FRANK LIVOY – District E - Responses

BSD School Board Candidates' Survey

1. **What motivates you to seek this position? Please tell us about yourself by providing key facts, such as your educational background, past positions held, and the qualities that make you believe you are the best candidate for the School Board position.**
   As a 50+-year resident of the Brandywine District, a former teacher at Concord High School, the parent of two daughters who were successfully educated BSD schools, and the grandparent of two current BSD high school students, I have been deeply invested in our public schools and want to help maintain BSD's tradition of excellence and help to bring it to new levels of excellence as we all face new challenges in our society. In addition to teaching for 29 years at the high school level, I have been a trainer of new teachers at 3 Delaware Universities for 15 years and served as a whole-school reform coach and leader of professional development for schools in several Mid-Atlantic states during my 10-year tenure at Rutgers University. In all of those functions, I have worked with educators and leaders at all levels on the essential questions in education: 1. How do all students learn effectively? 2. How do we measure and reflect real learning by every student? 3. How do we create and maintain safe and challenging classrooms, the crucible of learning, for all students?

2. **What are the three (3) key points you want voters to remember about you, your goals, and what you aim to achieve as a School Board member?**
   I hope that voters remember:
   1. My long, broad and deep engagement with the essential elements of not just schools but more pointedly, the act of learning.
   2. My career-long commitment to providing equitable opportunities for every student in every classroom in every school, regardless of their zip code, cultural background, or physical or mental ability.
   3. My conviction that public education policies, like any democratic process, requires committed participation by all concerned parties who listen to one another and are willing to compromise at times to arrive at consensus, wherein everyone can live with the final agreement.

3. **What are the top five policy concerns and issues you believe the Brandywine School District needs to address?**
   1. Expecting more engagement by students in classroom learning activities; that

means less reliance on screens and barring cell phone use during instruction.
2. Providing prompt support to teachers and their students whose classrooms are disrupted by anyone unwilling or unready to learn.
3. Collaborating with families and community organizations in sending a consistent message to all students about the value of regular attendance and full participation in the learning process.
4. Sending strong, regular messages through a variety of media about how BSD students meet and exceed goals in academic achievement, social development, and career readiness.
5. Class sizes that sometimes make it difficult for even the most talented and dedicated teachers to meet the needs of every student equitably.

4. **If you become involved in the replacement of a Superintendent, what would your performance criteria be for evaluating a person who is the best fit for this critical position?**
   I would look for a candidate with a strong history of classroom teaching and leadership, familiarity with the entire BSD community, a reputation as a good listener who is not afraid of distributive authority, and a commitment to raising up other leaders.

5. **Ensuring a Safe and Inclusive Environment:**
   a. **What is your commitment to inclusivity and equality?**
   b. **How would you support the diverse needs, including mental health needs, of students, faculty, and staff?**

As a public institution, schools must include everyone in the dialog about what is best for our students. We must respect all voices equally and commit to addressing all needs as far as our resources (funding, time, talent, expertise, and space) allow.

6. **Teaching Standards:**
   a. **What constitutes good teaching? How will you measure this?**
   b. **What sort of innovative programming would you advance if given the opportunity?**
   c. **In what areas would you like to expand the curriculum? For example, do you see a need for**
      i. **advanced technical training.**
      ii. **apprenticeship.**

iii. **Bringing back "civics" courses to all elementary, middle, and high school levels so students can learn how government works and understand their responsibilities as citizens.**
iv. **bringing back "cursive writing."**

a. Good teaching is based on the 3 R's: rigor, relevance and relationship. Teachers must set high yet achievable standards for each of their students and show them the steps they can take to meet them. They must choose materials and activities that students find relevant to their lives - past, present, or future. But most importantly, teachers must build and maintain a strong professional relationship with each of their students based on mutual respect and trust.

b. We clearly must learn more about and prepare our students to live and work in a world in which artificial intelligence plays a significant role in communications and life-long learning. In its infancy, AI presents some serious challenges to the traditional ways we ask students to learn and demonstrate their own knowledge. However, we would ignore or exclude AI to our students' detriment.

c. i. I would encourage continued exploration of technical training, not necessarily to prepare students for careers in any one field, but, as time has proven, to give students valuable experience in learning beyond the introductory level. And if that training provides more hands-on learning and collaborative problem solving, we would prepare our students well for almost any career possibilities, seen or unforeseen.

ii. I believe we should explore apprenticeships as relevant learning opportunities.

iii. Our consistently weak voter turnouts tell us how much we need to educate our students and future voters about how democracy works and what their roles are in it. Civics projects, especially during election seasons when students can see examples of the process, as well as other non-theoretical learning activities about government, could lead the way to more robust proactive citizen participation.

7. **Budgetary Oversight**
    a. **What strategies or plans would you advance to ensure the schools are adequately funded?**
    b. **If there were a shortfall in funding, would you advocate for school district assessment or cut in activities?**

a. In addition to working closely with our federal & state government officials and lawmakers to assure adequate funding, I would encourage our district to continue to meet

with all citizen groups when considering a referendum to increase local funding as needed. When we all understand how our funds get spent to assure better learning conditions for all students, we soundly support our schools. That takes additional time, patience and the good will of all parties.

b. In the case of a shortfall, I would advocate for a careful balance of additional funding and cuts to programs that could be funded by other means. But I would ask for input from our students, staff and families about the importance of anything we might consider cutting.

8. **Curriculum Standards**
    a. **What are your thoughts on who should have the final say about textbooks and curriculum content for the various grade levels? The grade-level teachers/administrators? A committee with parents? The School Board majority? The State Dept. of Education?**
    b. **In your opinion, how should the type of books and content of Middle and High School libraries be determined?**

a. Curricular decisions must be made by a process that includes the voices of all affected parties: students, teachers, building and district administrators, parents, board members, and state and federal departments of education. That, clearly, must take time for all parties to examine the research about whatever curriculum is being considered and to arrive at a consensus. The ultimate decision must be made by the trained professionals who should base their decisions on reasons supported by data and the experiences of the professionals who teach it.

b. Middle and high school libraries should include works that students have demonstrated an interest in over recent years. Education should include learning how to critically read and analyze divergent ideas and opinions. If we exclude materials by some litmus test of political acceptability, we do not prepare students to judge rationally on their own current and future ideas that may be out of the mainstream.

9. **Do you believe there is an issue of transgender student-athletes participating in competitive sports? How do you think the issue of transgender student-athletes participating in sports will be resolved?**

That is, I believe, a miniscule and almost hypothetical "issue." Each parent wants their child to have equal access to all of the benefits of public schools, including the physical,

psychological, and social benefits of participating in competitive sports. The coaches I've spoken with report that their transgender student-athletes just want to be included in that experience. Why create a policy that prevents anyone from participating at this level of competition without evidence that anyone is harmed by inclusion? We need to approach any concerns with clear heads and open hearts, not out of unproven fears.

10. What are your views on financial transparency and government accountability?

Elected bodies have clear guidelines for informing constituents about and including their voices in the decision-making process. Some parts of the process must be kept confidential by law; but those elected bodies need to give access, in good faith, to that process to the extent that the laws allow.