

Questions to Ask Potential School Board Members-IEP and Special Education Related

1. Often, when children have a diagnosis that greatly impacts their maturity, social interactions and behavior, they are given consequences that, while in line with school policies, are ineffective. How do you think we can determine if what we are doing is in fact helping rather than detrimental to these kids? Would you be open to changing long-standing policies related to this, provided there is new research and data to justify doing so?
2. If a parent approached you with a Special Education concern, and stated that he/she felt that this was a systemic problem, what would you do?
3. When you have learned that some district personnel are in non-compliance with IDEA (which is a federal law) how would you like to see it handled? What are some ideas you have to prevent issues from becoming systemic?
4. Besides attending a school board meeting, what can, or will you do as a BoE director to hear parent concerns?
5. Recently, our government passed "XYZ Bill" which many feel will affect special education because...(fill in blank). What do you think our district can and should do to counterbalance the negative effects of this legislation?
6. What do you think is the greatest challenge in xyz school district regarding special education?
7. For the most part, my child, identified as a child with a disability, is not welcome anywhere besides the public school for his education. But, too often, parents like me who need to rely on the public school more than anyone, have the most contentious relationships with the school. It's no secret that IEPs and the IEP process carry a significant amount of emotion and stress, as pertains to both parents and teachers. Mere mention of the words "IEP meeting" is usually met with either groans or a "hmpf." What do you think that our district can do, to better the climate and the relationships between staff and parents? What can we do to prevent fractures in these relationships?
8. I always ask a very general question like "What is your philosophy of special education?" You can tell a lot about whether they have put any thought into it or if they are just spouting back district policy.
9. What is your experience with inclusion and what do you think our school district can do to increase inclusive practices?
10. Do you see the inclusion student as an asset to the classroom, or as an obligation and why?
11. How does the school board determine if district personnel are adequately trained in issues such as autism, behaviors and mental illness?
12. What do you think it means for students to be supported in the 'least restrictive environment'?
13. Budgeting--during the year, new needs arise, new students needing services move in, staff takes a leave of absence. How do you plan to budget for these additional expenses and from where will you redirect additional funds to ensure required services are provided?
14. Other topics to think about and possibly generate a question: restraint and seclusion, teacher/staff mandatory training, FAPE, contentious nature of IEP meetings, out of district placements, alternative education, manifestation hearings, assistive technology.