, even in the current economic climate.

Q1: How to measure 'success'? Is this important?

Measuring 'success' in a school is a tricky task because the standard for success is inherently specific to each family and each child. What determines how 'successful' a school is? Do you look at college admissions data? Parent satisfaction surveys? NECAP scores? The level of student involvement in the community? All of these things give you a perspective of the school system is, but none of them alone can quantify how good a program is.

Q2: When having to make drastic cuts in the budget, what do you think are the most important things to retain in the school program?

In terms of budget issues, the most important things to retain in the school program are the teachers. Firing personnel during tough economic times, though a seemingly easy method to save money, is one of the most damaging things that can happen to a company or a school. Employees are not just resources, they are resourceful. Cutting productive workers hurts productivity. There has been much said about the teachers in Hanover and how much they are paid. It is useful to note, however, that the pay SCALE for Hanover teachers is not much different than most other school districts in New Hampshire. The reason our teachers salaries are high is because they are highly qualified. That is extremely important and I hope we will be able to maintain the staffing at the Ray School through the passage of the warrant article to reinstate the teaching position that was removed from the budget.

CANDIDATE FOR THE SINGLE TWO-YEAR TERM:

KEVIN COTTER: BA in history from State University College of New York at Buffalo. Completed Teacher Education Program at Hamilton College in Clinton New York and became certified to teach in NY State. I am certified to teach in NH. I have been a classroom teacher for the past 10 years.

Q1: How should we measure success? Is this important?

I believe measuring success is very important and that success can be measured in many different ways in and out of the classroom:

- Test scores (NECAP, NEAP), SAT scores, AP test scores
- Number of students who are accepted into top tier colleges, or their first choice college/institution
- Number of students who give back to the community
- Participation rate in athletics
- Athletic success, on and off the playing field
- Number of students involved in the visual and performing arts
- Level of participation in other extra curricular programs
- Student satisfaction surveys

Q2: When having to make drastic cuts in the budget, what do you think are the most important things to retain in the school program?

When making drastic budget cuts, I would look to cut areas that would have the least effect on the student experience in the Hanover/Dresden school district. To do so, I would seek to protect those expenditures that have a direct impact on students (academic and extra-curricular programs) and faculty.