

Parent Educator Collaborative Questionnaire

Do you support the Mayor's "Booster Stabilization Fund"? What are its strengths and what should change?

The mayor has made a good faith effort to balance current educational needs with Newton's obligation to adequately fund its pension liabilities. However, Newton's school children have a significant learning deficit as a result of COVID. We need to make sure that educational support services such as teacher aides are fully funded. Since the City Council has rejected the Mayor's "Booster Stabilization Fund" proposal, the Council and the Mayor must work together to find a solution with more flexibility and the ability to provide necessary funds to the schools.

What do you view as the relationship between new development (housing, commercial) and the schools?

There is no greater responsibility of local government than to educate our children regardless of how they arrived in our city. It makes no difference if they were born into a long time Newton family living in a single family home or are newly arrived and live in a new development such as Avalon, Northland, or Riverside.

We should constantly push developers for mitigation funds to help offset the costs of educating children from new developments.

Please share your thoughts on the national teacher shortage, and how it impacts Newton's ability to attract and retain strong educators. Does a city councilor have a role? What is it?

A recent article in the New York Times (Dec. 14, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/14/opinion/teacher-shortage-education.html>) on the subject of the national teacher shortage, included the following quote from Doris Santoro, Prof. of Education at Bowdoin College:

Teachers are not only burnt out and undercompensated, they are also demoralized. They are being asked to do things in the name of teaching that they believe are mis-educational and harmful to students and the profession. What made this work good for them is no longer accessible. That is why we are hearing so many refrains of "I'm not leaving the profession, my profession left me."

The national teacher shortage demands a national strategy in response. There are many components to what a national strategy would need to look like. One troubling trend is that the teaching profession has become a battleground over "culture wars" (e.g., banning books on certain sensitive topics from school libraries and from the curriculum.) It will take persistent leadership at the local, state, and national levels to combat this trend. I believe that Newton's School Committee and new Superintendent will provide important leadership on this issue.

Another troubling trend is the growing gap between teacher salaries and the salaries of all college graduates. According to a study by the Economic Policy Institute (see <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-in-2022/>) in 1979 teachers earned 23% less than other college graduates. In 2021, the gap had grown to 33%.

I strongly believe that teacher compensation must be agreed upon through the collective bargaining process. However, all elected officials, including city councilors, have a role to play in advocating that Newton do its part to buck this trend.

Operating overrides help ensure the health of our schools. What is your plan for and role in ensuring successful overrides?

Deciding whether to raise property taxes above the prop 2½ level depends on whether the mayor and others have made the case that city services will fall to an unacceptable level unless additional funds are raised. Since the mayor is the main decision-maker when it comes to whether an override vote will be put to the voters, my plan for ensuring that future overrides are successful is contingent upon how thoughtfully the mayor approaches this question. If the case to be made is strong, I will do all I can to support it.

The current contract offers teachers a COLA of 2% or less. NPS Unit C employees report a non-living wage. Do you believe it is reasonable to expect the NTA to accept the current terms? How can you, as a city councilor, advocate for a fair contract?

I support the national movement to increase the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. I am very proud that Massachusetts is one of only three states where the minimum wage is at least \$15. I certainly support a living wage for all Newton employees. However, as I said in answer to a previous question, if there is a recognized union, as there is in Newton, compensation must be agreed upon through the collective bargaining process. I support the state mediation process that is assisting the current labor negotiations. I also urge the Mayor and the School Committee to agree to a generous settlement with NPS staff and teachers so that Newton can maintain an educational system of the highest quality.