



2025 School Committee Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Jenny Graham

Office Sought: School Committee

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(A) Your Candidacy

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

For 6 years, we've been working hard to create a solid foundation, that was largely missing from MPS. We are rapidly turning the corner, and we can be a top-tier school in no time if we keep on this pathway. Next term, I'm ready to continue this progress and:

- Lead the Medford Comprehensive High School Building Committee to accelerate our path to a new MHS, serving students sooner and reducing project costs.
- Fight for the budget needed to support our students, care for our school buildings, and bring increased transparency to district finances.
- Amplify the voices of our community as we create our next strategic plan, address space constraints, and improve the quality and performance of our schools.
- Increase wrap-around support for families by offering more after-school and summer care options, expand pre-K programs, and emphasize the importance of communication between home and school.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I own a Medford-based consulting business, Zelus, LLC, where I advise government agencies and corporations on strategic planning, core business functions, change management, and learning design and delivery. I founded Zelus 21 years ago. I have a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in Finance from Babson College. I've been on the School Committee for 6 years, 4 as the Vice Chair. In 2024, I was unanimously nominated by the School Committee to chair the Medford Comprehensive High School Building Committee to bring a reimagined MHS to Medford.

I have a proven track record of results for our schools. Check out my website for more information about me, my platform, and many of the issues I've tackled over my three terms: electjenny.org. A few of the things I'm particularly proud of:

- Led efforts to make a historic investment in our schools with the passage of two important ballot questions that will infuse the school budget with \$7 million and end the cycle of cutting and doing less.
- Chaired the Medford Comprehensive High School Building Committee and guided the district successfully through the initial phases of the MSBA process well ahead of deadlines. The quicker we move, the sooner a new building can support students and staff, and the less it will cost the community.
- Led negotiations to secure a new schedule that increases the length of the school day, fixes structural issues with our school schedules, and increases access to academic exploration and enrichment for our students.
- Settled nine contracts with our union partners and led internal efforts to improve the efficiency of school operations that support our staff. Made historic investments to pay our teachers and paraprofessionals competitively.
- Transformed the School Committee's capital planning process to demonstrate our capital needs clearly. We are investing in significant projects to replace our failed HVAC systems, upgrade our security systems, and invest in our digital infrastructure.
- Developed plans to dramatically increase access to Medford's after-school programming in the next few years.
- Chaired the Family Engagement and Communications and Strategic Planning Subcommittees and sat on the Rules and Policy Subcommittee.

(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?**

Medford Public Schools has made meaningful strides toward educational equity, but there is still much work to be done. I'm proud of initiatives like the Office of Family & Community Engagement, which connects families to critical resources and centers equity, anti-racism, and cultural proficiency in its work. Additionally, the School Committee's recent allocation of override funds to restore essential positions—such as school nurses, mental health professionals, and special education teachers—was a critical step in stabilizing our schools post-pandemic. These investments directly support our most vulnerable students and help close opportunity gaps.

However, persistent disparities remain, especially in access to advanced coursework, special education services, and language support. We are embarking on our next strategic plan, and I expect our support services to take center stage in this work.

- 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?**

Medford Public Schools has taken important steps to support immigrant families, including updated online resources and multilingual outreach. We've been in frequent communication with our school attorney as the landscape shifts and we've implemented protocols around how to handle immigration enforcement. Our staff have been trained so that our schools remain a safe place for all students. We are actively supporting our students who have been directly affected, and we are providing information so our families know their rights.

- 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?**

Every student deserves to feel safe, affirmed, and empowered. I'll work to make Medford a leader in equity and inclusion. Medford has already taken meaningful action to protect LGBTQ students, including the School Committee's adoption of a gender identity nondiscrimination policy. The district also offers mental health resources like the Trevor Lifeline and promotes a culture of Belonging through staff training and student engagement. In my next term, I will remain committed to full compliance with Title IX, and seek to expand and overhaul our counseling and mental health support services. I will ensure we prioritize budget dollars for quality professional development for our staff so they are prepared to best support our students and foster an environment of respect and understanding..

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

We are embarking on the build of a new Medford High School. The charter for that project is to achieve Leed v5 and NE-CHPS certification. We are actively working to outfit our middle schools with solar and we are seeking grant support from the MSBA to address the outdated HVAC/Roof combos at our 3 remaining elementary schools.

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

Accountability starts with listening, and transparency means showing how decisions are made. I'm committed to both. As Vice Chair of the Medford School Committee, I've worked to make our decision-making more open and accessible. The Committee has adopted policies that promote transparency, including public posting of agendas, livestreamed meetings, and clear procedures for community input.

If re-elected, I will continue to:

- Communicate regularly with families and stakeholders, using newsletters, forums, and social media.
- Push for clear, data-driven reporting on student outcomes, budgets, and equity goals.
- Ensure public input is valued, by advocating for inclusive engagement and timely responses to concerns.

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

Budgets reflect our values. I believe in making the process inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs of our entire school community. As Vice Chair of the Medford School Committee, I've prioritized transparency and collaboration in budget planning. We've completely overhauled the budget process during my 6 years on the committee so that our requests reflect what is really needed to achieve the outcomes we are seeking and align our budget with our strategic plans. We passed a historic override made possible by this work, and my unending commitment to our students through all the changes we've made. If re-elected, I will continue this work and make sure that our strategic planning and budgeting efforts are used to hear from families and students, both in meetings and in my interactions with our residents at community events and while supporting our residents.

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?

Education funding reflects our values. I'll use my voice to fight for fair, adequate, and equitable resources for every district in Massachusetts. I was an avid supporter of the Fair Share Amendment. As Vice Chair of the Medford School Committee, I've helped secure \$7 million in new annual funding through voter-approved override measures—restoring critical staff and expanding access to arts and vocational programs. Local action isn't enough. If re-elected, I will support the push to review the Chapter 70 funding formula, push for increased reimbursement by the MSBA for school building projects that create increased vocational education opportunities, advocate for a new foundation budget review commission, and work with our state delegation to prioritize what Medford's students need.

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

Public education is the foundation of democracy. I'll use my voice and vote to protect it—for every student, in every classroom. The Trump administration has taken alarming steps to undermine public education—cutting over \$100 million in federal funding for Massachusetts schools. If re-elected, I will advocate for full restoration of federal education funding, speak out against federal overreach, and push for equitable funding formulas at the state and local level.

(C) Yes/No Policy Questions

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