



2025 School Committee Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Tristan Smith

Office Sought: Lynn 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?

My name is Tristan Smith. I am running for the Lynn School Committee because I am an educator, an activist, and an attorney. These experiences afford me a unique insight and perspective to bring as a member of the Lynn School Committee.

My top priorities are:

1. Improving student achievement through revolutionizing how we think about schooling.
2. Increasing transparency, accountability, and communication of our school committee.
3. Creating change by amplifying our voices at higher levels, such as state and federal levels, with a focus on eliminating inequities in the state school funding formulas, particularly in financing new school construction.

2. What qualifies you to hold this office?

I have worked with youth in Lynn for my entire professional career as a coach, a teacher, and a mentor. This gives me a firsthand perspective of what both teachers and students in the modern day are dealing with. Furthermore, I have been very active working with Lynn youth both in and outside of the public schools. I am the founder of All Lynn Track and Field, a sort of “boosters

club” for all of the Lynn track and field teams that also organizes the yearly championship meets, which puts more kids on a competitive field at one time than any other event in the city. I am also a member of the city’s Youth and Adolescence Taskforce. Finally, as an attorney, I have a legal background that allows me to tackle nitty-gritty policy, budgeting, and curriculum decisions that can make a big impact on our students.

(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?**

On the local level, we need to acknowledge that we have wide gaps in our city. Lynn has always been a diverse, working class, gateway city and we wear that proudly in both our history and in the present day. However, our schools are not equal across the city. We all agree that a child’s zip code should not determine the quality of their education; neither should a child’s neighborhood. Acknowledging this reality is the beginning of fixing it and we as School Committee members should be doing more to promote equity across the city, particularly in our elementary schools.

I would further partner with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to affect change at those higher levels where things like funding models emanate. These are changes that need to be made, and as an urban district, we must be proactive in bringing our perspectives to where they are not being heard.

- 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?**

First, no child should be afraid to go to school and get an education for fear that they or someone they love is in danger of not being home at the end of the school day. Our schools need to make it clear that we support our students and their families and that the schools are a safe place to come for learning. Our student social workers, who already do such important work, need to be equipped with how to deal with this trauma that specifically impacts on this portion of our student population.

For staff, LPS will take an active role in sponsoring our employees' work visas and ensure that we stay on top of any status issues that may arise. We should not keep records of employees' immigration status on hand where they could be accessed by a surprise ICE raid. Additionally, I believe it is so important to have these procedures and protocols in writing so that all employees and supervisors know exactly what to do if asked for such documentation by a member of ICE.

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?

As a school district, we can make it clear where we stand in terms of being welcoming to all students, including those in the LGBTQ+ community. This can be done in small symbolic gestures and recognitions. However, to fully support these students, we should ensure that we have comprehensive, LGBTQ+ inclusive sex ed in schools. Additionally, we should train our clinicians and teachers in how to be appropriately supportive of a student who may entrust them with this information, especially if their own families are not as supportive.

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

New buildings are essential and overdue for our school district. These buildings will be much more efficient and should be built with the highest concern for sustainability and efficiency.

More broadly, our schools should be preparing our students for the 21st century. This means discussing the jobs of the future, including those in green energy for which there will be significant demand, ranging from manufacturing to design to engineering. Many of Lynn schools have decades old heating systems that need to be replaced by modern electricity based systems. The state has a significant interest in reducing carbon and this option presents an opportunity to reduce carbon, create efficiencies and save local dollars

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

The Lynn School Committee has need for more transparency and accountability. First, I plan to be a very active and visible member of the School Committee, being someone who can be approached and will be seen much more than just at the meetings. I would like to spend as much time as I can in the schools themselves - not to “oversee”, but rather, to be accessible and present. One can learn a lot about what is going on at a school by experiencing a day there. Second, I plan to modernize communication by and from our School Committee through larger and smaller changes. One such small change would be providing School Committee members with a proper LynnMA.gov email address. This is a small change that represents a larger push toward increased communication to and from committee members.

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

I look forward to directly with students on the newly formed Student Advisory Committee, which will allow student leaders from across the district to take an active role and have a say in their education. I want to find ways to empower students to be a part of this process and not just a figurehead role. Furthermore, it is imperative to keep our teachers involved in this process and truly listen to their needs. Decisions are often made without listening to those who are in the classroom day-to-day and this needs to change. Our teachers hold insights that we as committee members can learn from in discussing our budgetary priorities.

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?

As referenced above, I believe that partnering with other urban school districts through the Massachusetts Association of School Committees can make us a powerful force to create change for these student populations. It is past time to get serious about how we fund our schools.

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

Unfortunately, municipal school committees have become the battlegrounds upon which national debates on issues such as those discussed above are fought. As a School Committee member, I will be steadfast in my stances on these issues to ensure that the damage that the Trump administration can

and will cause is not only kept to a minimum, but reversed upon the President's exit from the office.

(C) Yes/No Policy Questions

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

Regarding Question C2, I want to be clear that law enforcement should be allowed to enter schools in times of emergency. Having said that, police should not perform functions in our schools better served by school clinicians, social workers, and guidance counselors. Furthermore, I am even in favor of using school social workers as truancy officers, as they can often get to the source of their absenteeism. Our police officers, including those in Lynn, have a legitimate safety role to play in our schools. We can strike a balance between police officers overstepping into school activities while acknowledging that their presence in schools can help to forge better relationships within the community with youth.