



2025 School Committee Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Dan Spheekas

Office Sought: School Committee At-Large

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

I am running to do my best to facilitate positive change in Haverhill Public Schools. My top three priorities are:

- Making sure schools are safe
- Tackling the chronic absenteeism problem
- Bringing in and retaining highly qualified educators

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I have been an educator since 2010, have held school leadership roles, been involved in developing school improvement plans, and have a passion for helping students. I have two children enrolled in Haverhill Public Schools and coach in the community as well.

(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?

Every student in MA (and Haverhill) deserves a fair chance of success. This chance at success should not change because of the city they live in, their background, or their native language. Evaluating the school district's work on equity should be tied directly to the work that is already being done, and to specific data around race, income, native language, special education status, etc... I would advocate for district-wide climate surveys, identifying ways to bring in and keep more highly qualified educators who students can relate to, and also focus on things like trauma-informed instruction and any ideas to improve learning/achievement gaps in classrooms.

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 **Earlier this year, the Trump administration repealed a Biden-era policy that protected schools from immigration enforcement.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?**

Massachusetts remains one of the leaders in the country regarding education. Most districts in the state have policies dedicated to protecting students, and Haverhill is the same. There needs to be a judicial warrant shown and there is a process of communication before any agent is let into a school building. According to past case law, every student living in the United States, regardless of status, is guaranteed an education. Protecting children while they are at school is of the utmost importance.

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?**

All students deserve to be safe and respected at school. Steps I would take would be to continue to have nondiscrimination practices in our schools. I would take another step to make sure the district's policies have a commitment to student safety. The physical and mental health of our students is very important, so it also means that there needs to be better training and practice for all staff members. All forms of bullying is wrong and students should be able to go to school and succeed without fear.

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

The district can respond to climate change in a way which will benefit its students and community. Educating students with factual information, giving them the opportunity to participate in conversation and advocacy, and allowing them to positively impact the community can lead to a better informed population focused on making sure that our children will have clean air to breathe and clean water to drink. Students who are interested and well informed can then stand with other advocates in the city to develop more climate focused plans for the city. It would be wonderful if the city developed a plan to utilize space in a more efficient way and use resources we have in the city more efficiently as well.

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

If elected, I would model transparency by being open and honest with the community. I will share information, explain decisions, and ask for feedback on decisions and how things are going. Accountability can be modeled by following through on promises, being consistent, and being open minded and flexible when ideas and solutions need to change.

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

In order to properly assess the needs of our schools and students, it is important to hear the thoughts of all stakeholders so that we can provide adequate support. Stakeholders can participate in surveys, forums, and focus groups to demonstrate needs or facilitate new ideas. I'm open to parent, student, and teacher choice within a small, dedicated portion of the budget to facilitate positive change as well. Clear budgetary explanations outlining any decisions made on behalf of stakeholder choices can be shown and can be monitored for the future.

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?

I will try to team up with local representatives to push for more funding tied to Chapter 70 funds from the state. If we can revisit some changes to the formula they use, marginalized districts like Haverhill could end up with much needed funding. If we can demonstrate measurable outcomes based on policy changes in our schools, we can better present data that supports the need for more funding as well.

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

It is going to take a strong team effort to dedicate time and thought on how to approach any cuts or changes which are made at the federal level. Even though MA has good leadership at the state level, cuts to federal funding which greatly impact school districts like Haverhill could have negative implications for student success. I will advocate for as much funding for our schools as possible. I will seek out state funding, more funding from the city, and grants. It is also important to facilitate new ideas as well. Creating partnerships with community businesses and nonprofits could potentially help. Reaching out to neighboring communities to enter into partnerships to share resources and be more efficient could be beneficial as well. I will do whatever it takes to try to get our schools what they need. Lastly, I think it is imperative that the budget is audited in a way to identify wasteful spending and make it so the majority of funds are going to directly impact student progress.

(C) Yes/No Policy Questions

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **YES**
2. Do you support police-free schools? **NO. With the country-wide issues regarding student safety and violent incidents, I believe School Resource Officers are great resources.**
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.)