

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

**Joe Stevens
Advance 300
Responses To Candidate Questionnaire
CUSD-300 Incumbent Board Member and Candidate**

1. Name: Joe Stevens

Address: 1961 Dorchester Ave. Algonquin, IL 60102

Township/County of Residence: Dundee Township / Kane County

Date of Birth: 5/22/45

Years living in District 300: 13

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):

Public School in District 300 (**All are now adults**)

Private School in District 300

Public School outside of District 300

Private School outside District 300

I home school my children

Other (please explain)

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

I believe a strong public education system signifies a strong and healthy community. When we came here we received strong recommendations on the school system. Our son was in the middle of his junior year of high school and we were concerned about how he would do transferring at that critical time. He not only did well, he did extremely well and loved finishing high school here. Today he is a graduate of Illinois State and is enrolled in the MBA program at University of Chicago. My other children were older and already out of college.

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.

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As a child I attended St. Patrick's Catholic Elementary School in Rockford which is now closed. I went from there to St. Thomas High School which was the forerunner for Boylan Central Catholic High School, however, in my junior year; I transferred to Auburn High School and graduated from there in 1963. I attended Rock Valley Junior College and Rockford College. At age 56, I entered the MBA program at Lake Forest Graduate School of Management graduating in 2004.

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

As I indicated in question # 3, I believe a strong education system signifies a healthy community. I have personally seen the value of both a public and a parochial education. Even if you believe in a parochial education for your children, without a strong public system, the community in my opinion is not as strong a community. I like the public system because it is more inclusive and more representative of the diversity of the community it serves. I think the children who come from the public system have an easier time acclimating into college life as well, where they surely will experience more cultural diversity.

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.

For the last 10 years prior to my retirement in 2003, I was a Vice President for Sherman Health. I was responsible for the primary care physicians that Sherman employed at that time and managed their medical practices. I was responsible for multiple buildings and activities that occupied those buildings, such as the Medical Center on Randall Road in Algonquin, the Medical Center on Rt. 31 in Crystal Lake, medical buildings in Barrington, St. Charles, Carpentersville, Elgin, and South Elgin. Activities I was responsible for included Urgent Care Centers, Emergency Dept., Hospital food service, Chaplaincy, Managed Care Activities, Physician Practice Management Company, Hospital maintenance and housekeeping department as well as other support departments over the years.

Since retirement, I am serving or have served in the following non-paid, fully volunteer positions:

- Board Member – Community Unit School District 300

I was appointed to the Board in July of 2006 to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of John Court. In this role I serve on the Finance and Human Resource Committee.

- Chairman of the Board – Greater Elgin Family Care Center

I have been on this board since 2002 and currently serve as Board Chairman. This is a Federally Qualified Medical Center that serves the

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underserved in the community.

- Treasurer – Family Service and Community Mental Health of McHenry

I have been on this board since 2005 and was elected Treasurer in January of 2007

- Ecker Mental Health Center – Elgin, Illinois

I served on the Finance Committee during the period 20005-2006

- Algonquin/Lake In The Hills Rotary Club

I have served two recent terms as President of this club being elected by my peers and I am now on my second term serving as the Youth Exchange Officer which is a position that coordinates the activities of inbound and outbound foreign exchange students.

- Willoughby Farms Master Association

I have served as Treasures since being elected to this post in 2006

As of January of 2007 I have periodically worked as an independent consultant for pay, for International Executive Connections, Inc. which I plan on continuing.

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

In my employment, I was responsible for multiple business lines, millions of dollars of expenditures, and locations spread over multiple counties. I was successful in my business career in handling that type of responsibility. You find many of these same situations in our school system. I have the ability to analyze situations, work to achieve goals, and live within budgets. All of these factors prepare me to have a positive impact on CUSD 300 as I bring this skill set to the Board.

8. Why are you running for a Board position?

I believe I can make a positive contribution to this community by serving on the school board and know I have the skill set to serve. I come from the private sector which I believe is a positive and am supportive of public education. I work

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well with others and like working towards consensus rather than confrontation. I think children today are more in need than ever before of a solid education that prepares them for complex world that has quickly become a global market where their skills and abilities will be challenged every day. I don't now have any children in the district, nor any relatives that work there and don't do any business with the district, I think that makes me somewhat unique in this field of candidates.

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?

This question amused me a bit for when I joined the board in July of 2006 I can honestly say I didn't really have a good understanding of this. Now I certainly do and the commitment is a very large one. It is not at all unusual for me to devote 15-20 hours per week at a minimum attending committee meetings, doing research, or preparing for a board meeting. There have also been weeks where I have spent over 40 hours working with staff on projects. I am fully able to commit to this and feel if I were to limit my involvement of time, I wouldn't be fully briefed or be able to properly vote on the many important issues that come before the BOE.

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.

- While an undisputed lightning rod for controversy, the district is blessed to have one of the finest CFO's in the country in Dr. Cheryl Crates. Cheryl has put this district on firm financial footing for the first time in many years. In addition to managing the passage of the March 2006 referendum, further evidence of her ability is the recent upgrading in our Bond Rating from Moody's from BBB which is junk bond territory, to A3. This is the first time in the history of this district that we have had a bond rating in the A category. Over the next 10 years or so, this fact alone will save the district over \$4,000,000 dollars in expenditures. This is very significant.
- Thanks to the taxpayers we are building schools to accommodate the growth taking place and that which is anticipated. As I live close to Westfield School, I watched in amazement as the school opened almost to full capacity and in year two had several portable classrooms on the property. Overcrowded schools don't allow for the best educational environment. We now have over 32 portable classrooms throughout the district. While some have been critical of the growth numbers being lower than expected this year, we need to remember the projections were over a five year period and even the critics aren't saying it won't occur, only that it is delayed due to the housing downturn. School buildings don't get built in a few months. I am very pleased that next year we will be able to relieve some of the overcrowding that is taking place now and have some

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excess capacity to handle the future certain growth

- Most importantly and the ultimate goal of the district, is the education of our children. Recent reports have shown some dramatic improvement such as the recent activity at Carpentersville Middle School through the No Child Left Behind program. Discipline problems have lowered dramatically, test scores have improved dramatically, and the children seem happier in the environment and proud of their accomplishments. This is what it is all about. This could not have happened without smaller class sizes, more teachers, and a dedicated staff. This would not have been possible without the passage of the March 2006 referendum. As you look at virtually all of the surrounding school districts, we have the second lowest tax rate for schools, higher than only one other district in Aurora. In addition, we are a large growth district which presents its own set of issues.
- The district is currently developing a long range strategic plan. Part of this process is the surveying of the local taxpayers, current students, former students, parents, and many other interested parties. When completed, we will likely have input from over 40,000 individuals. We are seeking to understand the common themes and interests of those surveyed. This has never been done to this degree in the district. My opinion is that ultimately, it is the taxpaying public that decides what type of school system they want for their communities. This district must keep the trust of the taxpayer and constantly inform the community of the districts activities, results, and goals in order to maintain that trust. This is the major function of a School Board Member, as he/she first represents the views and wishes of the taxpayer. You cannot say as a parent you want better teachers but not be prepared to compensate them at a competitive level, you cannot say you want your child in a smaller class size and not be willing to pay for more classrooms and more teachers. You can and must say you want your tax dollars spent wisely and appropriately. It is up to the BOE to assure that this happens.

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.

- If I am elected one of the things I would like to do either as a single Board Member, or hopefully, as a full Board is to have an official open meeting, where the only agenda item is to dialogue with the community. It would be a forum where any question can get asked, and responded to.
- Consideration of adding department heads for high schools needs to be brought forward so the administrators can be appropriate administrators.
- Technology is unevenly distributed throughout our district at the elementary and middle school level. This needs to change and technology

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which is so vital today in a student's education, needs to be available to all.

- I would like to expand the capacity of Oakridge School where some wonderful things are happening. The building which is a modular building needs to be replaced and expanded.

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.

Prior to seeking a board seat after the March 2006 referendum, I was not involved with the school district.

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.

- Fund additional teachers which would be targeted in the elementary and middle schools where students are not reaching their capability. This is would be outside of the No Child Left Behind program. This would require more space as well. We have the possibility of actually having a surplus; we need to spend it in the classroom very judiciously.
- Evenly distribute and modernize technology to be funded either by foundation grants or potential surplus
- Form a cost reduction sub-committee from the Finance committee to find other potential funds to do better things in the classroom. There is always the potential for savings. I believe this can be done in a non-threatening way that benefits all. Recent examples would be how the District worked with Johnson Controls to manage our energy needs and saved over \$500,000 last year alone. We are currently looking at a grant that will partially fund us changing light bulbs at Westfield that would in three years pay for themselves and thereafter, fund new programs.

13. What, in your opinion, is the function of the Board of Education?

The main functions are to hire and fire the Chief Executive, set School District policy, and safeguard the taxpayer's dollars.

14. What is the single most important duty of a member of the Board of Education?

Protect the interests of the taxpayer while providing a good education to the children of the District.

15. Are you a supporter of public education? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Yes. A strong local Public School District translates into a stronger more attractive community for everyone with better educated residents who contribute back to

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society.

16. Are you a supporter of District 300? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Yes, I live here; I want it to be good, even though I do not have any children or grandchildren in the schools. See the above question.

17. 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.

A variety of things set me apart. I come from the private sector, and have no previous connection to the district which means I have no agenda or vested interests. In addition, my education and work experience have prepared me especially in the finance area. I am not an “anti” or “pro” anything like some of the candidates running and I judge things based upon the facts available. I am not funded by any single group or cause. I have the willingness to expend the time and effort that this job clearly requires. I attend most all functions available. During this campaign period, few of the candidates have attended board meetings or any of the committee or focus group meetings held. I would think if they really wanted to be a fair and impartial board member who contributed positively to the District they would begin to prepare in case they actually win the seat their vying for. There is a large learning curve.