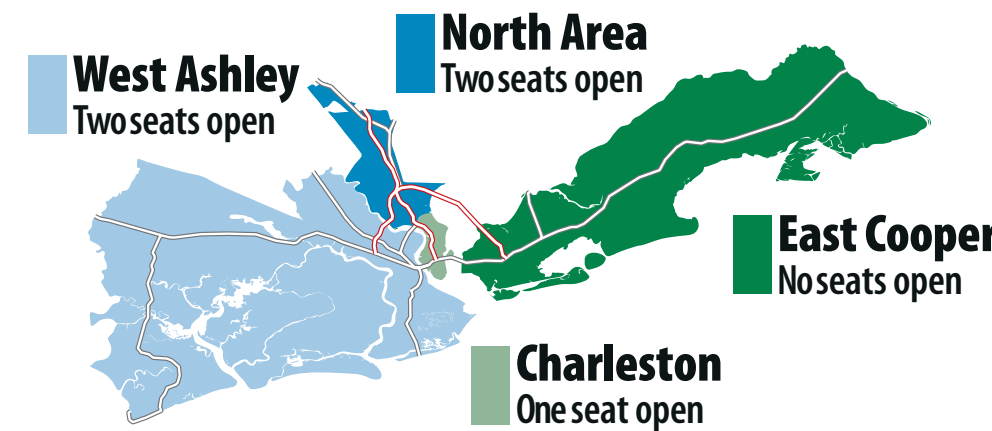


Q&A

with Charleston County School Board candidates



How the school board election works

Voters will choose five new members of the Charleston County School Board in the Nov. 4 election. The nine-member board sets policies for the district's 80 schools, hires and evaluates the superintendent and sets tax rates by approving budgets.

Candidates run for specific seats on the board, but they are elected by the entire county. For example, Holly-wood residents can vote for the North Charleston candidates. The North Charleston candidates, however, must live in that area.

On the ballot, candidates will be listed alphabetically and by the districts in which they live: City of Charleston (downtown), North Charleston, and West Ashley. The School Board race is nonpartisan, which means membership in a political party is not indicated on the ballot.

School Board candidates (Color corresponds with mapped districts)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p>Toya Hampton Green (i) Downtown</p>	What grade would you give current schools Superintendent Nancy McGinley? Why?	What should the board's role be when it comes to the superintendent (i.e. would you support a more hands-on board that is involved in the district's day-to-day operations or a policy-setting body that would set overall agendas for the superintendent to implement)?	Should the School Board set specific expectations for the school district in terms of measurable objectives, such as its graduation rate, number of unsatisfactory-rated schools and its achievement gap? If not, why? If so, can you give specifics on the expectations you would set (i.e. the number of unsatisfactory-rated schools should drop by two each year, etc.)?	Would you support increased funding for schools (i.e. a tax raise)? Why/why not?	Do you think public education is adequately funded in Charleston County? If so, why? If not, what should happen (i.e. funding should increase 10 percent annually or funding should increase 100 percent annually)?	For the past few years, the school board has directed officials to scrutinize and improve 10 percent spending annually. Are there any areas that should be off-limits, and are there any areas that the board should be digging into more deeply? Please provide examples.	Would you support giving new charter schools space in school district buildings? Why/why not?	What is the district doing or not doing for charter schools that you would like to see change?	Under what conditions would you support closing, consolidating or restructuring schools in Charleston?	Which school board candidates are you going to vote for in this election?
<p>Marvin Stewart Downtown</p>	I would give Dr. McGinley a C. The superintendent needs to be more forceful in dealing with the different factions on the board and informing the public about the inequities that exist within our school system. I would support a strong superintendent, not caring about job security, but making good decisions for all of our children.	The board should set effective policies, insist on a challenging curriculum for every school and search for committed administrators and teachers. The board should not micromanage. It is extremely important that the superintendent have strong leadership qualities and a sense of urgency to improve this school system.	Yes, the board must set achievable objectives pertaining to graduation rates, closing the achievement gap and eliminating failing schools. I don't believe in five-year plans or even a one-year plan. Our child has this year in a particular grade. Improvements must be immediate or parents should remove their child from failing schools.	I do not believe in raising taxes. However, I am open to securing additional revenue as federal and state governments continue to reduce resources to school districts. I elected, I pledge to examine the entire budget very closely.	Yes, I believe our school system is adequately funded. The majority of the budget is for personnel and our employees do a great job. Possibly, the superintendent can obtain additional revenue through grants and other sources.	There should be no sacred cows in looking at the budget. Again, my focus would be to provide as many resources as possible to failing schools, which would reduce the high drop-out rate in this district.	Yes, I support converting school buildings into charter schools and utilizing those that are closed. It is within the law and the board should support parents who want a better education for their children. This does not exist in 50 percent of our schools.	The district should not impede the process to establish charter schools. Five members of the School Board can guarantee that successful charter schools remain a viable part of this school system.	I support closing every failing school. However, this is not logistically possible. This is why I am a strong supporter of parents transferring children out of failing schools. Restructuring and consolidating schools was not successful in the past and was simply a gimmick.	No comment.
<p>Chris Collins North Charleston</p>	I have not worked closely with her, however from the media reports, she is doing very well and I would give her a B+.	A board that is more policy-setting with agendas for the superintendent to implement.	The board should set specific goals/expectations. For example, we should aim to improve yearly one-third of all unsatisfactory schools with a long-term goal of having all successful schools in Charleston County School District by 2011. Also, we should aim to get at least a 90 percent graduation rate.	I would not support a tax increase, but I would seek funds from another source. For example, the South Carolina Education Lottery. Enough money is being raised by the lottery to contribute to Charleston County schools and still have enough money left over to meet the state's other needs.	No. Funding should increase by changing the state funding formula to make it fair to Charleston County School District. The increase should depend on actual needs.	No areas, in general, are off limits, but you certainly do not want to cut teachers' pay. If anything, they should be given increased salaries with incentives. I would cut back on consultant spending.	I would support this if it does not interfere with ongoing educational programs.	The district is giving more money to one charter school than the law requires.	Only when all possible means have been exhausted to make schools satisfactory or, by consolidating, we can save a lot of money and still educate the students.	I see myself simply voting for the good of all students in Charleston County School District, and it does not matter if I'm in the majority or minority. I'm voting for Mattese Lecque. I haven't decided on the rest of them yet.
<p>Elizabeth Kandrac North Charleston</p>	I would give Dr. McGinley a C. I do not feel she fully supports the mission of the constituent boards. I have not seen her push for a new vocational or technical school, and she was reluctant to place the Charleston Charter School of Math & Science on the School Board agenda.	There could be a compromise of both a more hands-on board, involved in day-to-day operations, without getting too bogged down in minuscule details, as well as a board being the policy-setting body that would present agendas for the superintendent to implement. I will have a better feel for the practicality of this when on the board.	I believe when Superintendent Goodloe arrived in October 2003, she stated all schools would be rated satisfactory by 2006. We have a tremendous problem: low graduation rates, students who are functionally illiterate, etc. The school board can set specific expectations that can be measured, but with realistic, measurable objectives.	I do not believe raising taxes (or "more money") is the answer to our failing schools. There is waste in our school district. I believe the school district's budget should be published, available online, and open for scrutiny by the tax-paying public. We should stop spending frivolously first, then work from there.	With all the waste I saw as a teacher in the Charleston County School District, I contend public education is adequately funded in Charleston County. Everybody should know where their money is going, hence the need to publish the budget.	I think every area should be open to scrutiny. Some of the areas I saw waste included after-school programs not doing what they were intended to do, breakfast and lunch programs implemented improperly, and programs, consultants, and attorneys that do not perform in the best interest of the district.	School district buildings are best-suited for charter schools. They eliminate costly rent, since the district owns the buildings.	I would like to see the district embrace charter schools and learn a lesson from them: when the community (parents, etc.) is involved and supports these schools, they succeed. All public schools could learn from that.	I would consider the superintendent's sixteen points before supporting the closing, consolidation, or restructuring of schools in Charleston. I would highly recommend listening to the constituent school boards, and remember that there is a certain number of schools that must remain open in each district.	I will vote for John Graham Altman and David Engelman in West Ashley and Marvin Stewart in downtown. These candidates are fiscally conservative, know and admit the school district has been broken for a very long time, and yet are optimistic that a new school board will not ignore what is wrong.
<p>Mattese Lecque (North Charleston)</p>	Her tenure has been short, and she is already evaluating means to work smart and not hard; as an example, she is working closely with the community to ensure we can make the shortfall budget work best by consolidating resources. This will be very political but is something that needs to be closely scrutinized.	The board should not be involved in day-to-day operations of the district. We have to allow the superintendent to do her job, let the teachers teach, and we assist with the bigger issues that are usually confronting the board, as trustees.	The superintendent should have her team decide what the goals are for the district and we, the board, should measure her performance by the accomplishment of the goals she completes. She should also use a similar tool as a performance measure for her staff.	No, we all are experiencing economic woes just as everyone else is in the world. Pouring more money after bad investments is not good business. We need to fix what ails us, reinvent what is needed, and build on the resources we have to stay on task.	The board does not have the ability to tax since it was taken away. We rely on businesses and homeowners. Additionally, it would be terribly presumptive of me to place a percentage on any budget matters until I am able to make an assessment for the level of funding that is required for our district.	There should be no areas that are off-limits. If any area was to be deeply scrutinized, it should be use of outside resources, as an example, contractual agreements for outside services. When elected, this would be an area of major concentration.	I would support giving new charter schools space in the school district's buildings if the opportunity served the district to meet its goal of excellence and it provided the same educational opportunities for all children in the district.	According to state law, charter schools get more of the district's budget than a regular school its size. The state funding formula is not fair and I would like to see more equity in the funding.	If it serves the district to achieve the mission under budget cuts and it provided a safe environment for all students and staff, and if it served to increase communication with the community. Lastly, if it means multiplied efforts to improve overall student achievement.	I am still in the process of listening to and making a decision about my peers running for the seats that are vacant on the school board. So, currently, I am not sure who I am casting my vote for at this juncture.
<p>John Graham Altman West Ashley</p>	I've never worked with nor even met the current superintendent. Therefore, I couldn't give an intelligent "grade" anymore than you'd expect a teacher to give a "grade" to a student whom the teacher has never taught nor met.	A competent board hires good staff, sets policy and standards, and keeps a sharp eye out. Good school trustees are on duty every day to listen to the public. The most important people in the school system are the children, not the board or any superintendent.	All objectives must be measurable, or they are not objectives but a wish list. Specifically, it is totally unacceptable to have any of our schools labeled "unsatisfactory" or "below (state) average." That's a disgrace and the public should be in revolt!	I don't vote to raise taxes. I search for responsible ways to cut taxes.	The school district costs us over a half-billion (that's billion with a "B") dollars a year and the return to children, citizens, families and taxpayers is nothing like that. The board wastes money now and I won't raise taxes.	If the School Board is doing what your question says (reviewing 10 percent of the budget a year) it should stop, and apologize to the public. A good school board scrutinizes 100 percent of its budget every year and monitors the expenses daily.	Yes, I want to help the public, not get in its way.	The school board needs to welcome charter schools, teachers and parents as partners in education, not as a rebel force to be suppressed.	Educational need.	Besides me, I'm going to vote for David Engelman, Elizabeth Kandrac and Marvin Stewart. They asked me for my vote, and they are conservatives. We need to rein in the school board spending, and they'll help me get schools safe.
<p>David Engelman (i) West Ashley</p>	She's been in her position but a year, so, if I grade her on that, I would assess her success on various initiatives as between a B and a C. If I add in the time spent as chief academician, her efforts would result in a failing grade.	The board has adopted a hands-off stance. I can't be involved in the day-to-day operations of the school district, nor would I want to be. However, this district just keeps trying different programs that have little effect on the statistical results, with the board majority enabling a kind of experimentation at taxpayer expense.	Personally, I look only at the aggregate state statistics addressing our SAT scores and the graduation rate — the top and the bottom. So, regardless of the inputs, I know the output. And that's all that really matters to me.	No. The district's budget is more than enough. Like other institutions nationwide, our district portrayed its financial situation as a "perfect storm" — a childish attempt at emotional blackmail. Tens of millions of dollars of program and school failures make me wary of district leadership's maturity, judgment, experience and ability.	Yes. The amount of money spent per pupil exceeds that of most private school tuitions. South Carolina school districts with the highest PACT scores spend \$1,200 less per student than poor-performing districts. There's an inverse relationship between dollars spent and results achieved.	Everything needs to be on the table, and not just on the local level. State and federal expenditures need to be examined. Salary-setting, use of re-employed annuitants, non-profits, consultants, contracting, programs, bonuses, positive behavior models, recruiting, screening, hiring, nepotism, firing, school board affiliations, Title 1, Head Start, etc.	The space was bought and paid for by the taxpayer, not the school district. Use the schools in a manner that gets results.	In public, the district and some of the board majority seem to support charter initiatives. In private, those same people exhibit disdain for the advent of the charter school. I think it's a control issue born out of insecurity. But the best ideas always come from the fringes, not from bureaucrats.	Where the effort and dollars expended cannot point to a positive academic trend. We need to be results-oriented — to see quantifiable sustained progress. We need to redirect a significant portion of our effort to vocational education based on viable and current trade skills. And this country needs to address the jobs issue.	I'll be voting for Marvin Stewart, Elizabeth Kandrac and John Graham Altman. Those are the conservatives who are running.
<p>Chris Fraser West Ashley</p>	I think that I would give Dr. McGinley a B+. I believe she articulates a vision that the community can see, and given time, will effect the changes needed for success.	We should work WITH the superintendent to establish a vision and agreed upon goals and objectives, and then work together to support this direction, otherwise, we are not going to achieve the best outcomes.	Yes. Goals are goals, not all which can always be achieved but at least we should set targets and work toward them.	Not today. Until we can prove to the public that we have achieved operating efficiencies and deliver results, we must not raise taxes. However, we need to examine the funding formulas now in place and make changes to insure adequate and stable funding.	No. We need to establish a budget that is efficient and effective to allow all schools to be excellent, until we know what that is, I don't know much. We are going backwards now based on reliance on sales tax, and some expenses rise annually outside of our control.	Nothing should be off limits to examination. Our budget issues will not allow any sacred cows.	Again, the law allows for this. My concern is that if we are considering reducing the number of schools for budget reasons, but we then fill them with charter schools, we have made no progress in creating savings to the taxpayer and negatively affect the breadth of education elsewhere.	The process for approval, renewal, etc should be simplified and objective, not subjective.	50 words is too short. We should not bus children for hours. We should seek enhanced educational opportunities but respect the community aspect of each school. There is no single solution or answer here.	I would be happy to serve and work with any of them. If elected, I will maintain my independence in decision-making and voting.
<p>Ann Oplinger West Ashley</p>	I would give her an A. Her Charleston Achieving Excellence plan is a well-constructed, systemic approach to improving our large and challenging school district. She has created focus groups in order to address district needs and she has hired new highly qualified principals to strengthen our schools.	School boards are policy-making trustees, who create a district vision, set goals and expectations and hire the superintendent to carry out those policies. They should support the superintendent's efforts to improve student performance, review any policies that impede that process, and hold her accountable.	Of course. That is setting policy in its purest form. Not setting those policies is an abdication of responsibility. We need measurable objectives to focus and drive accountability.	Given our current state funding formula, we have limited opportunities to make much of an impact on educational funding in our district. More money doesn't guarantee excellent education, but you can't expect quality education without fully funding it. We must continuously assess the impact of how we spend money.	No. But that depends upon what the district goals are. If we truly want to improve the educational level for ALL of our students, we must fully fund our schools based upon need. Currently we are not doing so.	We must ensure that classroom instruction is not compromised, that high-quality instruction and learning are taking place in every classroom, and that schools have the resources needed to meet district and board goals. All programs and systems should be evaluated for effectiveness on an ongoing basis for continued improvement.	That would depend upon the results of the School Redesign Initiative. As funding and the charter school laws currently exist, providing space for charter schools at no cost will bankrupt the school district. Surely that's not the intent!	Charleston has more charter schools than any other district in the state and has placed a district person to oversee district charter schools. I have received positive reports from a group working toward charter status that this support is helpful and valuable. I see no need for change.	For equity, educational quality, sense of community, and economy, in that order.	I can work with anyone.