

CFF Ferndale School Board Candidates Forum
Sunday, April 25, 2010 from 1:00 – 2:30 pm
at the Kulick Center
Election: Tuesday, May 4, 2010

1. Basic Information

Name _____Kristy Stoll_____

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2. Introductory Information

- a. Did your children attend Ferndale schools? Why or why not?
I currently have a third grader at Kennedy Elementary School in the Ferndale School District. I also have a four year old who will enter the district in the fall of 2011.
- b. Why are you running for the School Board?
I am running for the position of Trustee of the Ferndale School Board because I have passion. I have a passion for my community, I have a passion for education and I have a passion to serve. I feel my passions combined with my skill set make me an ideal candidate for this position.
- c. What specific experiences have you had that would prepare you for this position?
I have an undergraduate accounting degree and an MBA in General Management and Marketing. I have experience in banking, non-profit, automotive and retail. I am currently a Marketing Instructor at Macomb Community College. In addition to my professional experience, I served on the Board of Directors of the Junior League of Detroit for three years, where I helped to establish early childhood literacy as the organization's primary philanthropic focus.

3. Issues that Face the Ferndale Schools

- a. Give your assessment of how the middle school/high school/one building arrangement is working out.
After speaking with a number of middle school parents I have learned that it is working out beautifully. The staggered bell schedule and lunch times eliminate the concern about kids being in the hallways and lunch room together. Security is ever-present. Anxiety over the transition from middle school to the high school is reduced if not even eliminated for some. Additionally, some students are afforded opportunities that they wouldn't otherwise have without the close proximity, such as being in the high school musical or some 8th graders being selected for the high school marching band.
- b. What changes/challenges will the Ferndale Schools face due to changes in state funding?

Reduced funding from the state will clearly make every school district do one of two things: reduce costs or increase revenues (or a combination of the two). I support current revenue efforts such as UHS, the selling of administrative services and offering adult and alternative education. I would be open to additional innovation in revenue before supporting cutting of programs or services.

- c. Is the university/high school program living up to expectations?

I believe the recent Magna word is a testament to the success of UHS. Its unique combination of academic rigor, a focus on college and career and real-world experience is paying off in terms of college acceptance and entrance. In terms of meeting student expectations, I've talked to a couple recent graduates and they were pleased with their experience at UHS. They mentioned a few areas still in need like facility issues (that are being addressed) and some course offerings they had anticipated that never came to fruition during their time at the school, such as video game programming and design. But they recognized that UHS is still a "work in progress" and that the efforts are being made to address these minor issues.

- d. What effect has the "Schools of Choice" program had on Ferndale schools?

"Schools of Choice" has unfortunately led to a large exodus of our students/families to other public school districts, primarily Royal Oak and Berkley. It pains me to see this and I feel it ultimately challenges those families' ties to our community. On the other hand, "Schools of Choice" has allowed us to fill open capacity in our school buildings and bring in revenue, which has allowed us to maintain our status as a full-service district. I am proud that we have not been forced to cut programs that our students value so much, such as the fine arts and athletic programs.

- e. How should the success of a school district be measured? And how do you see Ferndale ranking, based on that criteria?

There is no one way to measure the success of a district. Clearly, we want to have confidence in our academics and this can be measured by MEAP scores, ACT/SAT scores, college acceptance and scholarship awards, etc. We want to have trust in our school safety and can measure that through looking at incident reports. We want success in our non-academic areas like the fine and performing arts and athletics. Success in these areas can be measured by awards, recognition, records and championships. The harder things to measure are the reputation and the perceptions of our success. We should measure perceptions through tools like surveys and focus groups. However, the key to any measurement system is to use them properly. When the results come in, action plans can be developed to address areas of need, rather than using those results as a punishment tool.

As for how Ferndale is doing. I think we are doing well, but we could do better. For example, the MEAP scores are good and have been improving, but we have to continue improving the scores to reach the level of some of the other schools in our area. I think the perception of our success, or lack thereof, is one of the biggest problems. I think that many in our community don't know how well our students are doing academically, athletically and in the fine arts. I don't know if they realize how

much our students are doing to give back to the community and become better citizens. I think we could be doing a better job of communicating this to all community stakeholders.

- f. Should the curriculum be the same for all students? Why or why not?
I believe there should be a core curriculum that each student should have to complete. I truly believe that every student can learn in all areas – there are no throw-aways. Beyond a core curriculum, I think students should be able to pursue subjects in which they have a personal interest or aptitude.
- g. Please list the three (3) most positive things you can say about our school district.
1. We have amazing fine arts.
 2. We are financially sound and have not had to cut programs.
 3. We have an extremely involved group of families and community members who support our schools in many ways – from volunteering in the schools, to tutoring, to mentoring, to leading student groups, to attending sporting events, to raising funds and the list goes on and on!
- h. Please list the three (3) issues that you see as problematic or that definitely will be addressed by the Board in the next two years.
1. We know state budget cuts are coming and we will have to be innovative in revenue and cost management in order to maintain our status as a full-service district.
 2. We continue to lose students to other school districts, especially Royal Oak and Berkley. We need to stop this in order for the community to continue to thrive – a successful school district is in everyone’s best interest, as it draws residents, businesses and funding to our community.
 3. Our teachers are currently working without a contract and that is definitely going to have to be resolved.

4. THE BIG ONE

Why should I send my child to Ferndale Schools?

You should you’re your children to Ferndale schools for the four C’s: Choice, Culture, Community and Citizenship.

CHOICE: Although we have a small community and district we still offer choices to our families and students. We have great elementary schools with unique programs in all schools that appeal to a variety of learning styles and needs. Our children are introduced to music at young ages and have the opportunity to start playing an instrument in the fourth grade. Like our elementary schools, there are choices in middle school too – a traditional academic program and one with more academic rigor. Even in high school there are choices from the variety of fine arts programs to schools like CASA (Center for Advanced Studies and the Arts) and University High School.

CULTURE: Ferndale is one of the most diverse school districts around – racially, ethnically, socioeconomically and in lifestyle. This diversity is an amazing teacher. Our district is a wonderful place to raise socially-aware and accepting children.

COMMUNITY: Many of us chose to live here because of the type of community that exists. We have a caring, involved, active, open and engaged group of citizens who genuinely love the community. This sense of community extends into the schools.

CITIZENSHIP: The school administration and staff want to turn out good citizens and there is an emphasis on this in each of the schools. Character education isn't just a saying it is an over-arching theme throughout the district.

Return this questionnaire to Kat Bruner James at 263 Vester St or email to kbruner@albion.edu.

Thanks!