



2025 School Committee Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Beth Anne Cornell

Office Sought: Salem School Committee

Website: <https://cornell4salem.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cornell4salem>

Instagram: @cornell4salem

Twitter:

BlueSky:

(A) Your Candidacy

1. Why are you running, and what would be your top three priorities if elected to serve?

I am running for a second term to continue the upward trajectory of SPS. My three top priorities are:

1. to find solutions to address our growing budget deficit and to continue to lobby the legislature and governor to appropriate more funds to Gateway school districts.
2. To expand our district pre-k program, which is now nearly universal, so that all of Salem's young learners have access to free, high quality instruction.
3. To continue to develop a culture of high expectations for all students.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

- I have served on School Committee for the past four years.
- I was a professor at Wentworth Institute of Technology for over twenty years, teaching English and American Studies, and served as the chair of the faculty, as well as a union officer with my AFT local.
- I have been a parent in the district for 17 years straight (my youngest is a 10th grader at SHS), serving on the Carlton PTO, and on various teacher and administrative hiring committees.



- Over the years, I have volunteered with the Salem Education Foundation, LEAP for education, the Clothing Connection, and Salem Youth Soccer.

PROGRESSIVE
MASS

(B) Open-Ended Policy Questions

- 1. Massachusetts has wide racial, income-based, and language disparities in educational outcomes. How would you evaluate your school district's work to improve educational equity? What additional steps would you advocate for?**

The current School Committee works in partnership with district leaders to analyze data around education disparities. This month we had our yearly MCAS update and found that these disparities persist in every category (including in our growing unhoused population), despite gains made across the board for all students.

Salem provides more out-of-classroom and wrap-around services for students than almost any district in Massachusetts. This includes mental health services from an outside provider, two or more free meals per day for all students, in-home visits, and more. We have a school choice policy that mandates socioeconomic equity in each of our schools. We've increased access to AP and advanced coursework for all students and provide pathways to early college and the trades. We've increased the number of teachers of color by over 10%. Can we do more? Absolutely, but we can't do it alone. To close these gaps we must have increased state funding to Gateway cities. I believe that expanding our dual-language program and instituting universal pre-K for all students will help to close these gaps, and it will take aggressive pressure and lobbying from Gateway districts to secure the funding we need to make it happen.

- 2. Earlier this year, the Trump administration repealed a Biden-era policy that protected schools from immigration enforcement. What steps would you take to ensure that schools remain a safe and welcoming place for all students, regardless of immigration status?**

Salem Public School employees have been trained and educated around how to protect the rights of all students and staff working in our schools. With the support of Salem PD, we have protocols in place should ICE attempt to enter our schools or detain community members. Early in the year my fellow School Committee members and I requested a meeting with the School Committee lawyer to help educate us about new White House directives, and we have



been briefed by the Superintendent and Chief of Police about how to protect students and staff from ICE abduction. Overall, we demand a culture that is inclusive of all students, regardless of immigration status.

3. The Trump administration has been targeting LGBTQ students's civil rights. What steps would you take to ensure that schools remain a safe and welcoming place for all students, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation?

After this administration took office, the School Committee publicly reaffirmed our commitment to our LGBTQ+ students. We have clear and specific policies in place to support, celebrate and protect our trans and non-binary students, and that will not change. I and my fellow School Committee members fully support our LGBTQ+ students and families, particularly in the face of federal attempts to undermine their dignity and civil liberties.

4. What role do you see for the school district in the city's response to climate change?

The most important steps we can take as a district are around energy efficiency in school buildings. Since the pandemic, we've made slow progress toward updating heating and cooling systems throughout the district, but the construction of a new Salem High School will have the greatest impact on the city. The current high school accounts for a quarter of the city's energy costs. The new building will include solar power and is anticipated to be a net zero project.

5. How would you model transparency and accountability if elected?

During my time on school committee, I have made a point to visit our Parent Advisory Committee and English Learner Parent Advisory Council (ELPAC) meetings to listen and to provide updates. Two years ago I formed the Athletic Advisory Committee, a city-wide organization of stakeholders committed to expanding opportunities for Salem children to engage in youth and school sports. My role on School Committee has also been to draft and disseminate updates to the community on everything from the high school building project to labor negotiations. If elected to a second term, I will spearhead a monthly School Committee newsletter, for which I already have the support of my colleagues.

6. How will you engage stakeholders, including students, in budget decisions?



PROGRESSIVE

MASS

Over the last few years, the budget process for Salem Public Schools has become increasingly collaborative and transparent. Over the course of many months, the finance subcommittee (of which I am a former member) meets with groups of stakeholders to discuss budget priorities and concerns. These groups include the Parent Advisory Council, ELPAC, the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, and the Superintendent's Teacher Advisory Council. In addition, the Superintendent works closely with the Salem Teachers Union to make sure educators have input into the process. If elected to a second term, I would like to see these steps institutionalized in writing so that future School Committees and Superintendents continue to pursue transparent community engagement.

7. How will you use your position to advocate at the state level for increasing education funding, especially to provide additional support for students in historically marginalized districts/communities?

This is an important priority. The past four years has been an education for me about the extent to which inadequacies in state funding affect students in Gateway cities. We are fortunate in Salem to have Representative Manny Cruz and Mayor Pangallo as School Committee members. Each has played a key role in advocating for our district, and I plan to continue to seek their council going forward. I also believe that School Committees have an opportunity to partner with teachers unions across the state to advocate for funding.

8. How will you use your position to combat the Trump administration's war on public education?

I think this is a moment in time when the state of Massachusetts has to focus on what we can do to fund and support public high quality, equitable education. We cannot rely on the whims of the federal government when it comes to our children. This means rethinking the Chapter 70 funding formula to ensure equitable distribution of state funds, among other things. At the district level, we must work to improve efficiencies so that cost cutting does not impact teachers and students.

(C) Yes/No Policy Questions

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **YES**
2. Do you support police-free schools? **YES**



PROGRESSIVE
MASS

3. Do you support teaching comprehensive, medically accurate, consent-based, LGBTQ-inclusive sex ed in schools? **YES**
4. According to the American Library Association, in 2022 there were at least 45 attempts to restrict access to books in MA schools, disproportionately books that speak to the experiences of LGBTQ students and students of color. Would you oppose such book-banning efforts if they occurred in your city? **YES**

(D) Additional Comments

(Use this space to make any final comments you deem important for progressive voters assessing your candidacy.)

Thank you!