First State Educate's 2026 School Board Candidate Survey

Email *

rforsten@saul.com

Full Name *

Richard A. Forsten

Cell Phone Number *

302.584.0589

School District *

Appoquinimink

School board members play an important role in guiding the direction of public school districts. The questions below are designed to help voters understand how candidates think about governance, decision-making, and student success. While candidates may express their ideas in different ways, strong responses often reflect several core principles of effective school board leadership.

Public school boards are responsible for setting direction, overseeing district leadership, and stewarding public resources on behalf of the community. **Why do you want to serve on your local school board?**

I am a strong believer in the importance of public education and in public service, with 15 years of experience on the board already; I believe my skill set as a practicing attorney provides a lot of knowledge and experience which benefits the board and district; I also have extensive experience on numerous boards and commissions, and so I am experienced and skilled in serving on boards. I also have a deep knowledge of the political process and was the primary author of the Voluntary School Assessment Fee state law, which requires all new homes in New Castle County to pay a school impact fee to the school district to help pay for construction costs of new schools and repairs to existing schools.

School board members make decisions that affect thousands of students and millions of public dollars. **What principles will guide how you make those decisions?**

The number one principle is to always act in the best interests of the students after considering all relevant factors; a close second is to listen to the community (parents, teachers, administrators, staff, and the larger community); and, finally, I think we need to remember that the district is spending other people's money, and that monies should only be spent or committed after careful consideration of the first two principles as well as recognizing that money is a finite resource.

School boards are ultimately responsible for ensuring districts improve outcomes for students. **What student outcomes should your district improve over the next four years?**

Student literacy in early elementary school grades should be the top focus; it a student doesn't learn to read in grades 1-3, they will suffer in later grades because, as the saying goes, "first you learn to read, then you read to learn."

School boards must work across differences and remain connected to the communities they serve. **How will you work with fellow board members, district leadership, and families to move your district forward?**

I have been able to work successfully and collaboratively with all of my fellow school board members, as well as the various constituencies which the district works with (teachers, administration, parents, business community, elected officials, etc.). The keys are mutual respect, honesty, and transparency -- and no snarkiness, sarcasm, insults, or belittling social media. All must be shown respect and it is entirely possible to disagree without being disagreeable. And, as stated earlier, I think everyone needs to recognize that they are in public education for the students -- our mutual goal is to educate students and to improve the public education system.

School boards are making decisions that affect students and district resources. **How should board members use data, research, and community input to guide those decisions?**

School boards should make decisions with as much data as reasonably possible, and should make sure that all data is explained and available for public review; school boards should also make sure to hear from parents, teachers, and the community as much as possible and should seek out such input before making decisions. The more viewpoints, the better.

School board members communicate decisions to the public.**How will you ensure the community has an honest, clear picture of district conditions and can see how the board is making decisions?**

All board decisions must be made in public with an explanation as to why they are being made; in Appoquinimink, all of our board meetings are available on YouTube both live and recorded for future review and reference (note that this is now a state requirement, although we started this before the requirement was put in place). Board members should also be available outside of Board meetings to talk to parents, teachers, and others -- and our board members on Appoquinimink are all so available

School boards often bring together members with different perspectives. **How would you approach working collaboratively with other board members while keeping the focus on the district's long-term goals for students?**

I think anybody who has watched our Board meetings in Appoquinimink over the years will agree that our discussions are professional, calm, and deliberative; there is no shouting, there are no insults, there are no heated arguments about Robert's Rules; we all respect and listen to each other. We don't always agree (no one agrees with their spouse 100% of the time), but we don't let those disagreements impede our work or our working relationship. We recognize that, at bottom, we are all basing our decision on what we believe is in the best interest of our students -- that is our north star -- even if we may disagree in good faith about what the best interest may be in a particular case.

Please upload your Bio (summary of resume or professional experience). We will post your Bio on our candidate page. *

Document6 - Ric...

Add file

Please upload your picture- high resolution preferred *

Screenshot 2026...

Add file

This form was created inside of First State Educate.

Google Forms