

# 2021 School Board Candidate Questionnaire

## Responses from Amber Frommherz

### **Briefly tell us about yourself and what motivates you to run to be a member of the School Board.**

Greetings, I am Amber Frommherz. I am originally from Page, AZ, a small border town on the western edge of Navajo Nation. I am a mother of three girls-one who is a 2020 TMHS graduate and two who attend FDMS. We're an active-duty Coast Guard family who moved here from Boston, MA seven years ago.

My journey started post high school when I joined the Navy to help pay for college. I am a first generation college student who did not want to add a financial burden to my folks. I spent six years in the Navy stationed aboard the USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD-6), at Commander Amphibious Group Three (CPG-3), and Navy Recruiting Command Phoenix. During this time I discovered the school where my formal higher education would begin.

I am the model of their are many ways or places to go when acquiring your education. I started at a tribal college, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, transferred to Middlesex Community College, and finished at Tufts University with a BA in American Studies and a MA in Educational Studies. After completing my graduate degree at Tufts, my family received orders to Juneau, AK.

I am running for JSD School Board because I am passionate about education, my children's education, and see this as a way that I can "give back" as I've received so much support throughout my educational journey.

My professional experience has equipped me with program leadership and importance of a whole-child perspective that also includes attention to the family's wellness as well. As a previous Head Start Director, at Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Tlingit & Haida), and Director of Tribal Services & Outreach at Tlingit & Haida Regional Housing Authority, I am aware of both early education and housing states at federal, state, and regional level. In additional from my Head Start capacity, I was able to work with Bridget Weiss in our Head Start collaborative program(s) and development of KinderReady. Both positions bring to front and center the importance of Maslow's hierarch of needs while discussing JSD. policy and practice.

As a Juneau community member, I am offering my interpersonal skills and dedication to teamwork. I understand that I will enter a board and system; however, I believe I bring a reflective, whole-child and family-oriented perspective that bring solution-oriented energy to benefit our JSD students.

**What do you see as the major issues facing the School District and how will you address these issues during your term?**

I think the lack of data (due to COVID-19) is a major issue. I am wondering how I can assist, if I were to be elected, and would love to hear from you--teachers! I would then see how I can bring your comments or ideas to the school board for action, if applicable.

The next "issue" I see is a state-focused advocacy issue, which may or may not be applicable for this questionnaire. I am interested in doing what I can to increase the Base Student Allocation (BSA). This will assist JSD as whole. Relatedly, this will also require our student attendance to increase from the recent dip (due to COVID-19).

The third "issue" is supporting our curriculum supports. I know the district made great advances by bringing aboard new reading specialists, a curriculum person to help teachers deepen their curriculum, and supporting TCLL's oral standards. My hope is to help foster the development of our curriculum in ways that do not take away from the teacher's time rather that supplements their efforts.

**How do you rate public education in the Juneau School District, and how do you believe the public rates it?**

I rate JSD satisfactory and think the community does as well. Can we improve? Of course, always! However, it is in which ways that are meaningful to students and teachers while efficient as our budgets are not as large as we'd like.

**Who do you contact when you need to gather information concerning education issues?**

I read Juneau Empire, ask current school board members for information, and/or speak with other primary sourced individuals about the concerning issue. Lately, I have consulted with my friends who are also teachers.

**What other public or private agencies would you collaborate with when making policy decisions for public education?**

I would work with AEYC-SEA, the cultural heritage organizations, like SHI and Goldbelt Heritage Institute, Juneau Youth Services, related tribal partner departments, Juneau Public Health, UAS, and local unions, if needed.

**What do you identify as the top diversity issues affecting student success in our school district, and how would you address them?**

As a previous director of an early childhood program in Juneau, I would say that, from my observation, the current early childhood programming in Juneau is stratified based on class. Many low-income students (who are not identified with a special need) attend Head Start and those who attend KinderReady come from families who can accommodate the payment or transportation. I would interested in seeing the demographics of all the ece programs to see if my observations are correct. If so, I would work with the administration and other stake holders to see if they are aware of the data and to ask if this is acceptable. I would hope that collectively we come up with ways in which the information/curriculum is equitable for the students across the programs.

The reason this is important is due to the large return on invest during the early years that sets up children for a more successful K-12 experience.

**What type of professional development do you support to ensure employee growth and success among teachers and support staff?**

I would support teachers with assessment PD, social-emotional curricula, and cultural-relevancy enrichment. I do support this effort but would have to consult with the data (hopefully from the teachers that reflects their wishes) before determining specific PD.

**Do you support public employee unions, collective bargaining, and the right to strike? Why or why not?**

Yes, I believe we should pay and treat our teachers with respectable and reasonable pay, treatment, and expectations.

**Do you believe teachers in our school district are fairly compensated? Explain**

I would have to consult with the data; however, I do think, in general, teachers do not get paid enough for their hours, dedication, and lift-impacting work.

**Do you believe the support professionals in our school district are fairly compensated? Explain.**

I would have to consult with the data; however, I do think, in general, support professionals do not get paid enough for their hours, dedication, and lift-impacting work.

**What do you see as the role of School Board as it relates to the day-to-day operations of the district?**

I see the School Board not involved at the day-to-day level. They could communication/work with Bridgette, if needed, on a regular basis. However, the goal is to let the admin do their jobs and use the meetings to complete actions, for the most part.

**As a school board member, what will you do to ensure effective communication between the School District and Borough Leadership?**

I would accessible for comments/feedback from the public. I would like to learn the chain of command first, then consult with the appropriate persons to get a pulse of the communication status between JSD SB and JSD Admin. If I learned of significant issues, I would work with the SB and Superintendent to find a solution that ensure thorough communication.

**In light of the state's finances and cuts to education funding, what would be your priorities for cutting and/or maintaining the budget and programs provided by our school district?**

I would like to see how I could be of assistance in advocating to raise the BSA at the state-level. My priority to cutting and/or maintaining the budget and programs provided by JSD would be driven by public engagement. The community voice(s) would drive the budget conversation. However, I would ensure that the curriculum supports stayed a top priority.

**What is your approach to attracting and retaining quality education employees?**

Communication. I would hope that the employees felt heard and knew their role. To attract quality education employees, I believe will be through competitive wages. To retain quality employees, I believe would be being heard and felt appreciate.

**Which member of the current school board most represents your views, and explain why?**

Martin Steptin because of his tending to the safety of our students and teachers. I also agree with his support of the TCLL program. I also am hoping to learn about the current CTE offerings with the goal of increasing this realm of JSD's programs.

**How well do you feel the current school board has addressed the issues pertaining to education in the world of Covid-19? What do you see as having been successful, what would you change?**

Satisfactorily. I am glad no one was severely or fatally impacted. I would change the ambiguity of authority during the emergency. I think the public should know who has authority to make decisions, either the Superintendent or School Board, under which circumstances. I think JSD could have dealt with the JDHS Boy's State basketball situation differently-by outlining who had ultimate authority to come to such a decision.

**Information concerning your campaign: a. Who is supporting your campaign? b. How much money do you plan to spend? c. What means of campaigning are you planning to do?**

- a. A few Juneau residents
- b. \$3K
- c. I hope to to some town halls via zoom.
- d. I hope to learn soon1



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