

## Questionnaire To Be Filled Out By District 300 Board of Education Candidates

This questionnaire is meant to gather information relevant to the voters of District 300 in choosing Board of Education members in the upcoming election (April 17, 2007). Each answered questionnaire will be posted on our website, [advance300.org](http://advance300.org) no later than March 17, 2007. If you are submitting your answers via hardcopy, either type your answers or write neatly and in black ink. We will also post a copy of this questionnaire on our website. If you would rather answer electronically, go to our website at: [www.advance300.org/GetEducated\\_BOEQuestions.html](http://www.advance300.org/GetEducated_BOEQuestions.html).

A questionnaire has been sent to you and each of the other candidates via certified mail, hand delivery or via e-mail, if an e-mail address is available. **Responses are due no later than March 16, 2007.** No responses will be accepted after that date in fairness to candidates that answer by the March 16th deadline. Responses may be mailed to: **Advance 300 at 2303 Randall Rd., #146, Carpentersville, IL 60110-3448.** Or submitted via e-mail at [advance300yes@yahoo.com](mailto:advance300yes@yahoo.com).

Advance 300 will not endorse any particular candidate. A blank questionnaire with the candidate's name on it will be posted for any candidate who does not respond by March 16, 2007. This will be done simply to notify the public that the candidate was given the opportunity to respond but chose not to.

While we will post each candidate's answers as they come to us, we reserve the right to reject responses that contain profanity or other offensive language.

1) Name: Dave Alessio

Address: 1871 Arbordale Ln, Algonquin

Township/County of Residence: Dundee Township / Kane County

Date of Birth: 1964

Years living in District 300: 10

2) Have you had or do you currently have school-age children or grandchildren?

If yes, please check the type of schooling that your children receive(d):

3 Public School in District 300

Private School in District 300

Public School outside of District 300

Private School outside District 300

I home school my children

Other (please explain)

## Questionnaire To Be Filled Out By District 300 Board of Education Candidates

- 3) With regard to question #2, please explain why you chose the venue of education for your children that you did.

My family attends public schools because we feel it's important to be involved in our neighborhood community. While I understand private schools or home schooling may be the best choice for some students, and I support our church school, I believe the public schools are one of the pillars of the community. This indirectly affects property values and local investment in our area.

- 4) Please describe your educational background from elementary school through post-graduate work, if any. Please include the dates of attendance and date diploma or degree, if any, that was conferred.

I have attended public schools in Illinois from kindergarten through college.

BSEE – University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1987

MSEE – Johns Hopkins University, 1996

- 5) What, if anything, about your educational background do you believe makes you a good candidate for the Board of Education?

I understand that not all students are the same and not all will learn at the same speed. I had a lot of difficulty learning to read and write in the early grades. Many teachers were able to make accommodations and help me to overcome this.

- 6) Please list your employment history for the last ten (10) years. Please include what positions you currently hold and have held with each employer and what responsibilities that position entailed.

I work as a systems engineer of cellular networks. This requires planning for system growth in complex systems with many variables and uncertainties. I must also be mindful of costs in all planning to remain competitive. I also use data analysis to identify and prevent problems in these networks. Prior to this I was a radar systems engineer at the US Naval Research Laboratory.

- 7) What about your employment background, if anything, do you believe makes you a good candidate for the Board of Education?

Working in an industry that requires advanced technical skills gives me a practical appreciation of the challenges our students will face in a global economy. I have also seen how the members of our armed forces must rely on their high school education when they enter military training schools and are called upon to operate and repair sophisticated weapon systems all around the world.

- 8) Why are you running for a Board position?

I want to help bring financial stability to the district as we improve educational quality.

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The last decade has seen continuous growth, deficit spending, teacher layoffs, overcrowded classrooms, and referendum questions. By maintaining balanced budgets we can forestall or prevent the need for a future referendum. Good things are happening now in the district, and it's exciting to play a role at this time. Class sizes have been reduced, new curricula are being introduced, new buildings are under construction and additions are going up. Test scores have improved and we are seeing the results of programs to improve discipline and school safety.

- 9) What is your understanding of the time commitment required of a Board of Education member? How much time are you able to commit to your position as a Board member on a weekly basis?

I usually attend at least 6 meetings per month. This includes two regular board meetings. Even though the open session starts at 7:30 pm, the closed session starts at 6:00 pm and often continues afterwards until 11 or 12. If there are too many student discipline cases to hear, a closed discipline meeting will be scheduled the next night. The finance committee and community finance committee meetings are on Wednesday and Tuesday nights, respectively, one time per month. The policy committee is usually once a month but only takes around an hour. In most months there is a special topic covered on a Saturday morning for the whole board.

Each weekend material is sent to board members to read and to be studied before voting at board meetings. We also receive information by phone or email before and after work, or during lunch most week days. My work schedule involves days and nights so I often have flexibility to attend daytime events at the schools as an observer or to represent the district.

- 10) Please list at least three positive things about District 300. In other words, what is working? Be as specific as possible and provide sources for any factual information that you rely on in forming your opinions.

A) The district average ACT composite score jumped over half a point to 20.6 this year, rising above the state average. (See Illinois State Board of Education – eReport Card Public Site.) While test scores may not be reflective of a student's growth or learning, these are important in determining which college opportunities may be available.

B) ISAT tests in reading and math showed increases in all district scores for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. (also from the ISBE eReport Card web site) This is part of a multi-year upward trend. I believe this improvement results from the district emphasis on literacy and learning to read at the earliest grades. The math scores are now showing year-to-year improvement after the curriculum change was implemented.

C) The fiscal responsibility of the board and administration has allowed the operating funds deficit to be improved from \$29 million to \$5 million over the past three years. This resulted from the promises made with the referendum regarding deficit reduction and class sizes. This is \$1 million better than predicted for this time. The union contracts were also negotiated in 2006 to be fair while keeping the budget balanced. (See revised 06-07 budget approved for publication 3/12/07.) The stabilization of the district financial

## Questionnaire To Be Filled Out By District 300 Board of Education Candidates

programs has resulted in a vastly improved credit rating, which already saved the taxpayers money during the recent \$105 million construction bond sale. (Moody's rating – A3)

- 11) Please list those things that you would change about the District and why. Please be specific and provide sources for any factual information that you rely on in forming your opinions.

I won't suggest any new changes right now, because many are currently in progress and will take years to complete. The new curricula will take time to implement after all required textbooks and materials can be obtained. The high school and middle school boundaries will be addressed starting in September to produce a plan coinciding with the opening of the new Hampshire High School in the fall of 2008. The block scheduling in the high school programs is currently under review and I will wait to see the suggestions.

- 12) Have you volunteered to work with District 300 in the past? If so, please list your volunteer activities including the nature of your work and the dates that the volunteer work was performed and where.

Facilities Advisory Committee – 1999-2001 – This committee evaluated the needs of all district buildings and noted the areas of disparity between schools. A long term plan was created which began to address the unequal facilities and identified four new elementary schools to be built. Now all District 300 schools are air conditioned.

TRAC – 2002 – This committee helped me continue learning about school finance in the state of Illinois.

My family has also been active in the Westfield PTO and the District 300 Foundation for Educational Excellence.

- 13) Please name three things that you would do to improve the education of the children of District 300 and explain, in detail, how your proposed improvements would be implemented.

A) An appropriate alternative high school setting. The current Oakridge facility is nearing capacity, and being built of trailers, lacks many features of a building. The board hears many cases up for expulsion and I would like to see an alternative setting to provide a second chance for students who have made a mistake or need temporary help adjusting to the demands of high school. The district needs to evaluate available space to seek accommodation of this program.

B) Pre-K programs. Some additional preschool programs are needed to prepare children with special needs for kindergarten. This may help students start school closer to the level of their peers and prevent the need for expensive services later in their education. Increased screening would allow this program to reach the students who would most benefit.

C) Expand the Advanced Placement program. The number of students eligible for AP classes could be increased with proper preparation through accelerated programs at the

## Questionnaire To Be Filled Out By District 300 Board of Education Candidates

middle school and early high school grades. This would allow a greater variety of advanced classes to be offered, creating higher-level options that could be used to further save on college costs.

14) What, in your opinion, is the function of the Board of Education?

The board must set a clear policy so that all district activities are focused on the same goals. The strategic plan will soon be ready, and the board will have to decide which recommendations to implement and how soon the district can afford those changes. Once the future course is determined, we can avoid wasting efforts on purposes not aligned with those goals.

15) What is the single most important duty of a member of the Board of Education?

I believe a board member must always keep the overall district in mind when making any decision. I have focused on the financial aspects while serving on the board this past year. But each line item must be somehow tied to learning in the classroom. And all decisions must be analyzed to see what effect they would have all parts of the district.

16) Are you a supporter of public education? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Yes, most of the families in our towns depend on the public schools to educate their children. This provides the opportunity for our children to grow and achieve our hopes for them. The public schools also are important for our state and country to provide a work force which keeps the local and national economies going.

17) Are you a supporter of District 300? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Yes, I believe this is the most efficient school district around. The quality of education is improving despite having the lowest tax rate in this Fox Valley area. Many teachers, parents, administrators, and students have worked valiantly to keep this district going through all the issues related to the growth of the last decade. I believe this past year will mark the beginning of the greatest time ever for District 300.

18) Please set forth what, if anything, sets you apart from the other candidates running for the Board and that you feel is a good reason for the residents of District 300 to vote for you.

One difference is I am the only candidate with children in district elementary schools. Because of this, I take a particularly long-term view of district projects and improvements. Also, I am not accepting money from district contractors, unions, nor either side of the referendum campaigns – Advance 300 or FTN.