



## 2025 School Committee Candidate Questionnaire

Name: John Taylor

Office Sought: Ward 6 School Committee Member, Beverly

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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 represent our community, communicate the value of a public education, and help create community in what is often a divided space.

- 2. What qualifies you to hold this office?**

Community really matters; I know my neighbors – you cannot hold elective office in a community if you do not know your neighbors and do not have credibility in your community.

I am also a data gatherer and someone who understands the intricateness of decision useful information and finance and accounting as a CPA. The likelihood I will be fooled by fancy charts and nice graphs is slim to none.

### (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?**

We need to meet people where they are. The way that progressives express

themselves that play in places like Somerville cannot be expressed in the same way in a conservative place like the North Shore of Massachusetts. They just can't.

So, we need to understand our audience. With 80% home ownership rates, north of 30% Trump voting rates, and a legacy of large estates on the North Shore, Zohran Momdani and AOC probably wouldn't find as much of a home as they would in Boston. Those are data and those are facts. You can come to different conclusions, but, as Senator Elizabeth Warren says, you are not entitled to your own facts.

But facts also mean that we need to have the very real conversation about racial, gender, and linguistic disparities in our Beverly public educational system. We need to both (a) encourage DESE (the Massachusetts Dept of Ed) to backtrack on their expectations about what counts as a satisfactory grade on MCAS since many racial minorities have difficulty meeting that target and (b) help unique learners better learn by increasing their access to resources.

One of the best examples I use with my voters when I talk about DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) programs in schools is that of gender in our public educational environment. There is conflicting evidence that male teachers have better student outcomes than female teachers, but would my voters really call a qualified white, male teacher a DEI hire? However, having teachers in our schools who look like our students matters. And isn't that the definition of diversity, equity and inclusion?

You lead with that kind of conversation about DEI in a politically moderate area.

**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?**

Beverly schools must educate all students regardless of immigration status and I would push to continue that. I would continue to encourage that all law enforcement operations check in with the Superintendent and that detention operations not be conducted during school hours and on school property. This is also a very real financial threat to schools. For instance, if students can be detained in private cars on their way to a public school sports game then school districts may have to confront the real possibility that they will need to fund and

provide transportation options. That's challenging from a financial standpoint as budgets are already constrained.

If budgets are constrained, Beverly has to meet federal obligations related to special education, there are new transportation obligations that Beverly must meet, then the 30% of the City which voted for the President and owns their own home will have to pay more in taxes and will feel the squeeze. A strong argument could be made that a more progressively minded administration would be less likely to do things that will lead us to increase their property taxes.

**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?**

The various administrators of our Districts should ensure that children are welcomed in our District in a way that values their distinct personalities, whether they be LGBTQ or otherwise. If that is not happening, I would take action from a policy perspective on the School Committee.

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

Our buildings must be built resiliently, and the School Committee's job should not be to interfere with learning outcomes and instruction for classes which explore scientific analyses which consider climate impacts.

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

Communication and Representation. I need to make sure I communicate with people and not expect them to communicate with me and represent them accordingly to the School Committee and in my conversations with the City Council.

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

Stakeholders include teachers, students, taxpayers, parents, City Councilors and administrators, some of whom live in my Ward and some of whom don't; others vote and some do not.

We utilize a fairly clear budgetary process in Beverly whereby the School Committee's Finance and Facilities Committee considers the School budget beginning in September and the City Council manages a Financial Forecasting Committee which produces a publicly forecasted surplus or deficit in December. Almost all of those meetings are public or publicly available.

What is unclear is that the general public truly understands that this is the process – it is less that the process is kept intentionally in secretive, non public forums as that it may be a less transparent process with someone unfamiliar with how City budgeting works.

I would encourage the President of the City Council and the President of the School Committee to better model transparency by clearly stating what will be happening throughout the process.

**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 have already spoken with our State delegation to encourage more funding via the State special education funding process. With respect to the Special Education funding process, the State allocates money based on how marginalized it feels a District is. The State feels that Districts like Beverly, which historically have a high proportion of marginalized students, should be lumped in with well to do communities, such as Boxford. That's crazy – and that's the polite way of saying it. For your readers, the Special Education funding process is known as "Chapter 70." Unlike the City's, the State budgeting process is not transparent.

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

We need to communicate the value of public education to our voters. Some voters see professional teacher status (PTS) as a permanent employment program; we need to better educate voters about the value instead of assuming they will magically understand this.

We need to show that public education is not a threat. Some voters assume public education is unpatriotic, that kids in public schools are hostile, and that encampments in high schools are everywhere. If progressive readers assume that people think differently, they have not walked the moderate Ward I have walked and talked to the 200 voters with whom I have spoken. And how would

these moderate voters know differently? President Trump tells them this is true every day and Fox News and ABC repeat this endlessly. Even Governor Baker with a loud megaphone did not choose to send his kids to public school!!

How can I change these perceptions? Create community. Show that our young children value being with their elders. “I loved it when the Juniors from BHS came to the Senior Center to serve us our meal – it was so meaningful to me!!”, said one of my voters. Let’s do more of that. Our School Committee, including me, is filled with parents who sent their kids to our local Beverly public schools.

### (C) **Yes/No Policy Questions**

1. Do you oppose the expansion of charter schools? **NO**
2. Do you support police-free schools? **NO**
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.)*

Progressivism was started as a religious commitment to bring Heaven to those who were suffering. Progressivism always recognized that there were those in our society who suffered, were injured and needed to be taken care of – that empathy was not a bad word, that compassion worked, that our tax law, our education system, and even our employment system favored those with connections, better incomes and fewer obstacles to their rise. Beverly’s first Mayor, John Baker, was a major progressive and is the only Massachusetts Gubernatorial candidate to have been endorsed by the women’s suffrage movement in State history. Ever.

It is not weak or “woke” (or whatever the phrase of the moment is) to recognize those in our society who seek refuge from the storm. We can be a City on a Hill that has many standing atop already and also hands a ladder down to those who need some steps up. That doesn’t make the people standing atop the hill bad, nor does it make the people who need a step up bad. Let’s rise together in education and let’s hope for change where we can.

In closing, it is not progressive to exclude those who need a step up the hill from other educational options or expose them to unsafe environments. If a charter school is a better option for a poor child, why would we exclude that child from that option? If having police in a school creates a sense of safety for a racial minority, why would we prevent those children from learning in environments that make them feel safe? As progressive economist Noah Smith argues, if we create a political litmus test for who can call themselves a progressive, then progressivism will lose politically and we will find ourselves in the wilderness, clutching pearls of truth in deafening silence.

Let’s look towards the future; let’s be progressive.