



**Candidate Questionnaire - Incumbent School Board Member
August 2022 Primary Election**

Your name: Jen Mitchell
Your email address: votejenmitchell@gmail.com
Your phone number: 239-216-2056
Your age: 49 years old
Today's date: 6/3/22

What year did you move to Southwest Florida, and where were you living previously?

I've lived in Naples for 25 years but was born and raised in Lafayette, Indiana.

What is your educational background and work experience?

I graduated from Purdue University with a degree in education. I taught for a year at Naples Park Elementary before my husband and I welcomed our first of four children. We made the decision that I would stay home to raise them. This allowed me to spend the past 17 years volunteering in my children's classrooms, serving on their school PTOs and SACs, as well as the Superintendent's District Advisory Council. However, in 2014, I decided to go back to work and got my Real Estate license.

Describe your community and School District activities, both before and during your Board service. How have those experiences benefitted you as a Board member?

My work as a Realtor has reinforced my belief that schools directly impact the local economy, for better or for worse, as they relate to property values, job growth and other such economic indicators. My time as a parent volunteer gave me a unique perspective as to the strengths and weaknesses of the District and inspired me to run for School Board as a way to continue the positive trend of improving student achievement, expanding career and technical education, and working to attract and retain great teachers.

Describe an initiative on which you showed leadership as a member of the School Board.

In terms of leadership around a particular initiative, I felt strongly that our students needed to get back to as normal a school experience as possible in the Fall of 2021 so I asked my fellow Board Members and Superintendent to ensure our students were able to celebrate Homecoming, as was originally planned, instead of postponing. Thankfully, we were able to get it done. Additionally, the district was not allowing parent volunteers back in the schools during the Fall of 2021 and I was able to get consensus among my fellow board members to allow them back. Lastly, I have worked to ensure that parents have a voice with regard to the media center books their children have access to.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SERVE.
Please email your responses to sandy@sparkers-soapbox.com
no later than June 3, 2022.

What changes, if any, would you like to make to the CCPS Policies?

I would like to change the policy regarding adding items to the agenda. Currently, the policy reads that the Board Chair “may request” an item be placed on the agenda in coordination with the Superintendent. I believe the Board Chair should be able to place an item, period.

What changes, if any, would you like to make to the CCPS Budget?

The budget change I would like to see is really more of a policy change around the budget, which is that an item over \$25,000 must come before the board for approval. As of now, an item must be over \$50,000 to come before the board. To clarify, this would specifically pertain to operational items only. I would also like to see a monthly report to the board of grant monies coming in and going out.

What changes, if any, would you like to make to the CCPS Leadership?

When the time comes, I would like for the board to engage the community in the process to select the next Superintendent.

What actions, if any, should the School District take to address the need for affordable housing?

I would love for the district to be part of the solution to our problem with regard to workforce housing. It would go a long way in helping with teacher retention. We currently have several parcels of land not slated for use in the next 20-30 years so creating a community where we allow employees to lease either tiny homes or mobile homes for a reduced rate would allow us to make use of the land AND help our employees with housing.

Please comment on your recent votes to approve textbooks.

I spent many hours going over the textbooks myself, as well as reviewing the work of the committees. I believe the books that were selected were the best available. They were selected off of the Governor’s list, however once the list was amended and a couple of the books were pulled, we paused the process to be sure we were in keeping with the Governor’s wishes regarding the approved list.

What are your views about the parental rights and charter school movements as they relate to the School District? How do they influence your actions and decisions as a School Board member?

In terms of charter schools, I think it’s important to have good choices, my only concern is the lack of oversight to ensure they are good. CCPS has great relationships with its’ charters, with the exception of one. As for parental rights, I will always stand for a parent’s right to have a voice in their child’s education. CCPS works hard to foster open communication and involvement with parents and families, including the use of emails, phone calls, and multiple social media platforms to relay important information. Additionally, CCPS encourages PTO and SAC participation and most recently created the “parent academies” to foster deeper parent and family involvement.

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