

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

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2. Introductory Information

a. Did your children attend Ferndale Schools? Why or why not?

I have two daughters that attended Ferndale Schools starting in Kindergarten and graduating from Ferndale High in 2008. They attended Ferndale Schools because my husband and I believed that Ferndale Schools would provide them a well rounded education that would offer academic, fine arts and athletic opportunities. We also liked the opportunity for them to attend school with an economic and ethnically diverse population of students that would better prepare them for the real world.

b. Why are you running for the School Board?

I am running for re-election to the School Board because I believe the challenges that are coming to our school district will best be addressed by an experienced board. By all indications we will be facing additional funding issues and we have recently seen the need to act quickly.

c. What specific experiences have you had that would prepare you for this position?

I have served on and have held office in many school organizations and related committees including, PTA at all grade levels, the District's Long Range Planning Committee, the Ferndale Education Foundation, the Citizens for Quality Schools Bond Initiative, I have served on five District Committees and I am completing my first 4 year term on the School Board where I held the position of Treasurer for two years. I currently chair the Eagles Pledge (a new organization to assist Ferndale graduates after graduation) and I hold office on the Woodland Park Improvement Association board.

3. Issues that Face the Ferndale Schools.

a. Give your assessment of how the middle school/high school/one building arrangement is working out.

My children were in the first 7th grade class to attend the new middle school. Knowing many parents had concerns, I worked on the parent transition committee to help make

the transition a success. As in any new program there were a few small glitches that were addressed immediately. Two years later the transition from 8th grade to 9th grade went very smooth. Our middle school students now have a broader selection of electives, athletic facilities and a smoother transition to high school. And many of our middle school students don't see a need to be separated from the high school students. I believe it brought many positive program and student enhancements to our 7th and 8th graders.

b. What changes/challenges will the Ferndale Schools face due to changes in state funding?

The changes/challenges will be directly connected to the funding we will receive. At this point no one knows that number. However, unlike other districts, we started ten years ago with the restructuring to address funding problems and currently find ourselves in better shape than neighboring districts. Our big challenge will be keeping a "full service district".

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

Yes! We need to congratulate all those who have worked so hard to make this school a success. There have been two graduating classes and both have graduation rates in the high ninetieth percentiles. The student body has won multiple first place awards in vehicle design, they have patented student designs and School Board member Keith Warnick just accepted the 2010 Magna Award on behalf of the district giving the program national recognition.

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

The Schools of Choice program is one of the many ways that help stabilize Ferndale's overall enrollment numbers. We participate in the Schools of Choice program because our neighboring school districts participate. It is a "rob Peter to pay Paul" program designed to give parents "choice". Ferndale currently limits Schools of Choice enrollment at 15 percent and our current numbers come in below this cap.

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

There are many measurements that can be taken to evaluate the success of a school district. MEAP scores, graduation rates, financial stability, program offerings, how safe is the student environment, how a student adjusts into the real world after graduation, alumni achievements, etc. But it's the summation of these measurements that tell the story. I believe Ferndale Schools can stand toe to toe with any School District, Charter School or Academy in the State or elsewhere.

f. Should the curriculum be the same for all students? Why or why not?

I believe curriculum opportunities for all students should be the same and academic expectations should be high for every student. I see curriculum being delivered with expertise and addressing multiple learning styles. I believe each student's abilities should be challenged and by high school their interests should be encouraged and explored. And, I believe each student should have quality guidance throughout their education career where families can address individual student needs.

g. Please list the three (3) most positive things you can say about our school district.

First, the Ferndale Schools offers a well rounded and exceptional academic experience where students also learn the acceptance of other cultures and people who may be different than themselves with an education that will take them anywhere they want to go in life. Second, we have an Administration that should be applauded for their success in bringing the district to a sound financial standing, notwithstanding the financial cuts of recent years, by finding alternative resources, thus adding to the quality of our offerings. The most recent examples include a College Success Advisor that will follow our students to college offering assistance in navigating the first year and a Community Volunteer Coordinator who will work with families and the community offering our students enhanced educational experiences. And third, we are committed to staying a full service district that services all students.

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.

The first issue will continue to be funding which will be directly related to maintaining a "full service district". And depending on the severity of the funding issues we will be working hard to maintain the positive relationships we have with our staff and with the community.

4. The Big One

a. Why should I send my child to Ferndale Schools?

Ferndale Schools offers program choice to parents, academic challenge to student and has a caring community of administrators, instructors and staff members. There is a supportive volunteer community with extracurricular program offerings. It is a full service district where students will learn about different cultures and what it means to be inclusive. There is an open door policy at all levels and the community is welcome! It is a progressive thinking district that is finding alternative means of funding to maintain and add to its offerings when neighboring districts are cutting services. Ferndale provides for students from pre-school to college. Students have the opportunity to graduate with life skills that take them where ever they want to go in life.

