

School board candidates aim to prioritize students first

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PHOTOS | Isabella Boedeker



The Nov. 5 GPPSS school board election is a crucial moment for determining the future direction of our district, according to math teacher Lauren Nixon. With department curriculum reviews happening at both high schools, Nixon stresses the need for board members who prioritize transparency and community input, ensuring that every student receives the support they need to thrive.

With four open seats and nine candidates: Clint Derringer, Melissa Fradenburg, Dianna Gellci, Kate Hopper, Laura Hull, Tim Klepp and Heath Roberts, as well as incumbents Terry Collins and Colleen Worden, this election holds significant importance over the community. According to Nixon, students' learning needs vary widely and she believes it is crucial for the board to manage thoughtful budgeting and resource allocation.

"I think one misconception that a lot of people have is that learning can be one size fits all and we know that that's not true," Nixon said. "Everyone has different, different learning needs. So when we think about where that money is being spent in the district, one school may need a resource that's different from another, and we want to be able to allocate the money appropriately."


Building off of Nixon's idea on the importance of resource allocation, incumbent board member Colleen Worden was motivated to run for re-election to prioritize students' needs by supporting the teachers.

"I think that it's really important that we rely on our experts, and our experts are the teachers," Worden said. "They are the people that are in the

classroom, they are the people that are the closest to the students. They are the ones that know about the budget that's related to curriculum and the cuts that come with the classrooms."

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MARISSA FORD
SENIOR

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Also looking to support teachers, incumbent board member Terry Collins anticipates tackling district challenges, particularly the ongoing loss of educators.

“Changes in state school aid continue to be a concern for all school districts in Michigan,” Collins said. “The board is committed to stay engaged at the state level to be aware of funding changes and make the necessary budget adjustments. Teacher and staffing shortages is another key issue that has affected districts across the state. We must

investigate all opportunities to attract and retain educators to our district.”

In light of the ongoing challenges related to staffing and budget constraints, Worden emphasizes the need for students to consider how board decisions directly affect their school.

“I think it's really important because the teachers at North were very much affected by some of the decisions of the board members and some of the behavior of the board members’ retaliatory behavior,” Worden said.

Along with that, Collins thinks that the election's outcomes will hold equal significance to all schools in the district, rather than just affecting North alone.

“I do not believe that this election will have any impact on a specific school within GPPSS,” Collins said. “Our focus must remain on every student in every building.”

From a student perspective, senior and president of the Grosse Pointe Students for Change organization Marissa Ford has firsthand experience speaking with board members about the Orange Resolution Proposal regarding gun violence awareness and believes that this school board election will heavily impact students and their education.

“I think the school board is the election that affects students the most directly,” Ford said. “The school board makes so many of the decisions for our school like how much funding we get for certain things and our teachers are really affected by them. Last year, student voices were affected by how much they listened. Last year we tried to pass an Orange Resolution and they voted it down.”