

Questions for Candidates for Board of Education – At Large Post 1:

1. What do you feel are the top three issues facing the Glynn County school system?

Mike Hulsey (Incumbent):

Safety and Discipline – Given recent events school safety is at the top of everyone’s mind. We can all agree that teachers, students, administrators, parents, and all stakeholders that visit our campuses deserve to feel safe to focus on the education of all young people in Glynn County.

With that said we have already taken steps to increase security at our schools. Two years ago we added school resource officers back to all elementary schools that had gone without one since the recession. Cameras and other restricted access technologies are being installed in schools that previously did not have these updates. We continue to partner with local law enforcement agencies including FLETC to train our officers in active shooter and other critical scenarios. Although we have implemented a number of these strategies it is vitally important that we remain keenly focused on ways to keep our schools safe.

With regard to discipline we have taken a very hard stance on any student caught making terroristic threats. There is no place for this type of activity in our schools. Although we see spikes in these threats after school shootings in other districts across the country it is important for our students to know how seriously we take these offenses.

School Climate and Teacher Retention – With ever increasing mandates from the state putting more pressure on local systems and their teachers it is important that we keep lines of communication open between front-line staff and the Superintendent. I feel that historically some teachers and administrators were hesitant to come forward with ideas for fear of retaliation by administration. I’m confident that Dr. Cole will continue to work hard to foster the positive transfer of ideas so that we can implement strategies that will make our students more successful. Each year we lose about ten percent of our teaching staff. It is increasingly difficult to make sure we have the pipeline of qualified teachers to fill voids in experience left by retiring educators. I believe that our ability to reinstate raises for all staff will help with retention but that support of our staff in other ways will ultimately help us hold onto qualified staff.

Parental Involvement – This is something school systems have always struggled with, but the lack of parental involvement has become more of an issue as of late. When I talk about parental involvement I’m not just talking about getting parents to come to PTA meetings but getting them fully engaged in the educational process of their student. I feel that this can be accomplished by educating parents on processes that can be confusing and intimidating at times. From registering for classes to applying for colleges parents tend to shy away from things that aren’t familiar. We have to continue to host activities that engage parents in these processes and teach them how to work through issues with their children. We must get them reengaged in supporting our teachers especially with children that can be discipline problems by helping ensure that students come to us understanding personal accountability.

Markisha Butler:

I feel the top three issues facing the Glynn County school system are:

- **Improved Communication**-Board members, administrators, and staff need to be transparent, approachable, and actively engaged in the community. Various methods of communication should be utilized to reach the diverse community population.

- **Strengthening Partnerships**-By collaborating with other agencies, policy makers, and stakeholders we can overcome some of the community issues that impact student's ability to learn (i.e. poverty, mental health, etc.).
- **Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Teachers & Administrators**- We have a shortage of qualified teachers and administrators. Board members and administrators should be actively involved in recruitment efforts. We should look at offering incentives for individuals to seek opportunities within the system as well as incentives for high performing teachers. These incentives may be offered by a community partner or through other funding streams. An in-housing mentoring program for non-teaching employees seeking teaching positions as well as a leadership development program would be key to growing our own talent pool and promoting within the school system.

Trae Ross: Chose not to respond

2. Many students are graduating high school without the skills necessary to compete successfully in the workplace. What do you propose to address this problem?

Mike Hulsey (Incumbent):

In order to address this problem I feel that we need to do a few things. One is that we need to continue to build upon the soft skills training being implemented at the Golden Isles Career Academy. This training needs to be implemented at all levels and partnerships with each school through Partners in Education should be strengthened so that we fully understand what businesses are looking for. Our work study programs should be expanded and monitored more closely at the high schools to ensure that employers are seeing the skills in our students that are necessary for them to be successful.

Markisha Butler:

In effort to prepare high school schools to compete successfully in the workforce, we must be abreast of the latest workforce trends and high demand careers. I strongly believe the school system would be benefit greatly from Career Advisors housed at the high schools to help direct students and introduce them to essential career development tools (i.e. soft skills, interviewing, résumé development, etc.) as well as job training opportunities.

Trae Ross: Chose not to respond

3. Have you examined the current school system budget? How are the Board of Education priorities reflected in that budget? What would you add or change?

Mike Hulsey (Incumbent):

I have been very involved in the budget process for the board in my fourteen years as an at large member. Six years ago we lowered the millage rate and have kept that rate flat since then while seeing increases in graduation rate and key test score indicators. With approximately 88% of our budget going to salaries and benefits our focus is clearly on classroom instruction. Despite a popular belief the Glynn County Board of Education is not top heavy at the central office. We currently rank 169 of 203 systems in the state with regard to cost per pupil for central

office staff. Programs have been strenuously researched before implementation to make sure they will be effective and provide the appropriate ROI to the tax payers of Glynn County.

Interventions such as Reach 180 and System 44 have helped students increase their reading level by two grades in many cases. Reading is vitally important as rigor has been increased in all subject areas.

Markisha Butler:

In examining the current school system's budget, I am unable to make a strong assessment regarding the budget because the numbers are broad and do not provide a line-by-line examination of the budget. However, Governor Nathan Deal has increased the revenue estimate for FY '19 and most of that increase is going to K-12 education to end the austerity cut to the QBE (Quality Basic Education) formula.

Trae Ross: Chose not to respond

4. What would you do to increase citizens' knowledge about School Board activities and inform citizens about how the School Board is spending citizens' tax dollars?

Mike Hulseley (Incumbent):

I strongly feel the current Board of Education is one of the most transparent we've seen in some time. From televising and streaming it's meetings to the financial dashboard that can be found on the district's website more information is available now than ever. Dr. Cole has implemented sessions in the evenings at schools across the county to address issues whether they be financial or otherwise. I believe we've seen unprecedented cooperation between all media outlets and the board in recent years. Dr. Cole is actually the first superintendent to be a guest on Straight Talk in at least 8 years. One area we can improve upon is direct communication to our stakeholders and business leaders through the Chamber of Commerce with regard to helping all citizens understand the BOE budget. With fixed, mandated cost increases exceeding \$3 million per year it is vitally important that we communicate clearly and regularly with all stakeholders.

Markisha Butler:

Communication is vital. To increase citizens' knowledge about School Board activities and inform citizens about how the school board is spending citizen's tax dollars, I would utilize, automated telephone, email, and text message services, host town hall meetings and open houses, create newsletters, and utilize social media platforms.

Trae Ross: Chose not to respond

5. Are the current measures of student achievement the right ones? What would you change or add?

Mike Hulsey (Incumbent):

I think individually we have the appropriate measurements of student achievement in place. When you look at Milestones, ACT, End of Course, and SAT scores you can a clear picture of student achievement and teacher effectiveness. We should put more emphasis on teacher effectiveness in high school with regard to AP classes so we get clear picture on how well students are being prepared in those advanced classes.

Markisha Butler:

While testing is important, it is equally important to capture other pertinent data for a student's progress to be tracked. The school system must continue to look at students holistically. There are many factors that can influence how a student performs. There must be a focus on creating wrap around systems (links to social services, mental health services, summer reading/tutoring programs, etc.) so they are able to focus on learning and being their best selves.

Trae Ross: Chose not to respond

6. What ideas would you propose for the Glynn County school system to better align its curriculum with the need for a more advanced workforce in Glynn County?

Mike Hulsey (Incumbent):

We need to continue to build upon the successes of the Golden Isles College and Career Academy. The graduation rate for students who attend at least two semesters at GICCA is 96%. Within the home high schools we need to have instructional coaches and professional development personnel within the system meet with business leaders to hear first hand what skills are most important to businesses in Glynn County so we can help our teachers pass that knowledge along to our students.

Markisha Butler:

The Georgia Department of Education has mandated that high schools implement a senior capstone project for 2017-2018 school year. The project allows the student to focus on a career area of interest and spend time with a mentor, complete a research paper, develop a portfolio, and make a presentation to a community committee member with the overall goal of having the necessary soft skills to be employable. To build a more advanced workforce, I would like to see more local and regional employers come to the table to develop registered apprenticeship programs. It's an employer-driven model that is proven to be a win-win for all involved. It combines on-the-job learning with related classroom instruction. It's a collaborative partnership with USDOL, the technical college, business industry, and school system. The student can attain a national credential as well as a technical certificate of credit, diploma, or associate degree from Coastal Pines Technical College with the overall goal of becoming an employed and productive citizen who gives back to the community.

Trae Ross: Chose not to respond

