

First State Educate's 2026 School Board Candidate Survey

Email *

julie.derrick@cape.k12.de.us

Full Name *

Julie Derrick

Cell Phone Number *

NA

School District *

Cape Henlopen School District

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've been honored to serve on the school board since 2017, and it continues to feel like one of the most meaningful ways I can give back to my community. With a background in education—holding a master's in elementary education, a special education certification, and experience teaching both music and Pre-K—I care deeply about how children learn and grow.

As a mom of three, I see firsthand the differences every child. I believe in meeting kids where they are, recognizing multiple types of intelligence, and creating environments where they feel seen, respected, and encouraged. When students feel that, they thrive.

Every time I walk into our schools, I'm reminded of the incredible work happening and the responsibility we have to support it. Serving on the board is about advocating for all students—from our highest achievers to those who may feel overlooked—and continuing the important work our district is doing to create opportunities for every child to reach their full potential.

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

My decisions are guided first and foremost by what is best for students—all students. That means leading with equity, empathy, and a deep respect for the individuality of every child.

I believe strongly in positive environments where students feel supported and encouraged, because that's when real learning happens. I also value collaboration and listening—bringing together perspectives from educators, families, and fellow board members to make thoughtful, well-rounded decisions.

As a small business owner, I'm also comfortable thinking outside the box. If something isn't working, we need to be willing to explore new approaches rather than just continuing what we've always done. At the same time, I believe in being responsible stewards of our resources and making decisions that are both innovative and sustainable.

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

Over the next four years, I would like to see continued growth not only in academic achievement, but in the overall well-being of our students.

That includes supporting different learning styles so all students can access success, strengthening support for special education and students who may feel overlooked, and continuing to challenge and engage our high-achieving students.

I also believe we should prioritize social-emotional wellness. When students feel safe, respected, and confident, they are much more prepared to learn and succeed.

Ultimately, success should be defined broadly—helping every student grow into a confident, capable individual who feels seen and valued in our schools.

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?**

Moving a district forward is truly a team effort. I believe in leading with respect, listening openly, and valuing the different perspectives that each person brings to the table.

I've always felt that one of the strengths of a school board is when members can come together—with different viewpoints—and stay focused on what matters most: our students. I work to build strong, collaborative relationships with fellow board members, administrators, teachers, and families so we can move forward together.

Communication and trust are key. When people feel heard and respected, it creates a stronger foundation for making meaningful progress.

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?**

Data and research are essential tools, but they are only part of the picture. I believe the best decisions come from combining data with real human insight—listening to our teachers, our families, and even our students.

Data helps us identify trends and measure progress, but community input helps us understand the “why” behind those numbers. Both are necessary.

I also think it's important to stay open-minded. If the data shows something isn't working, we should be willing to adjust and try new approaches. Thoughtful, informed, and flexible decision-making is what leads to real improvement.

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?**

Transparency and clear communication are incredibly important to me. The community should feel informed, not confused or left out of the process.

I believe in communicating openly about both successes and challenges, and making sure information is shared in ways that are accessible and easy to understand.

I also think it's important to create opportunities for two-way communication—so families and community members feel comfortable asking questions, sharing feedback, and being part of the conversation.

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?**

Collaboration is at the heart of effective school board leadership. Not everyone will always agree, and that's okay—in fact, it can be a strength.

My approach is to listen carefully, stay respectful, and keep the focus on our shared goal: doing what's best for students, both now and in the future.

I believe in finding common ground and using each person's strengths to move the work forward. When we stay grounded in our long-term vision for student success, it helps guide decisions even when perspectives differ.

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

Document 7 - Jul...

 Add file

Please upload your picture- high resolution preferred *

IMG_2682 - Julie...

 Add file

This form was created inside of First State Educate.

Google Forms