



13 candidates qualified for 5 district seats for the Richmond County Board of Education November elections. In its efforts to educate and inform voters, the Chamber issues a candidate questionnaire. Candidate responses are listed below for viewing.

The Board of Education is a policy-making body and serves as a legislation body in the development and evaluation of policies. More importantly, they assist in carrying out the mission of the Richmond County School System which is "Building a world-class school system through education, collaboration and innovation."

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### BOARD OF EDUCATION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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#### **1. What do you consider to be the primary components of the role of a member of the Board of Education?**

Shawanda Griffin, District 1

Our primary components are to create and adopt policies for our schools, identify solutions to repeated problems within our system, find resources and opportunities to create academically competitive students, disperse funding, hire our superintendent, report to the people.

Lia Abney, District 4

The primary components of the role of a member of the Board of Education includes establishing rules and guidelines that governs the daily operations of employees and students of the Richmond County School System.

Wayne Frazier, District 4

Serve the community by supporting any and all educational opportunities that will improve and uplift the school system as a whole! Especially being the voice for those who are disenfranchised!!!

JaVonne Jones, District 4

As a board member for the Richmond County School System, the role is to work on behalf of the citizens of Richmond County. In order to work on behalf, we have to be intentional listeners of the people. We must listen to their concerns and serve as the voice for their concerns. We must do work on behalf of our district to bridge the communication gaps between the school board, parents, and staff to help all of our students succeed. We serve as support of the superintendent to ensure that the mission and the vision of the Richmond County School System comes to fruition. We ensure that he is held accountable for making sure all other entities of the school system are doing the right work to meet the ultimate goal of success in school and beyond.

Douglas Jackson, District 5	The board is supposed to work with the superintendent and lawyer to make sure that rules, regulations, procedures and policies are implemented as well as adhered to as mandated...
Samantha Moses, District 5	To set goals, determine policies, hire the Superintendent and set budgets. Work as a team and be a strong advocate for the Teachers, Students, and all other Essential employees. Be a liaison to the public.
Patsy Scott, District 5	The primary components of the role of a member of the Board of Education are to adopt policies to govern the operation of the schools and have the authority to determine the amount of school taxes to be levied on property in the school district. The board's function includes the employment and assignment of personnel on the recommendation of the Superintendent, acquiring and disposing of real estate and other properties, constructing of facilities, preparing and adopting of the annual budget, entering into contracts, borrowing money, signing promissory notes and serving as a tribunal or school law court in order to resolve local matters.
Jimmy Atkins, District 8	Hiring and evaluating the Superintendent is the most important role of the Board of Education. The Superintendent is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school system; therefore, it is important to have someone who is highly qualified and competent. The board should develop policies and budgets that coincide with the school system's strategic plan and provides direction to the Superintendent.
Yolanda Holley, District 8	As a member of the Board of Education, the primary component in this role is ensuring accountability and focusing on the concerns of students, teachers, and staff. As a board member, it is important to understand that the citizens are the ones being served first and foremost. Therefore, board members must put in place policies and procedures for a successful educational system. Board members must be informed, strive towards the highest student achievement, know where and when to allocate resources and be prepared. Board members must understand that in this role it is necessary to work together and with the community to accomplish the goals and vision of the school system.
Helen Minchew, District 10	One primary component would consist of being an active advocate for public education, both within and outside the school community, by keeping informed on educational issues locally, state and national. Another primary component is to strive to offer our students options and resources in which to better meet their needs to graduate prepared for college and/or the workforce, whichever their choice may be.

**2. What do you consider to be the greatest opportunity for the Richmond County School System at this time?**

Shawanda Griffin, District 1     We have the opportunity to shift the atmosphere in our school system from a failing one to a thriving one. Students, parents, our educators and staff members are ready to do different and obtain different results. The energy is different within our community right now, so this is the perfect opportunity to empower our students, families, teachers, administration and business partners to demand different. We are in a place where we can have progressive ideas and solutions that will help our school system to service not just the students and staff, but the families and community as a whole.

Lia Abney, District 4     The greatest opportunity for the Richmond County School System is to leverage community-based partnerships for the purpose of integrating knowledge and resources to improve the well-being of students and educators.

Wayne Frazier, District 4     I believe we as a system have the greatest opportunity to develop an effective communication strategy between the school board and all other stakeholders! A strategy which highlights the impact of a thriving educational system regarding the level of economic growth within the community.

JaVonne Jones, District 4     The Richmond County School System is so rich in opportunities for our students. We have various programs that are offered in this school system that will provide our students unique learning experiences that are beyond the general education curriculum. We have our magnet school programs that are extremely academically driven that focus on providing our students with a traditional, arts, and science/nursing education. We have our arts endorse schools that allot for the infusion of the fine arts with the general education curriculum. We have the inter baccalaureate program that focuses on the whole child and higher order thinking skills. We have our STE(A)M schools with the primary focus of preparing our students for careers in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. In addition to these we have the duel enrollment programs where our students are able to receive college credits and the list goes on. There are aren't any school systems in our Central Savannah River Area that are this enriched with a smorgasbord of opportunities that will ultimately prepare them for being successful after graduation.

Douglas Jackson, District 5     Currently, is to make sure that each student has the necessary materials and resources to successfully compete in our ever-changing and diverse society. Making sure that the safety, security, and welfare of all staff and children are the number one priority.

Samantha Moses, District 5     To be able to continue to educate our students while ensuring the safety for our Teachers, Students and all other employees during this pandemic.

Patsy Scott, District 5      The greatest opportunity at this time is to make sure our students in Richmond County have a safe learning environment during this Covid-19 pandemic.

Jimmy Atkins, District 8      The greatest opportunity for the Richmond County School System is the amount of choices offered to our students. We offer a wide range of dedicated magnet and specialized programs to meet the needs of our students and community.

Yolanda Holley, District 8      The greatest opportunity for the Richmond County School system at this time is the use of technology. Though there are some great things that have been put into place, this is still an opportunity. Teachers have had to make the transition quickly and parents are having to do the same. There have been issues with the actual equipment not working as well as complaints concerning the use of programs that are in place for receiving and turning in assignments. Technology that works and is user friendly is important for the student's success. When these things are not working it has other impacts that are not related to the assignments themselves. Students, parents, and teachers end up being frustrated because of the challenges they face and it affects the overall learning experience.

Helen Minchew, District 10      The greatest opportunity which I see centers on the relocation of the National Cyber Security Center to Fort Gordon which brings growth in the cyber security field throughout our entire area. This enables our students to not only study an exciting career pathway but access to a workforce supported by a concentration of related business and industries. In addition is the current need of skilled trades throughout the manufacturing and utilities industries, such as SRS. Augusta University and Medical School continues to expand offerings in many career fields as well as resources to assist our students.

**3. What do you consider to be the greatest threat for the Richmond County School System at this time?**

Shawanda Griffin, District 1    Lack of community involvement is a huge threat right now for us. Many of the top school's system report that involvement from their community is extremely vital to their success and it creates an extra level of accountability for the school board. It has been great what our community partners have helped the school system accomplish, but imagine what amazing things we can do and opportunities we can create if we had more parents, more businesses, more communities involved and volunteering in our school system some kind of way.

Lia Abney, District 4    I believe the greatest threat for the Richmond County School System is a sustainable workforce and technology infrastructure which both of these are tied to funding. Lack of adequate funding to hire capable and skilled workers as well as strengthen access to technology can greatly impact the school system's ability to ensure a well-rounded education for every student.

Wayne Frazier, District 4    Lack of effective leadership and communication between stakeholders!

JaVonne Jones, District 4    Our school system is in the bottom 4% in the state of Georgia. As a product of the Richmond County School System and a former Richmond County educator, this is bothersome. I can attest to being a successful product of this system. I was nurtured here myself and received a high-quality education. I attended magnet school, but we should not feel as if the high-quality education can only be found in the magnet schools. We have to get all our schools on a level in which they are thriving. There should never be a time when parents don't want their child to attend one of our schools because they associate the school with lacking resources and low student achievement. Although we have so many enrichment opportunities for our students, our students are still suffering academically. Many of these issues are attributed to academic achievements and everything that effects achievement. We need to look at how we prepare our educators. We need to ensure they have the resources they need to teach in order to be successful in that classroom. They have to receive the relevant and continuous training that will be beneficial to them on the latest trends in education. They have to have models of effective teaching and have mentoring programs/curriculum coaches that will really provide the support needed for our teachers to feel comfortable going before their students. WE also need to look at Parental involvement. We need to understand the accountability lies on the student, parent, and educator. We must work to bridge that relationship. When parents know that the teachers and administration really care, they will forever be on your side and it's easy to articulate information to the parent to help the student succeed. It's a lot harder when there is a communication gap. Lastly, we must distribute resources in an equitable manner in this school district. We can't expect underserviced and underperforming schools to get the same results if they don't have the resources needed to get those results. We have to maneuver our funds in order for these resources to get where they are needed most.

Douglas Jackson, District 5	The greatest threat currently is providing the necessary tools and resources for our teachers allowing them to do their job in optimal conditions enabling them to provide all our school Children with a high- quality education leading to their participation in a global economy.
Samantha Moses, District 5	The Pandemic. Updated Technology through virtual learning and keeping our Students and Staff safe with face to face learning.
Patsy Scott, District 5	The greatest threat is the global pandemic which is causing a national emergency.
Jimmy Atkins, District 8	The greatest threat at this time is dealing with the many obstacles related to Covid-19. The school system has lost numerous instruction days and teachers have had to learn to teach in a new environment. Much of the instruction is being done virtually but we are experiencing an insufficient number of devices and technical support due to the increased usage.
Yolanda Holley, District 8	I consider Covid-19 and its aftermath to be the greatest threat to the Richmond County School System at this time. Covid-19 has had a major impact on day to day operations at home, at work, and at school. Teachers are having to adapt to new teaching styles. Having to adjust to online learning and face to face learning adds to the stress teachers already feel. Parents are having to take on the roles of educators. They have to make the decision to either send their children to school or keep them home while taking into consideration that they themselves have to work. Bus drivers are faced with the daunting tasks of keeping both the children and themselves safe. In addition, there are impacts to the lunchroom and janitorial staff. Covid-19 has affected how students socialize which is an integral part of their growth and development. Students that need specialized care and one on one interactions may not always have access to these resources. All of these stressors impact student learning and grades. Before Covid-19, Richmond County School system was at the bottom 50% of Georgia Public Schools. While education and learning must continue in the midst of a pandemic, I believe that it's going to take time to make adjustments until we feel that Covid-19 is no longer a threat to our school system.
Helen Minchew, District 10	The greatest threat for our school system at this time stems from the effects of the pandemic upon the academic preparation of all our students. Many of our families throughout Richmond County did not have sufficient access to technology. It has taken time to assist in supplying devices and access as well as training both students and teachers in virtual learning. Face to face instruction had to also be set back to a later date (now being offered at all our schools), and the effects continue to the present time. Many special fields of study cannot be taught virtual only. The school system has worked tirelessly to address these demands as well as our community in donations of technology to students; however, as with numerous other school districts throughout the nation, it has been difficult.

**4. How do you believe Augusta's business community can best support the success of public education and its students in Augusta-Richmond County?**

Shawanda Griffin, District 1

Get involved, stay involved. Don't just show up for special events, show up every day and every week in some way. Contact your local schools for career days, volunteer in classrooms, mentor or apprentice students in your business to give them an idea of the type of success that they can achieve when they enter the work world. Read a book to a class, show up to a game or debate. Do this whether you have school-age children or not. Your presence can and will make a difference to the students, teachers, staff and administration. Your time is just as important as your money, if not more.

Lia Abney, District 4

I believe that community-based partnerships are essential to establishing communication and trust. It is an opportunity to leverage resources and identify skillsets that students need to be successful as they transition into the workforce. Involvement of Augusta's business community can also be helpful in providing feedback in the strategic planning process to achieve Richmond County School goals and objectives.

Wayne Frazier, District 4

Continue to partner with the school system. I feel that the business community should also find ways to infuse those underserved areas within the community with economic and educational opportunities.

JaVonne Jones, District 4

The Citizens of Richmond County are at the top of the school district's organizational chart. The entire community has a say so in what happens with our school system. We need to hear from our citizens whether they have children in our schools or not to get insights on the direction they feel we should be going in. In regards to the business community, we need partnerships. We need our students to be able to go into businesses for apprenticeships or just experience in some of the areas in which they may be interested in. By the time these students get ready for graduation, many of our students will have some experience and they will better know their prospective career path. We also need our business community to begin sowing into the schools. Businesses in our district should adopt a school; providing resources to that adopted school. When the school needs incentives for their students or extra materials for a classroom, they should not have to worry about finding the funds. The business would provide that cushion of support for their adopted school. This will bridge the gap between school and community and get our business more involved. I believe having this partnership will be beneficial for all parties involved and keep the community as well as business community knowledgeable about what is going on in our neighboring schools.

Douglas Jackson, District 5

Businesses and schools can network and collaborate with each other while utilizing valuable resources that will enhance and empower our students, teachers, staffs and school system...

Samantha Moses, District 5

By forming a partnership with the schools and help them obtain new and updated technology, and to offer mentoring and internship programs.

Patsy Scott, District 5

Our school system is blessed to have many business partners, but we are seeking more partnerships that will benefit our students in the community. This will provide opportunities for our students to see the advantage of living in Augusta as it relates to advanced learning.

Jimmy Atkins, District 8

The business community can help provide our schools with mentors and instructional assistance, especially in the schools that have little to no parent involvement. Our students need to hear first-hand what business and industry leaders are looking for in their workforce. Also, the business community can help with the digital divide for students who lack internet access.

Yolanda Holley, District 8

Augusta-Richmond County is fortunate to have several businesses as community partners that take an active part in the success of student's education. Forging relationships with additional businesses in the area would only enhance this. While having businesses contribute financially to education is helpful, having them to impart wisdom and skills to the students is equally as important. Businesses being an active part of public education leads to academic achievement, creating a prepared workforce, empowers students, stimulates the economy and helps build relationships. Businesses and schools working together will result in success for the entire community.

Helen Minchew, District 10

The Augusta business community already supports our students in Richmond County in way of the summer School to Work program, visits by classes to places of business, the partnership with Textron Corporation and our school district in the RPM program, and other endeavors. If these could continue and perhaps expand to include more of our students to be able to acquaint themselves with career fields and the workforce, this would certainly be a continued benefit. Also, in regard to the technology needs present in our county, any possible partnership by business and industry would be of great value to furthering all of our student's educational needs.