



2025 School Committee Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Suzanne Cox

Office Sought: Peabody 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?

I'm running for the Peabody School Committee because I believe every child in our city deserves access to a safe, supportive, and high-quality education. Public education should be considered the gold standard and I want to help foster and create a school system I am proud of and confident in sending my children to. As a parent, Peabody resident, and community member, I know how strong schools strengthen our entire city. I want to ensure families' voices are heard, educators are supported, and students have the tools and opportunities they need to succeed—academically, emotionally, and socially.

My top three priorities if elected are:

1. Strengthen communication and family engagement: Create clear, consistent channels for families to stay informed and involved in decisions affecting their children. I understand the importance of a team working together to achieve an identified goal, and clear and effective communication and trust is the foundation of creating progress.
2. Supporting Students overall well-being: Expand access to counseling, social-emotional learning, and proactive support so every student feels safe, seen, and valued in our schools. Ensure that we are providing a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment and ensure that we are viewing decisions through the lenses of our students.

3. Investing in Teachers and Classrooms: Advocate for fair funding, appropriate class sizes, and resources that allow our educators to focus on teaching. I will support the enhancement and development of academic programs that meet the diverse needs of all learners, including advocating for a vocational program to the high school and expanding on our special education programming to support students and teachers within our district.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I obtained my Doctorate in Occupational Therapy from MGH Institute of Health Professions in 2017. As a licensed pediatric occupational therapist and parent of two daughters who will be entering the Peabody Public School system, I bring both professional expertise and personal commitment to the work of supporting our schools. My background and education has given me a deep understanding of how students learn, what supports they need to succeed, and how to create inclusive environments where every child can thrive.

In my career, as the director of Occupational Therapy at The Children's Center for Communication, Beverly School for the Deaf, I have worked closely with teachers, administrators, and families to build collaborative plans that help students reach their full potential. I understand the importance of communication, empathy, and evidence-based decision making — all skills that directly translate to effective leadership on the School Committee.

As a parent, I know how vital it is for families to have a voice in shaping the future of our schools. I'm committed to ensuring that decisions are made with transparency, equity, and a focus on what's best for Peabody's students and educators.

(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?**

Peabody has made progress in supporting diverse learners, but we still have work to do to ensure that every student regardless of race, income, or language has equal access to opportunity and success. I would evaluate our district's work on educational equity by looking at data on student outcomes,

students' access to programming, and feedback from families and educators regarding these students, especially those from historically underrepresented groups.

As an occupational therapist, I've seen how individualized supports and inclusive practices can help close gaps in learning and participation. I would advocate for stronger partnerships with families, culturally responsive teaching practices, expanded mental health services, and professional development focused on equity and bias as deemed necessary. The goal of public education is to make every classroom a place where every student feels valued, supported, and successful in reaching their full academic and personal potential.

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?

Every child deserves to feel safe and supported at school, regardless of their immigration status or family background. Our schools must remain places of learning, not fear. I would advocate for clear district policies that limit immigration enforcement activity on school grounds, ensure staff are trained on students' rights, and communicate those protections openly to families in the families first language. I understand how fear and uncertainty can affect a child's ability to learn and thrive. I will advocate to strengthen partnerships with community organizations that support immigrant families, promote cultural understanding, and make sure every student knows they belong in Peabody Public Schools.

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, respected, and valued at school—no exceptions. I would advocate for district policies that clearly protect students from discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation and ensure those protections are consistently upheld in every school. Research shows how a sense of belonging can directly impact a student's ability to learn and thrive. I will support staff training on inclusive practices, strengthen anti-bullying protocols, and make sure all students have access to affirming spaces,

supportive counselors, and curriculum that reflects the diversity of our community. Peabody Public Schools are for everyone.

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

Our school district can play a vital role in Peabody's response to climate change—both in how we educate students and how we operate our schools. I believe we should lead by example through sustainable practices such as improving energy efficiency, expanding recycling and composting programs, and investing in greener school infrastructure when the opportunity arises. In order to lead by example, education surrounding this topic is necessary. We can empower students to understand environmental challenges and be part of the solutions through hands-on learning, STEM initiatives, and partnerships with local organizations focused on sustainability.

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

If elected, I would model transparency and accountability by keeping communication open, honest, and accessible. Families deserve to know how and why decisions are made, and I will work to ensure that information is shared clearly and consistently. I will ensure that I consistently ask the hard “Why” question when decisions are being made as well. As an occupational therapist, I make it a priority to listen to parents, educators, and students, and to follow through on commitments with updates and results.

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

Budget decisions should reflect the voices and priorities of the entire school community, which includes students, families, student facing positions, and our administration. I would work to make the budgeting process more transparent and inclusive by creating regular opportunities for families, educators, and students to share their input before key decisions are made.

This could include open forums, surveys, and student advisory input to ensure we're hearing directly from those most affected by our choices. As both a parent and occupational therapist, I believe that collaboration builds trust—and that thoughtful, community-informed budgeting leads to better outcomes for our schools.

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?

If elected, I will use my position to advocate at the state level for fair and increased education funding that meets the real needs of students and schools. Every child deserves equal access to high-quality education, regardless of zip code or family income.

I'll work with fellow committee members, local legislators, and education coalitions to push for full funding of various legislation that targets mental health supports, special education, and language access services. As an occupational therapist, I've seen how inequities in resources directly affect student outcomes, and I'll continue to speak up for policies that give all students the support they need to succeed.

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

If elected, I will use my position to defend and strengthen public education by advocating for policies that prioritize students, families, and educators over political agendas. This includes protecting access to inclusive curricula, ensuring schools remain safe and welcoming for all students, and opposing efforts to divert public funds to private or charter schools at the expense of our public schools.

(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.)