



AMY FELT

Northshore School District No. 417
Director District No. 5

Email: amy@felt4nsd.com

Website: felt4nsd.com

QUESTION #1

**As PTA leaders we believe that our children's education is a team effort. Describe ways in which you have contributed to this effort, and communicated with district staff, the administration, organizations, government officials, and other stakeholders to share ideas and solve problems for our students and community.
Bonus question: which PTAs do you belong to?**

RESPONSE #1

I am a member of the East Ridge Elementary PTA, the Woodinville High School PTA, and usually the Timbercrest PTSA (I inadvertently missed the renewal notice for Timbercrest this year). At the elementary level, I have helped in classrooms, acted as an art docent, volunteered as a room parent, and organized and participated in many school events, including field days and field trips. With the middle school, I have helped plan the 8th-grade party. I have helped with Career Day three times over in the last five years, the most recent being the virtual career day that Northshore Schools Foundation put on this school year. At the high school, I have engaged with the Music Boosters and served as a regional judge for 2019/2020's National History Day. I have reached out to school administrators over the past year with online-learning-related questions. I have listened to Dr. Reid's Thursday Thoughts, attended virtual board meetings throughout the year and an in-person meeting in May. I was involved and paying attention as a mom long before I ever thought about running for the school board director position. In fact, it's because I was involved and paying attention as a mom that I realized be a strong voice for the changes we need to see in the district.

Partnering with multiple stakeholders to advance our children's academic, social and emotional success is something I believe in. As I know from my day job as an estate-planning attorney, sometimes decisions are hard to make. Many variables are involved in matters that have a significant impact on lives. I practice what I preach and my candidacy is based on these three fundamentals:

1. Proactive leadership
2. Transparent communication
3. Collaborative results

Sometimes this can be hard, but anything worth doing takes effort. Our children are with the effort.

QUESTION #2

One of Washington State PTA's top legislative issues is: "Supports and Funding for Students with Disabilities and Their Families". Do you think this needs more attention and if so, what would you do to advocate for supports and funding for Special Education?

RESPONSE #2

I have heard too many times that parents of children with special needs end up suing school districts in order to get their children the support they need. School districts often settle in these cases. What's worrisome is that school districts appear to have money in reserve for these settlements, implying that they're ready and willing to serve those who have the money and time to sue. Parents of children with special needs are stretched very thin in time, energy, and often money, which means school districts are effectively shutting out families with limited means, communication skills, and supports—adding stressors rather than reducing them.

This past school year has been especially difficult for the families trying to work and care for special needs children while at home. The DOH allowed for these children to receive in-person services as early as December 2020. Our district decided, instead, to keep schools closed for all but a very small handful of SPED students (the numbers conflict with each other, but it's either 39 or 180 children that received in person services--either way, terribly insufficient). Based on the NSD Annual Report, we have approximately 3,095 children in our district who require individualized education plans. We must help these children--and all students--recover from a year where their individual needs were, in many cases, ignored and progress rarely assessed. I will evaluate how funds have been allocated, what the evidence is for measurable success, and work collaboratively to ensure we improve the services we provide. Our parents know their students better than anyone else and we need to listen to them.

QUESTION #3

Northshore School District has a Strategic Plan with Four Building Blocks. "Building Block 1: Equitable Access to Personalized and Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning. Teaching and learning is the central function of our school system. We will advocate for standards, practices and programs that engage every student in challenging work, regardless of their current level of performance. And, because 'one size does not fit all,' we will differentiate and scaffold instruction and supports to meet the unique strengths, backgrounds, readiness, and learning styles of each student." What does Building Block 1 mean to you and how would you approach it as a school board director?

RESPONSE #3

I would approach it the way I hope every single other candidate would: research, research, research. Implement practical plans quickly. Actively study other districts: what makes them effective or ineffective? Keep current on educational research--follow the science.

We also need a structured, age-appropriate curriculum consistently applied across the district. Many parents have pulled me aside to express concern over a lack of transparency in the curriculum being taught, lack of consistency in the curriculum being taught, and lack of feedback in the success of the curriculum being taught. Curriculum governance is an essential duty of the school board. As such, I will ensure that we know which curriculum is used by individual schools, that parents are aware of which curriculum is being used by individual schools, and that we have effective methods of measuring the success of the curriculum being used in our schools.

QUESTION #4

Two of Washington State PTA's top legislative issues are: "Increase Access to Nursing, Mental Health, and Social Emotional Learning Staff" and "Prevent and Reduce Gun Violence and Suicide". This coincides with the concerns of many Northshore families as well. The district has mental health supports at every school including staff and curriculum. For example, every elementary school of at least 500 students has a full-time mental health counselor and smaller schools have a half-time counselor. What is the district doing well? What should it be doing to better to support students' mental health and safety?

RESPONSE #4

A resource is worthless if no one can use it. Our students have had very little access to these school mental health resources at the time they needed it most. From what I have heard from students, many don't consider their school counselor as a resource if they were struggling with mental health.

My approach will be to hold the district accountable for the timely implementation of resources and the collection of data measuring improvement. We will adjust our methods if the results are subpar. Transparency and collaboration must be the new direction of this Board.

QUESTION #5

Funding is basically fixed and so new spending in one area means making cuts somewhere else.

Some of the things that Northshore has chosen to spend their money on are: the 7-period day for high school, and staffing for nurses & counselors beyond what the state provides. Where do you think we need to spend more of our resources and where would you cut spending to make it work budget-wise?

RESPONSE #5

Northshore saves far more of its budget than what is generally considered fiscally responsible for a school district. For example, the General Fund's minimum benchmark for carryover is typically 3% percent or \$12 million from the total budget of \$404.5 million. (Source: April 29, 2021 Business Services Monthly Financial Services Status Report, pg. 8). A conservative carryover for the General Fund would be 5% percent or \$20 million dollars. As of 3/31/2021 NSD had a carryover of 12% percent or \$48 million. (Source: April 29, 2021 Business Services Monthly Financial Services Status Report, pg. 3) That may seem like a good thing, but NSD has been claiming insufficient funds when it comes to matters like purchasing a K-2 literacy curriculum. Perhaps there are larger expenditures later in the fiscal 2021 year that would reduce that carryover; if not, a carryover of \$48 million seems excessive. Northshore has also purchased large lots of land, including Wellington Golf Course, where there are no apparent viable plans to build schools. (Source: Memorandum from Dri Ralph, Director of Capital Projects dated June 16, 2021 Final Draft Review of 2021 CFP). That's wasted expenditure. When we are actually forced into a position where we need to make cuts in one area to expand another, we will research and study to determine what's most effective for our students.

The budget should ultimately focus on a primary objective of yielding excellence in education (per our district mission) and do that equitably.

QUESTION #6

What is a school board member's role and responsibility under the law and under Policy Governance? How does that role differ from the role of the superintendent or the administration?

RESPONSE #6

The superintendent is essentially like a CEO. She runs the business of the district. The administration (finance, HR, operations, IT, deputy superintendents across the region, etc.) is like the executive team who report to a CEO.

The board oversees all of this. The board brings best practices, insights, and ideas, ensuring that the CEO is performing duties according to the expectations of stockholders. In a school district (with an annual operating budget of over \$350 M) the stockholders are the voters and the students are the customers. Though the board should not micromanage, it must reflect the voices of the students and community without shrinking from its role in asking critical questions and expecting accountability.

Our district website has done a fine job of articulating board policy and governance structure. However, articulation and deployment are different things. I have observed lax standards as to how goals and measurable results are determined, and, subsequently, how the district has declared success. Rigor is missing. I've seen tough questions shut down. Judging by the school board's voting record, rubber stamp approvals appear to be the norm. Board governance must always focus on expanding growth in students' educational excellence.

QUESTION #7

Within our school district, there is a lot of residential building. Overcrowding is a major issue in many of our schools as well as portables and buildings that are old and need maintenance. What are the steps you would suggest the district take to alleviate these issues?

RESPONSE #7

In King County, and, increasingly, Snohomish County, reasonably priced property is harder and harder to come by. NSD may have to get creative to deal with overcrowding. For example, we can add space to existing schools with new wings and stories. Older schools may need to be completely remodeled or torn down and replaced with larger, more up-to-date buildings. Some of these measures will be hugely inconvenient, but are likely more viable options due to the cost and availability of land.

The District does own two non-viable tracts of land, one in Wellington Hills above Costco and another parcel on Paradise Lake Road. The land at Paradise Lake Road is located in an area less likely to see a growth explosion and is subpar for school construction. The Wellington Hills parcel would need some significant infrastructure upgrades in the roads nearby to make the property useable to move school buses in and out safely. Those two parcels of land could be sold and viable land purchased. When we make these choices, we must work with experienced urban planners who specialize in strategic growth strategies.

As a board member, I will vote against budgets that do not prioritize closing learning gaps. We must address fundamental learning needs in all our schools (that means **all** our schools, not a select few) and put our students' futures first.



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