Why are you running for school board and why do you think you should be elected?

I have been directly involved with my son’s education in Guilford County schools from first grade through graduating high school. I am a Project Management Professional formally trained in seeing projects through to completion within budget, time, and scope. I have mentored young men in STEM, helping a rookie robotics team to the State finals. Guilford County Schools is one of the largest employers in Guilford County, and my business background will be useful in maximizing the taxpayer’s investment in public education. I want to be on the board to do the work of providing all our children with the high-quality education they deserve, while always being mindful of the equally important task of being good stewards of the finances.

What is your background in education?

I am not an educator by trade, but I do believe in supporting education. I am a product of excellent public schools. I have an MBA, a graduate certificate in Information Systems Management, an undergraduate degree in Information Systems, I hold a Project Management Professional certification, and I am a Demonstrated Master Logistician. I have aunts and sisters who are teachers and have been a GCS volunteer throughout my son’s time in school. Also, a board needs a diverse set of views and experiences. Not having a background in education is not necessarily a disadvantage to serve on a board.

Going into the new school year, what are the biggest issues that face schools and children in Guilford County?

We need to focus on the fundamentals of education. Our test scores are not great. Our Math and English EOG scores have been trending downward. In 2019 44% of students were not proficient in reading (grades 3-8). Many young people graduate lack the academic skills necessary to do well in the workforce or in the military. In my current job we offer employment to high school graduates with a wonderful benefits package. The requirements are to pass the Bennett Mechanical Comprehension Test and pass the ACT WorkKeys in Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, Workplace Documents and Workplace Observation, but we have applicants who cannot pass the tests. Quality of education must be our main effort. We also need to address staffing, especially our teachers. What more can we do to reduce the burdens on our teachers and make Guilford County Schools a great place to work?

What are your thoughts on critical race theory? What about teaching African American history in schools?

I am African American. African American history is American history, because we are “E pluribus unum”, out of many, one, one nation. We need to teach history with a view that we all live in this country together. I am a first generation American. My parents taught me to appreciate the opportunities that this country gave me and to respect the values of our Constitution. Regarding critical race theory, it seems that different people have different views on its definition. If you believe that critical race theory is simply teaching the uglier parts of American history, then I will agree with you that history should be taught. If you believe that critical race theory is a worldview that states that all aspects of life must be explained in terms of racial identities, then I would challenge that.

What about LGBTQ+ rights in schools?

We are a nation of laws, and I will enforce all laws applicable to students, parents, and staff. The state of North Carolina passed Healthy Youth Act in 2009. Each school board is required to pass the appropriate local policies to ensure that the requirements are met. All people’s rights should be addressed and respected.

In the past year, we've seen an unprecedented wave of book bannings by schools and school boards. What are your thoughts on that?

I am not for book banning. However, there needs to be a reasonable application of judgement on what certain children are exposed to. We don’t let minors drive, vote, own property or consume alcohol, so obviously there are some subjects that are not age appropriate. Teachers and parent should communicate and work together in the best interests of the children’s education.

If you were elected to the board, what changes/solutions would you push for?

I would push to clarify and enhance the Board’s responsibilities vs. the superintendent’s responsibilities. During the July 2018 Board Retreat it was recommended that the Board should devote significant time at each of its public meetings monitoring student achievement progress. I would push to spend more Board time on student outcomes and tracking student progress. We also need to work together to address the many openings we have in Guilford County Schools.

Anything else you’d like to mention?

During my reading I have learned that effective school boards stay focused on student achievement, govern together as a team with a common focus, govern in a transparent and open manner, maintain a high standard of integrity, and make high-quality decisions based on evidence and data. I would like to close with a quote from Dr. John Maxwell, “There is no more important mission than giving others the chance to dream of a better life and equip them to live it.” That is what I want to do as a school board member.