

Jacob Griffith 4/14/17

1) Please describe your personal experience and involvement with the Great Falls Public Schools or any other public school system in the past five years that lead you to believe that you will be a successful school board member.

1) If I were to get elected as a school board member, the only way I will measure success at my post is in how the students of our community grow; both as learners and citizens of Great Falls. I believe out of all the candidates running, I was the most recent to go through, and complete my secondary education in GFPS. My experience as a student in the system, I complied to all rules and suggestions brought forward to me to ensure my "success" later in life. Well, in today's economy and world, that is not quite the case. I would like to make changes to better prepare the students of GFPS to pursue whatever endeavor they value most. Despite having little to no interaction since I have graduated, I can think of no better avenue to exercise my passion for public education and this community than by being a representative for the community of Great Falls, as a school board member. I apologize, as it is my intention to remain rather vague, as I have not discussed any of my ideas with other members of the board, and I am only one voice. My one voice does not like to lie. I refuse to tell you I can, and will accomplish all of these plans, just to pander to the union for your endorsement. I can guarantee that no one will approach the issues that arise with the same intensity as myself. All of my eggs are in this basket.

2) What is your view of public education's purpose? Charters? Vouchers?

2) The purpose of public education is quite simply to educate and prepare the citizens of tomorrow, for the world of tomorrow. Ignorance is not bliss, ever. Knowledge truly is power, and is one of the things that no person can take from another person once they have attained said knowledge. Public Education should teach our children not only the knowledge they need, but the critical thinking and social skills that it would take to be a success in that world of tomorrow. I am a fan of charter schools, and judging from the research, they seem like they would be great. I believe that they would be as strong as the supervision that is executed over the school. Freedom is a great thing, and in the classroom can push both the students and the teacher to be their best selves. However, I also believe, education is fact based, and with the freedom in the classroom, it would be tough to keep one's own emotion out of teaching. It would have to be monitored, because if it ends up that some students are better prepared for "tomorrow" than others, based upon the instruction they received, we really are not making the community any stronger. I am an opponent of the voucher system. I grew up in Arkansas where I was fortunate enough to be able to attend a Magnet school. I was incredibly lucky to be given this opportunity as a child. My own personal experience in this area is where I draw most of my opinion from. A voucher system seems to leave schools not as diverse as if they would be non-voucher system schools. This is an issue for both today's world, as well as tomorrow's. The other reason why I am not a fan of the voucher system, is that, according to the Huffington Post, around 80% of vouchers are used to divert public funds to private areas. As a community that just had to levy money so we could update our technology and infrastructure in the district, is this the best option for our community? I say no.

3) What is your understanding of the local school boards role in the educational process?

I understand the school board to work with the superintendent to ensure that the district is preparing and educating the students for tomorrow. The board provides governance over the District so students can fulfill their potential, both in the classroom, and through school sponsored extra curricular activities.

4) What will be your top three (3) objectives, if elected to the school board?

4) If elected my top three objectives would be to: 1) Create a sustainable district within the community where we could provide a fair opportunity for every student that goes to school here. Sustainable meaning that we can work with the community to pass levy(s) if need be, but also upholding our end where we do not need so many levy's, so frequently.

2) My second objective would be to provide this community with the best public instruction available in the state of MT. I would like to make Great Falls Public Schools the premiere school district in the state. Offering the best instruction to our children, will only strengthen the schools and community at large. Each and every issue that comes before the school board is something that we will be judged on by the teachers in this district, and other districts. I want to make Great Falls a place where folks want to come and teach, because they know, through history, that the school board will not only aid them, but fight for them as well.

3) Finally, my third objective would be to become the greatest school board trustee in the history of our district. I would approach every issue with a tenacity that can not be matched. I want to fight for not only our schools, but our teachers, our students, and our community. All great things are built from the inside out. Communities are no different, and our schools are a cornerstone in our community. If we are able to achieve a solid foundation, here, with the schools, then we will be able to grow, as a community, on our success.

5) Do you have any specific changes you want to make in school district policies, programs, or the various curricula being offered? If so, what changes do you want to make and why?

I do not have any specific changes I would like to make at this time. I have not been able to meet with Ms. Lacey yet, and after reading the trustee handbook, I am no closer to understanding the current state of the district than I was before. That being said, I am a fan of the arts, extracurricular activities, as well as common core subjects. I am all about giving kids in our community the opportunity to achieve their potential. Who is to say in what subject area that is in? I would feel arrogant if I were to say "X is best for this district", when I have not even been able to see the results from Y.

6) Have you ever had the opportunity to belong to a union?

Did you join the union?

Why or why not?

I have never had the opportunity to be a part of a union.

7) Not only would I accept, but I would be honored to receive a union endorsement. I would consider myself lucky, when there are still so many of my own teachers, in this union. I would be honored.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to let me express my views to you and the Union. Have a fantastic weekend!

Jacob "Griff" Griffith