

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 *

erhursey4schoolboard@gmail.com

Name *

Ericka R. Hursey

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?

My formative education and professional experiences have prepared me to be an effective member of the Richland Once School Board. I have earned I have earned the following degrees: Bachelor's Degree (Business Education 1995)-South Carolina State University Masters Degrees (Urban Education 1996 & Education Administration 1999)-Cambridge College & USC Columbia Educational Specialist (Educational Administration 2015) USC Columbia Doctorate (Educational Leadership & Policy Management 2017)-Seton Hall University. Additionally, I have worked on the secondary level as Assistant Principal and Principal (middle and high) and the district level as Adult Education Director. My experiences in these roles and as a parent demonstrates that I understand the system from all dimensions. The knowledge I have gained working in these roles can be invaluable in making informed decisions leading to enhance student achievement, better working conditions and improved fiscal responsibility.

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? *

(1) Encouraging public accountability and transparency for the board and superintendent, (2) Supporting policy and procedures needed to ensure students have transformative educational experiences. (3) Employee retention and recruitment.

Schools are supported by public funds; therefore, the school board must keep the public informed. Information should be shared with the public in a format that is easily understood and can be interpreted by the public. Highlighting the need for transformative learning experiences, safe work environments, and data-driven decision-making are all supported by ensuring the board implements policies and procedures which are effective. An additional priority for Richland One should be to retain its current employees by ensuring they work in environments that are safe, free of bullying and retaliation, and supportive. Employees need to feel empowered to function as qualified professionals, with the freedom to express concerns openly and receive support in their roles. When employees feel safe, secure, and valued, they are more likely to contribute to recruitment efforts by speaking positively about the district.

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.

Based on the district's current performance, I would assess that the Superintendent is not meeting acceptable standards. The current goals for the Superintendent lack measurable outcomes, which makes it difficult to evaluate progress effectively. In my estimation, the Superintendents performance, operational and fiscal management have been substandard which have negatively impacted constituent, community relations and taxpayer trust in the district. As a board member, our fiduciary responsibilities are a critical function. We are responsible for ensuring taxpayer dollars are managed appropriately. Additionally, low student achievement and high employee turnover are significant indicators that the district's leadership is not successfully addressing key areas of concern.

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?

Despite the statements shared by the Superintendent and Board Chair, it is evident from the details provided in the complete Inspector's General Report on July 25th, and the follow-up memo submitted by the State Superintendent on August 22nd that the "district" violated state codes.

These violations prove the Superintendent failed in the areas of Leadership, Accountability and Transparency. There was mismanagement or lack of foresight in decision-making, lack of transparency, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning. Prior to construction of a new facility, a district-wide needs assessment to adequately assess the needs of the district should have been done. This assessment would be used to acquire data from the district and community to determine if and the type of educational building that is needed in the community. Upon completion of the assessment, this data would then need to be disaggregated, shared with stakeholders and used in the decision-making process. The absence of such an assessment indicates poor planning and oversight, especially for a project with potential long-term financial and educational implications.

The memo from Superintendent Weaver cited the district failure to obtain the proper School Building Permits and their fiscal practices. The district's failure to involve community members, teachers, parents, and students in this process undermines trust and reduces the likelihood of meeting the community's actual needs. This contributes to a disconnect between district leadership and those they serve.

Using a data-driven process would have ensured more strategic and fiscally responsible decisions. Because there is no evidence of an assessment and data, the district proceeded based on assumptions, rather than concrete needs which has resulted in lack of fiscal management and misuse of taxpayer funds.

To restore trust, it will be necessary for the district to be open, honest and transparent around all factors impacting the building of the early learning center. The residents affected and other community members should have an opportunity to express their concerns about the project. These events should be offered both virtually and in person, allowing for broader participation, while accommodating those who may have different preferences or schedules. The district will also need to offer the necessary support to remedy those homeowners impacted. To move forward, the district will need to consult with the right officials to implement a corrective action plan. Additionally, a needs assessment will need to be done to adequately determine the next steps for the acquired land.

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? *

To improve, the Superintendent's evaluation should have clear, measurable goals that align with the district's Strategic Plan, focusing on improving student outcomes and creating a more supportive work environment to retain employees. Effective oversight by the school board is critical in ensuring these changes are implemented. If not meeting the goals, the Superintendent should be placed on a plan of improvement and given the necessary support needed to be successful.

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

Voters should choose me over my opponent because I have more than 28 years of experience in education which includes degrees in Educational Administration and Educational Leadership, Management & Policy. I am an accomplished and successful school administrator with a strong background providing services for students in grades 6-12 and adult learners. My extensive experience and dedication to education make me a strong candidate for the school board. My expertise in working with at-risk youth, program development, budget/resource allocation, and strategic planning sets me apart from my opponent. As a school board member, I will adhere to the policies outlined in the South Carolina School Boards Association Policy Manual and approach decision-making with the district's best interests in mind. The focus will be on governance, ensuring that the Superintendent is held accountable by setting measurable goals aligned with the district's Strategic Plan.

I am eager to work collaboratively with our community stakeholders, county representatives and elected officials. Building upon and improving relationships will be paramount in moving Richland One forward. I have also been accepted into Leadership Columbia, where I will build relationships with city, county, and state leaders to deepen my understanding of governance and local issues. Additionally, I have worked closely with various educational boards and organizations, advocating for initiatives that enhance college and career readiness for all students in Richland One."

I am driven by a genuine desire to contribute positively to Richland School District One and advocate for students, employees, and parents. I know that Richland School District One can be a premier district and is committed to ensuring students receive a high-quality education in a safe and inclusive environment and employees are happy.

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