



2025 School Committee Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Jessie Ratey

Office Sought: Somerville School Committee, Ward 3

Website: www.jessieforward3.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61576195781166>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/jessieforward3>

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 School Committee because now, more than ever, our education systems are at risk. As a parent and a community member, I am motivated to step up by threats to education and the state of our country. My priorities will include:

a) Increasing Rigor and Support: Some families want their children to experience more educational challenge, others find their children need more classroom support from interventionists. All kids want to feel engaged, and all kids need a blend of challenge and support so they do not disengage or fall behind. I plan to work on initiatives that help educators with differentiation and ensure our schools are equipped to deliver it:

- Interventionist time assigned equitably across district schools and classrooms
- Working toward staffing of each class so that it reflects the range of student needs as well as size of the class

b) Safety and Well Being

All members of our school community, kids and adults, deserve to feel safe and welcome at school. Now is an incredibly challenging time for many families, and I support the district's position on safeguarding immigrant students. I also support the district's movements toward restorative justice, and at the same time understand that consistency is key to getting new models right. I will be an advocate for proven models and strong implementation:

- Advocate for continuing Somerville Public Schools' innovative policing model that emphasizes community engagement
- Ensure educators and school staff have clarity around and support in implementing restorative justice practices, and that families understand how this process plays out in schools
- Push for wraparound supports for families impacted by federal immigration actions, including counseling and legal aid

c) Improving Communication

Parents and caregivers want to understand how to support their children and teachers. Yet, families experience frustration with navigating information. Good communication requires planning and intention, and it needs to be linguistically and culturally appropriate. On the School Committee, I will look at ways to make communication mechanisms consistent and accessible, including:

- Streamlining the experience for families by reducing the number of apps, email lists, and calendars and encouraging after-school partners to use communication methods consistent with the schools and district
- Highlighting and expanding use of methods already being used effectively in schools and within grade level teams
- Building on existing efforts for availability of interpretation and other language supports to ensure accessibility for all stakeholders

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

My personal and professional experience qualify me to hold this office. I am a parent of two children who have been in the public school system for nine years, and I have been an engaged parent in their school, both serving on the School Improvement Council and volunteering with the PTA. Professionally, I have spent years evaluating education programs and initiatives for foundation funding, and I ran a grassroots nonprofit focused on providing ESL education programs in an immigrant community.

(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?**

I have professional experience in supporting educational programs designed to close racial and socioeconomic opportunity gaps in K-12. For me, the key to evaluating this work is first identifying what and where the disparities are; what interventions, programs, and supports are in place or planned to address them; at what intervals we can expect to check on progress; and what early indicators of success would look like. In the shorter term, we can look to how well the schools and district are implementing programs that have a proven track record of addressing gaps in opportunity.

- 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?**

I would advocate for continued policies to observe the non-cooperation with ICE without official warrants; for providing remote participation opportunities for families who are fearful to risk showing up in person at school buildings for meetings and other events; and for training and reinforcement for all school staff so protocols are clear to all adults in the building.

- 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?**

I will support policies and curricula that affirm inclusivity and ensure educators have access to the training they need to be prepared to address incidents of anti-LGBTQ+ bullying in the school.

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

The school district plays a role in the city's overarching response to climate change by ensuring our schools have science-backed curricula in place that

give young people the information and critical thinking tools to grapple with this complex topic. The schools can participate actively in climate-forward practices, and collaborate with local organizations engaged in similar work. The School Committee has already signed on to the city's "Resolution On Actions to Promote Students and Community Health and Resilience in the Era of Climate Change" and as a SC member I will continue to press for the funding needed to carry out these actions.

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

I plan to continue some of the current SC members' practices such as regular office hours both in person and on Zoom, to increase accessibility. I plan to issue a regular newsletter and/or other communication about SC proceedings and related efforts. Having discovered how much I like canvassing in my Ward of the city, I hope to continue doing this throughout my term as a way to connect one on one with residents and meet them where they are.

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

I love the practice of including student representatives to the School Committee, and I would use working groups/focus groups as an effective way to engage other stakeholders in important budget decisions.

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 work diligently with other Somerville elected officials and education funding advocacy groups to make the case for increased education funding from the state.

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

The Somerville school district has already taken the prominent step of suing the Trump administration over the closure of the Department of Education. I would support the city's continued resistance to the "war on public ed."

(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.)

Immigrants make our community better, let's protect our neighbors.