

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 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.

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.

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: Mary C. Fioretti

Address: 1627 Arquilla Drive, Algonquin, IL 60102

Township/County of Residence: Algonquin Township – McHenry County

Date of Birth: 1/31/1955

Years living in District 300: 14 years

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):

 2 Public School in District 300

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

The decision for public education for our children was one of choice for my husband and me. I was familiar with private education as I had attended a Catholic School for several years. My son Tony is hearing impaired and private education would not have provided the services that he would need. As it turned out, District 300 was wonderful to both of my children. Christine is currently a junior at Roosevelt University in Chicago pursuing an Integrated Communications degree and Tony is a sophomore at the University of Illinois Champaign Urbana pursuing a Finance degree.

- 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.

- Washington Elementary for Kindergarten in Ottawa, Illinois. 1960
- St. Columba School 1st thru ½ of 7th grade in Ottawa, Illinois 1961 - 1968
- Yorkville Junior High, Yorkville, Illinois 7-8th. 1968 - 1969
- Yorkville High School, Yorkville, Illinois 1969 - 1973
- Waubensee Community College 1973 – 1975
- Northern Illinois University 1975 – 1978; I had to quit college as my mother was gravely ill. She was a single parent and my siblings needed someone to be the bread winner. She died in 1980 and I became their legal guardian at age 25.
- Northern Illinois University 2002 thru 2006 – Bachelors degree.

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

As a child, I loved school. As an adult, I saw that higher paying positions were

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inaccessible to me because I did not have my degree. That frustrated me a great deal and deepened my desire to finish my college education. As a board member I am constantly reminding people that education is a must in today's society. The ability to communicate clearly requires excellent writing skills. Communication is the key to success in life. A well rounded education includes literature, technology, math, sciences, civics, and the interpersonal skills that are developed in a diverse and open learning environment. Each of these component areas contribute to becoming a well rounded adult who understands the opportunities that our democracy makes available to us.

- 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.

Roosevelt University – Coordinator for the Institute for Continued Learning. This is an organization dedicated to those 50 years and older that is peer lead. There are 450 active paying members who develop Study Groups for every Spring, Summer and Fall with a Winter Lecture Series

Fioretti Consulting Co-founder of the consulting firm, managing back office processes including bookkeeping, payroll, and invoicing. Consulting efforts focused on pro-bono work in support of education funding reform, which included presenting testimony to and working directly with general assembly members and government agencies. Collaboratively worked with state-wide grassroots organizations (A+, Better Funding for Better Schools, CORE4Kids) to promote forums and strategy sessions for success in funding. This included visits to Superintendent meetings at the Regional Offices of Education for Kane, Dupage, and Lake county. Developed white papers and distributed analysis as a basis for in-depth policy discussions regarding education funding issues. Organized, facilitated, and participated, as a subject matter expert in public forums regarding education funding reform.

4/05 - Facilitated a meeting of the McHenry County Superintendent's and Regional Office of Education at the bequest of A+ with Senator Pamela Althoff. Included Health and Human Services organizations, union representatives, Business Officers, school board members, superintendents and the ROE.

3/05 – Submitted Testimony to Senate Select Committee on Education Reform.

1/05 – Panelist, Building Consensus for School Funding Reform, co-sponsored by A+ Illinois, Better Funding for Better Schools, IASA, IEA, IFT, and IPA

03/04 – Submitted Testimony to the House Appropriations Elementary and Secondary Education Committee Public Hearing on Education

02/04 – Submitted Testimony to the Senate Education Committee Budget Hearing

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05/03 – Submitted Testimony to the House Committee of the Whole regarding the Education Budget.

03/03 – Panelist, Larkin District U-46 Forum on Education Funding

9/02 - EFAB Hearing in Chicago, presented written testimony

Volunteers for Students Foundation. Served as Founder and Executive director. Founder and executive director of not-for-profit foundation focused on creating excellence in public schools through community involvement at the classroom level. Developed and acquired private funding support for all programs established by the organization. Utilized outstanding communication skills to establish relationships with businesses, faith-based organizations, and educational communities to generate support these programs.

- Defined and developed a three-year business plan for the foundation. Performed all legal and business functions, including annual report, budget, state and federal filings, and administrative functions. Chief grant writer.
- Wrote, edited, and published monthly newsletters for volunteers, staff, educators, and business patrons. Engaged the private and public sector to participate in many of the projects that VSF sponsored. Such as, SBC / Ameritech employees, Arthur Andersen, Carpentersville Village Trustee, District 300 School Board members, Kohl's employees, Amcore Bank, and Barnes and Noble.
- Recruited and managed 42 volunteers for two schools with approximately 1,500 students. Ancillary programs covered five schools and served 3,000 students (Book Drives.)
- Developed marketing plan to encourage public involvement in recruiting volunteers, introduction of new programming, and any newsworthy promotion related to the foundation. Excellent rapport with the print media. Direct results of PR doubled our efforts in all programs and volunteers.

St. Margaret Mary Church Responsible for daily operation and management of the Parish Office as the personal assistant to the Pastor. Managed diverse technology within the office – Macintoshes & PCs and responsible for training of secretarial staff on current software.

- Responsible for content and layout of weekly, monthly and quarterly publications.
- Directed volunteer events for dinners, fundraising, staff meetings, and receptions. Upwards of 400 in attendance.
- Initiated the McHenry Deanery Administrative Assistants to meet every month to network on like type functions for churches and schools. Results from these meetings helped to modify and fortify positions for secretaries in various departments.

First National Bank of Chicago, United States Gypsum, Illinois Bell, Ameritech. (1978 to 1987) All computer programmer or operational assistants work.

7) What about your employment background, if anything, do you believe makes you

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a good candidate for the Board of Education?

Supporting education funding reform has given me the perspective of the need for change and makes me an advocate for change at the state level so that our property owners get a break. My work through the church has helped me to develop a deeper desire to help our students – to be compassionate where it is needed.

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

I am running because I want to build on the considerable progress we've made since I was elected to the board, specifically in the areas of financial stability, expense control, and improvements in educating our students. We have reduced the debt and improved our bond rating, leading to a lower cost of money and a more stable financial environment. We have lowered class sizes, improving the learning environment for our students and the working environment for our teachers, which targets improved test scores for our students. We engaged the community in many ways, from involvement in district committees, helping define school boundaries, selecting principals, and in developing a vision for the future. I want to ensure that the strategic 5 year plan that we have developed gets implemented in order to prepare our students for success in the 21st century. I am running because I have great pride in our district and a passion for public education.

- 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?

Being a member of the District 300 Board of Education requires the commitment of a great deal of personal time. I average from 10-20 hours a week either working on D300 business and attending D300 activities and events. The commitment involves much more than attending a school board meeting every two weeks. BOE members receive a 3 inch binder on the Friday prior to each meeting. The information in the binder must be reviewed and understood prior to the meeting on Monday. Board meetings average 4 hours, and some extend beyond 6 hours.

In addition to the Board meetings, I attend various committee meetings and

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meetings for the D300 foundation during the week. I also try to maintain my connection to the schools and the students by attending whatever sports, music, and other school functions as I am able.

I am able to commit this time only because both of my children are now in college and because my employer, Roosevelt University, allows me the flexibility to make this possible.

- 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.
- Since coming to the Board in 2003 Dr. Arndt has assembled a leadership team that targets educational improvements, sound fiscal policy, improved human resources, and increased public participation. This team includes recognized professionals who would be welcome in any district. It is my opinion that the Board of Education has directed the Superintendent to move the District in the right direction for students, staff and the public and it has given him that autonomy to do so. Of these broad areas, I am most positive about the sound financial footing that we have been able to establish within the district.
 - I am happy with the progress we've made in involving the community. One recent example is the Boundary committee. I am very pleased with the work of the Boundary committee. The commitment of the community volunteers working with the district on this issue has been an enormous service and benefit to the community.
 - Since I have been on the Board we have had a concentrated effort on ACT prep. We have implemented Comprehensive School Reform where needed and have been recognized by the State as a successful model, resulting in an invitation to participate at the NCLB State Conference. The data coming out of the CMS model shows the dedication and professionalism of our educators. All involved have spent thousands of man hours working to provide the educational improvement needed for CMS and Lakewood. I support the model at Carpentersville Middle School and commend the feeder school, Lakewood, and its staff for preparing the youngsters coming into the middle school. The Board took an unprecedented risk to provide educational autonomy to the staff to develop a program that helps struggling youngsters improve their education. We

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need to celebrate this success.

- 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 would like to see more done with academic counseling at the Junior High level articulating to the High School level where young people own their academic program. Currently we need more counselors both in junior high and high school to meet the demand of all of our students.

We need to have Department Chairs at the high school level with type 75 to evaluate so that in these very large schools principals who do not have all the subject matter expertise when evaluating educators can adequately rely on department chairs to perform substantial evaluations as well as mentoring. As administrators are lured away by District 211 and 214 because they have the support base needed for principals we will continue to be the farm system for other high school districts. This will directly affect our high school system to move in the direction of those high school districts that are hugely successful such as Stevenson District 125. This will directly affect student learning by having mentored highly professional educators in the classroom. Stevenson High School Leadership Chart http://www.district125.k12.il.us/about/leadership_structure.html and their vision / mission http://www.district125.k12.il.us/about/district_vision.html

- 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.

- Secretary and Founding Member of the District 300 Foundation for Educational Excellence
 - A Founding Member of the Foundation.
 - Participated with foundation board to raise \$239,000 over four years.
 - Provided administrative oversight to guide the foundation.
 - Chairperson of the D300 Foundation Literacy Committee
 - Worked collaboratively with educators and community members on Literacy Projects for all D300 students.
 - Helped to bring in successful authors for students and educators such as Neil Schuesterman (7th grade project '04 & '05) and Deborah Frazor

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(4th grade project '06).

- Created opportunities for parents and students to interact with authors.

- Executive Director of the Founder of Volunteers for Students Foundation (VSF)
 - The Volunteers for Students Foundation was a not-for-profit organization focused on creating excellence in public schools through community involvement at the classroom level. I developed and acquired private funding support for all programs established by the organization.
 - Recruited and managed 42 volunteers to serve two schools for approximately 1500 students in D300.
 - Executed successful book drives for three years garnering 3000 plus books for youngsters in five schools in D300.
 - Helped to establish Literacy Investment For Tomorrow (LIFT) program with Perry Elementary Educators.

- Perry Elementary School Improvement
 - Participated with family centered evening programs designed by staff including Book Swap, Family homework night, and Cultural night.

- Jacobs High School Athletics
 - Established and coordinated Team Parent Coordinators.
 - Jacobs Sports Booster \$5000 Dinner committee, 2000-2003
 - Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior Football Parent
 - Freshman Girls Volleyball Team Parent, 2000
 - Golf Outing Committee, Jacobs Boosters
 - 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament Committee sponsored by Jacobs Boosters

- Neubert Elementary School Ways and Means '93-'95
 - Coordinated all fund raising events such as the fall spirit wear, fall fundraiser, and Fun Fair.
 - Helped to re-establish the PTO Roundtables.
 - Worked with District Admin to help PTO's to address issues regarding

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event insurance.

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.

College Day – I would love to see us implement in the Elementary and Middle Schools College Day where youngsters wear their favorite college spirit wear. Students need to know that there is more to life after graduating from High School and that there are all kinds of colleges to choose from. This would develop as a family activity where mom or dad could tell the student about their experiences at college and start the kids thinking and looking up what it would take to go to college. Teachers would be encouraged to say, especially in the younger grades, “this is what you’re going to need to know when you want to go to your favorite college”. This helps to build the expectation that college is inevitable.

More volunteers – We need to find a way to encourage more participation in the schools with those that have the time, specifically senior citizens. Having done this on my own I know how valuable it is to the children and the teachers as well as the senior citizens. I miss not having seniors sit with students helping them with their extra reading or math skills. I would like to see some service group work with the district to help move this along – perhaps Rotary, Park District Senior Center, Churches and many others. The benefit is the extra time spent developing an academic relationship with a youngster. The student looks forward to their special person coming to listen to them read or help them with their math.

Girls Excited about Math and Science – GEMS This is an initiative that is nationwide where middle schools partner with local colleges and universities with women in science and math to close the interest gap in both of these disciplines for young women. This would provide access to careers in these disciplines while helping them to understand that it’s not just for men. Companies that use engineers, chemical engineering, and many other types of careers could assist in this fascinating endeavor to motivate young ladies. This would take some initiative on the part of teachers, students and perhaps parents. A partnership would have to be formed with a local university to plan events. It could also be part of a service learning activity for University students. It has a lot of potential.

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

The primary functions of the Board of Education are in the areas of management oversight, financial direction, district wide policy, and in interaction with the legislators in the community and the state, as the district’s elected representatives.

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The Board's job is NOT the day to day management of district business. That job is the responsibility of the Superintendent and his team of administrators. The board has one employee that it manages, the Superintendent.

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

In District 300 it is to recognize that we serve all students and not just those that go to your child's school. We have a much broader scope than an isolated school.

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

Absolutely yes. Public education is about all our children, not just the wealthy ones, not just the healthy ones, not just the ones that speak English. As a matter of fact public education is probably more parochial in how we attend to all of our students. We provide a public education so that we may be self-governing, so that those that acquire the ability to reason can articulate their concerns when they have been aggrieved when they lose their right to privacy, right to freedom, or right to happiness. Public education is for all students.

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

Yes. In the past four years I have seen success in schools that have not been successful. This is a significant turn around. This must continue.

- 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.

I am a candidate with broad experience, serving the district and the community in many different ways. I have demonstrated leadership working with the board and with the D300 foundation. I have been able to build consensus and find common ground in difficult situations. I believe that I have the community interests at heart, balancing my responsibilities as a board member, my relationships with educators and administrators, my role as a parent and as a taxpayer, representing the voters and the students as honestly and ethically as possibly.