

Julianne Orsino, School Committee Ward 3 Candidate

Response to Malden Dems Questionnaire

1) In your opinion what do you believe is the greatest challenge facing the Malden Public Schools?

The greatest challenge facing Malden Public Schools is two-fold: bringing Malden High School back to Level 2 and creating a framework to provide equitable learning across our disparate neighborhood schools. According to the Department of Education, Malden High School is not meeting target on many measures for graduating students and is currently considered Level 3 by the state. Focusing efforts on bringing MPS back to Level 2 should be the #1 goal of our school administration and School Committee. Secondly, since the city has moved to a neighborhood school model, it will be important to begin to implement consistent standards across all neighborhood schools. According to the state's District Review Report, MPS is operating as separate individual schools versus a comprehensive school system. By implementing some of the recommendations from the report we can create consistency across all neighborhood schools and better serve the overall student and teacher populations.

2) What do you believe is necessary in order to provide our students with 21st century skills?

It is necessary that we begin to invest in our public-school system in order to provide our students with 21st century skills. Creating new programs that focus on math and science in the early grades, coding opportunities and introducing a language curriculum are just a few skills our students will need to compete in a global marketplace. Also, continuing to support our ELL and Special Education populations by implementing creative approaches to learning. Because each student learns differently we want to allow varied opportunities for everyone to explore their strengths and talents.

3) If you were put in a position where you needed to cut \$200,000 from the school budget, how would you approach it and what would you propose to cut?

We need to change the way we look at our school budget. The budget has been cut for several years. In 2016, I stated during the City Council Finance Committee hearing that we as a city "are cutting into bone." It is time for us to find ways to invest in the Malden Public School System. A community's public-school system is the centerpiece of the city and continuing to cut the school budget is an unsustainable funding model. I am the first candidate to support the Fair Share Amendment (aka the millionaire's tax). In November 2018, we will have the opportunity to vote on this amendment which is projected to raise \$1.8 billion in state revenue. The plan is to allocate this revenue to education and transportation. By starting out each fiscal year with the mindset that we will seek to invest in our schools, we will truly build a stronger school system and a proud future.

4) If you were put in a position where the district had a \$200,000 surplus, what would you advocate be added to the system?

The District Review Report recommended hiring a Director of Human Resources. First, I would prioritize the hiring of this position as a key change in the overall framework of the MPS administration. This would realign the HR, strategic planning and Professional Development workload that is presently being handled by the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and Business Manager. They would now be able to refocus their time and effort on their critical tasks and better support the principals, teachers, para-professionals, and school staff.

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Secondly, I would invest in Professional Development programs for the teachers and support staff. Presently the lower grades in most of our neighborhood schools are at or over capacity with the number of students per classroom. This is a problem faced by most communities. By providing a more robust professional development program for our educators, we would help teachers to better manage these classrooms by providing support with trained co-teachers and para-professionals. This would better serve the student population, remove some of the pressure on our teachers/support staff and overall, provide stronger results.

5) Do you support the expansion of Charter Schools? How would you interact with the unions operating in the Malden Public Schools?

I voted No on Question 2. The state funding model of Chapter 70 is antiquated and changes are needed to provide equitable funding throughout the school districts. These changes need to be prioritized and addressed at the state level before any discussion from Governor Baker should be considered regarding Charter school expansion.

My brother is the President of a union in Boston and I have many friends and family who are members of unions. As a life-long Democrat, I have been a supporter of unions. It is important that we develop a strong line of communication and trust between the School Committee, city administration and unions operating in the Malden Public Schools. Only by working together can the city and unions address the needs of both the school system and the union membership.

6) What do you believe is one of the biggest challenges facing our Special Education Department and how would you attempt to address it?

The biggest challenge facing our Special Education Department is the diversity of needs of our student population. Each student learns differently and accommodating those needs is a tall task. This is not an easy or quick challenge to solve. Superintendent DeRuosi suggested building Special Education programs inhouse to keep some out of district placements within district. That proved to be more difficult than thought. I would support a Special Education Taskforce here in Malden made up of Superintendent Oteri, the Special Education leadership, School Committee members and parents who work hard to advocate for their children. This would be an opportunity for Malden Public Schools to effectively leverage the wealth of experience from these individuals, look for ways to improve on the existing system and consider creative ways to move forward.

7) How will you work with the City Council to improve education funding and education access for Malden students?

I have recommended quarterly meetings between the School Committee and City Council. Many of the City Council and School Committee members with whom I have spoken agree that this would be a solid approach for bringing the two decision-making bodies together. Presently, the City Council becomes involved with school matters mostly at budget time. This is too late in the process for there to be in-depth conversations. Quarterly meetings would allow a greater sharing of information regarding necessary programs, the importance of early education and insight into critical line items within the school budget throughout the fiscal year. Additionally, School Committee members could help inform City Council decisions on such topics as new housing development that impacts the student population, the importance of keeping essential social service programs and education considerations when making critical financing/revenue decisions that impact the school budget.