

# Richland One School Board Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this candidate questionnaire.

GROW is a non-partisan, pro-public education 501(c)(4) organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for children in Richland County School District One (Richland One) through education, advocacy, and leadership accountability.

An informed public is integral to a successful election. In that spirit, please answer the following questions. GROW reserves the right to publish candidate responses, in whole or in part, with attribution. If a candidate does not respond, GROW reserves the right to share a "Did Not Respond" statement.

**All responses must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, September 22, 2024.**

Thank you for your time and for running for office.

Email \*

christaforschoolboard@gmail.com

Name \*

Christa Williams

What seat are you running for? \*

At-Large

Seat 2

Seat 4

What in your background leads you to believe you would be an effective school board member? What skills \* do you bring to the office?

Richland District One has a budget of approximately \$409 million. That is a little less than the budget that the entire city of Columbia operates off of. There is more than enough money in the budget to improve our schools, work to engage our parents and establish public and private partnerships with a track record of success. We have to establish community partners to work with our families to rally support for our students so that they enter the classroom ready to learn and not dealing with home life trauma at school. Having students dealing with trauma creates overwhelming and uncomfortable days for our teachers. I would also work with the district administration and the General Assembly to ensure that we are teacher morale-driven and our teacher pay is competitive.

I, Christa Williams, will be a voice for the parents, teachers and students of District One. I will not ignore you, and I will return your phone calls. I will work hard for you and the needs of your community. I would like you to know that I am a phone call away at 803-378-0182. As a small business owner, I am accessible and available, and everyday that I go to work, I am working to build relationships with the community. My experiences working as an educator in South Carolina Corrections, with the South Carolina Army National Guard and at Columbia College have prepared me to fight for our schools because our voices really do matter.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you think Richland One is fulfilling its mission of educating students? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Failing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Excelling

What are the top three issues that the school board needs to address and why? \*

If I am elected as a Richland District One Commissioner, my priorities will be student, teacher and family focused. I want to ensure that we exercise fiscal management of the funds that the district receives. The approximate \$409 million budget should be used to improve the lives of students, and our school system should not be used as a politician's "personal lawsuit" fund or be used as a social club "cookie jar" to fund nonprofits and groups that have personal ties to politicians while producing little results for our families, teachers and schools. If we invest more in our students, we can retain our teachers and have healthier and thriving communities. I want to ensure that every student graduates high school with a trade that will prepare them for entrepreneurship, for college or and for the military. Also, these acquired trade skills will be an asset to student's families and households. When we build stronger families and keep our students engaged, our teachers are able to effectively do their jobs in the classrooms. We must hold our school administration and General Assembly accountable to promote better teacher morale through competitive pay and funding projects that are positive outcomes in our communities. As a Richland District One Commissioner, I will work hard to ensure that our budget is used to ensure that our schools are a gateway to success for our students and not a pipeline to prison.

**According to the most recent test results**, only **23%** of 8th grade students met or exceeded math expectations and only **45%** met or exceeded English Language Arts (ELA) expectations. With so many of our students failing basic reading and math, it's no surprise that **39%** of Richland One high school graduates are not career or college ready. \*

In light of these results, is the current superintendent meeting expectations? Please explain how he is or is not.

One of things that I remember vividly from grade school is the repetitive practices that were ingrained in our curriculum to assist me with learning how to multiply numbers and how to accurately write sentences. As a graduate of the public school system, I was able to successfully pass all standardized tests and pass all college prep courses during my time in grade school. Therefore, I believe that in order to boost student learning and test assessment scores, the curriculum in our public schools must align with the test assessment requirements.

I will promote that emphasis be placed on working with educators to ensure that students are engaged and prepared for test-taking by ensuring that students have as much practice as possible. In addition to practice, students should understand the "why" in the reason for growing their learning curve, and students should also be able to apply the course work that they are required to pass to real-life scenarios and understand the usefulness of the curriculum to their everyday lives. During this process of growing a student's learning curve and preparing them for test assessments, data must be collected along the way to determine the effectiveness of the district's effort, and we must always invest in our private and public partnerships to ensure that we are creating a positive school and community culture for our students to thrive.

The current Superintendent was hired in 2015 by the District One Commissioners which makes his tenure almost ten years, I do believe its time to provide District One with a fresh new outlook. If elected, I would work with my colleagues on school board to ensure that we have the best talent in the role of Superintendent.

Per the State Inspector General's report, Richland One "mismanaged" \$31 million related to the Vince Ford Early Learning Center. This mismanagement led the [State Superintendent](#) to elevate the district from "fiscal watch" to "fiscal caution." \*

What would you recommend as the course of action for this particular project?

The only way to regain trust with the public is to be transparent with all decisions that are made and to disclose information to taxpayers regarding public funds spent by District One. When it comes to the Vince Ford Project, I felt that the decisions were made behind closed doors without much public input. If elected, I will work with families, teachers and community partners to ensure that the decisions regarding District One are put back in the hands of the public. I will work vigilantly to establish the public trust in the Richland District One School Board through accountability and transparency.

As a school board member, will you pledge to: \*

Yes

No

make your decisions in an open and transparent manner that is compliant with FOIA laws?

govern by the established school board policies?

prioritize dollars going into the classrooms versus administrative overhead?

set measurable goals and expectations for the superintendent regarding student academic achievement?

What kind of actions do you support to hold the superintendent accountable for meeting goals and expectations? \*

I am an advocate everyday for underserved students in our District. There are schools in my neighborhood and other areas of the District that have below average grades, the lowest grading range, based on the SC Department of Education grading scale. I believe that our communities must take back control of the District to ensure that each student have a chance at success in our schools. We want to continue preparing our students for college through college prep curriculum, but the other layer that we must add back to our school curriculum is trade skills. I believe every student should learn a trade throughout their four years of high school. When we empower our youth with skills to build up the community, WE CANNOT LOSE, WE WIN BIG TIME!

In holding the Superintendent accountable for meeting goals and expectations, I would ensure all information regarding the Districts goals, progress and areas of improvement be published on the website, published in a handout/flier, email or text and also published on social media so that this information is easily accessible to parents who have children in District One. Families and the public deserve to know if there is a return on the investment of their tax dollars in all areas of the District.

Is there anything else you want to share with GROW regarding your candidacy?

Website: [www.christawilliams.com](http://www.christawilliams.com)

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61564387311967&mibextid=ZbWKwL>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/christaforschoolboard?igsh=MThxZG84MndhYTYwOQ==>

Phone Number: 803-378-0182

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