

## HOPKINS SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE FORUM Q&A 10.4.2023

### Question:

How do you feel Hopkins students are doing on standardized test scores and should the District make any changes to improve this area?

**Shannon Andresen:** With the Legislative Action Coalition, we have lobbied the State Legislature to get away from the MCA's. They are not functional or useful.

**Brooke Roper:** Standardized testing has been criticized for not accurately representing student achievements and teaching to the test. We should have conversations about them with parents, administrators and the state board.

**Kaj Thompson:** In Hopkins, MCA test scores have been declining. We need to put more focus on reasons (for the decline) and stop making excuses about it. We need to teach kids the basics and get them to grade level.

**Zhiming Zhao:** Standardized test scores are imperfect. I am more concerned about the underlying conditions they (MCAs) reflect. Can our children do math? Can they read at grade level?

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### Question:

Do you support the 2020 decision to remove Student Resource Officers (SRO's) from Hopkins High School? Why or why not?

**Shannon Andresen:** I want to clarify, I was a part of the process in 2020. It was not a decision to remove the SROs from Hopkins. It was a decision not to renew their contract. It freed up funds better off spent on student mental health, etc.

**Brooke Roper:** Standard The SROs is the result of a school safety plan. Before I can make a decision, I need to know the comprehensive safety plan of the district. I do support removing them (SROs) from our schools.

**Kaj Thompson:** My first thought was that this will make kids less safe. Is this an opportunity for well trained officers to build relationships with students? To teach kids how to interact with police after graduation? Let's have that conversation.

**Zhiming Zhao:** I have studied this subject in academic journals. With all the news of SRO's pulling out of school districts because they don't know how to handle adolescent issues, I support the decision to remove them.

## HOPKINS SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE FORUM Q&A 10.4.2023

### Question:

Do you feel the school district is adequately funded? What are your top funding priorities for the school budget?

**Shannon Andresen:** It is the State Legislature's constitutional duty to fully fund education and they are negligent in that duty. We are chronically underfunded. My top priority is funding Special Education and Mental Health.

**Brooke Roper:** We have a \$158 million budget. When I am a board member, my priorities are to invest in equity initiatives and adequate mental health for students & staff. We also need to address climate and environmental justice.

**Kaj Thompson:** Cumulative funding for Hopkins schools has kept pace with inflation. Enrollment loss does not help the situation. One priority is for greater transparency on our school budget and to focus more resources on actual teaching our kids.

**Zhiming Zhao:** Teachers frankly just don't get paid enough. I would welcome additional state funding. As for priorities, early intervention and diagnostics to find out where students are getting off track in math, reading and behaviorally.

## HOPKINS SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE FORUM Q&A 10.4.2023

### Question:

Should the district be making any changes to address school safety?  
If so, what would you recommend?

**Shannon Andresen:** We often talk about student safety, or school safety. It means different things to different people. I have worked to expand cyber security, mental health services, reduced student-to-councilor ratios. Expanding our inclusion paradigm.

**Brooke Roper:** I would love for the district to develop a comprehensive safety plan. What is our policy of teachers protecting themselves? Also, I would be in favor of community organizations to serve as violence interrupters.

**Kaj Thompson:** Fully funding mental health as best we can. Also, finding ways to track unsafe situations and to determine what we can do to make more informed, good decisions in the future.

**Zhiming Zhao:** Teachers Some of the school safety stems from mental health. Pandemic has stressed mental health systems. We really need to tackle mental health. I am open to shifting resources to helping that.

## HOPKINS SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE FORUM Q&A 10.4.2023

### Question:

Schools across the state are experiencing difficulties in attracting teaching candidates. What are your ideas to attract more to Hopkins?

**Shannon Andresen:** To attract more teachers, we need to shift how teachers are treated. We are not creating neighborhoods and environments where teachers feel valued, supported and welcome. Teachers on their current pay-scale cannot afford to live in Minnetonka. We need to change that.

**Brooke Roper:** Number one answer is to increase teacher salaries. Also, creative ways to change the culture, like teachers working a 4-day work week. We can bring in community leaders to teach on Fridays. I also support more teacher benefits.

**Kaj Thompson:** The budget indicates the increase in Administrative spending has been more than spending for teaching. What can we do to retain our teachers? When you have talented teachers, do what you can to keep them.

**Zhiming Zhao:** Two aspects, recruiting more teachers and retaining the ones we have. Why are we losing teachers? We need to figure out what is causing the need for teachers. We should try to pay them more, but there are other things to improve morale.

## HOPKINS SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE FORUM Q&A 10.4.2023

### Question:

How can the district better address the learning needs of diverse students, ranging from immigrants just learning English to the gifted and talented students?

**Shannon Andresen:** I live this every day. I was part of that Gifted and Talented “re-imagining” and welcome the way Hopkins has expanded our program from a pull-out isolated delivery, to having it available for all students.

**Brooke Roper:** Personalized learning options would be a goal. It has better outcomes and the students enjoy it. Bi-lingual education requires more resources.

**Kaj Thompson:** First, I advocate for bringing “Gifted and Talented” back so that we can challenge students that want to be challenged. There is no substitute for teachers explicitly teaching. Do we have the curriculum they need?

**Zhiming Zhao:** There is nuance and variation, but at the end of the day we need to allow our students to strive for something. Whatever their goals may be, I want our students to strive for something and to be able to say Hopkins made me a better person.

## HOPKINS SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE FORUM Q&A 10.4.2023

### Question:

Please identify a district policy which you believe needs revision and review to more effectively meet the needs of our students and the district?

**Shannon Andresen:** We have had an equity audit which flagged some policies that we continue to work on. I am most proud of our student rep cohort and they serve on our board's Policy Committee. They lead a lot of the policy changes. It is unheard of across the state.

**Brooke Roper:** One of the policies that stood out to me was Board Member Compensation. Board members need to be paid a living wage and salary for us to comprehensively do this work. It is hard to transform a school district on a volunteer basis. It does not provide room for diverse candidates.

**Kaj Thompson:** Looking at the board goals on the website, I think fiscal transparency is falling short of expectations. It is very hard to find thorough budget information on the district website. It would help parents understand how their tax dollars are being used.

**Zhiming Zhao:** I would want to enhance and update Vision 2031, to put more real steps on what the district is doing to translate and make it more specific to your child. How do the day-to-day activities in school translate to the stated vision? How can it be more clear?