

2021 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
City of Tuscaloosa
Office: Tuscaloosa City Board of Education, District 4

Candidate:
Patrick Hamner

1. What do you see as the top three issues facing the Tuscaloosa City School System? How should those issues be addressed?

Literacy is first, specifically our K-3 students. Ensuring that the children who need additional resources to meet the grade level reading /comprehension requirements are provided those, while also providing continued, rigorous learning opportunities for those students already at or exceeding grade level literacy, along with providing our classroom educators the time/tools & resources to allow each and every one of our student to achieve literacy successes above grade level. Second is specific to this past 12 months: Continuing to take, make, find, and be innovative in ways we can support our students, educators and parents in making up for learning challenges due to COVID. Every moment we can regain counts and we must be intentional and cohesive in our efforts. Third is the decline in numbers of those entering the educational workforce, and the reasons they are choosing not to do so. We must do all we can to support our current educators, while inspiring our HS graduates to consider education as he noble career it is.

2. Significant community effort has been dedicated to develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan for the Tuscaloosa City School System. Do you support the implementation of this plan? If your answer is “yes,” why is it important to do so? If your answer is “no,” how would you change the plan?

Yes I support the strategic plan. Like all good strategic plans, as prior challenges and/or goals are achieved, they are replaced with more current ones. While some remain at the core of the plan (continuing to be innovative in our education of students with a course to prepare them for life and career success), others will be replaced as they have been finished (the \$175MM construction projects completed over the last 5 years). The draft 2.0 version of the strategic plan is coming together with headers such as: Ensuring student success with equity and access; Promoting and increasing stakeholder engagement; Ensuring safe and supportive learning environments; and Maximizing organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

3. What should be done to address schools labeled as “failing” by the Alabama Department of Education?

First, understanding the definition of “failing” as interpreted by ADE is important. That being done, one can begin identifying where the weaknesses are and begin working to make improvements as needed. This is an opportunity for improvement, not for pointing fingers, yet we all must be held accountable for providing our students with every opportunity to succeed. No one wants to be labeled as a “failure” or “failing” and I believe the faculty and staff of each “failing” school wants nothing more than to be off that list and onto the much larger list of schools that are performing. TCS is working to identify these opportunities for improvement in all of our schools and will be successful in its efforts, as can be seen with the number of schools in the System that have come off that list in the last years.

2021 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
City of Tuscaloosa
Office: Tuscaloosa City Board of Education, District 4

4. What efforts would you like to see to close the education “slide” students have seen from COVID-19 disruptions?

Many are already being made, such as getting back into the classrooms for face to face instruction; however, recognizing that we all (students, faculty/staff, parents, community stakeholders) must make every moment count going forward in order to curb the slide, making up that lost ground, is key. While not limited to Tuscaloosa City Schools, the challenges COVID placed on education set us back and we must remain diligent and efficient in closing the educational void it caused. My hope and expectations are that we will collectively keep the effects of the slide in our sights and narrow its impacts on our children each day. Our educators are committed to this, as they have shown during this entire time period. We must continue those supports for our students outside the classroom as well.

5. The Tuscaloosa region is expected to have a shortage of skilled labor in future years. What is the role of the Tuscaloosa City School System in helping address that shortage?

I hope everyone has an opportunity to visit TCTA and see the strides TCS is making to prepare our future graduates for life after high school. The emerging markets for jobs in the next 10+ years do not follow those same trends that many of us grew up with, instead focusing on workforce development in areas of technological proficiency, skilled labor and tradecraft, along with a professional workforce. Between the tremendous support from our local business community (Power Partners and the Chamber’s West Alabama Works programs to name just a few) and that of the faculty and staff of TCTA, our students in the City Schools have a tremendous opportunity to explore hundreds of career paths while still in school.

6. What is your vision for the Tuscaloosa City School System in 10 years? How will you, in your role as an elected official, help make that vision a reality?

I see not only universal Pre-K, widespread use of dual enrollment scholarships, and TCS’s other enrichment programs becoming the norm, but our also being able to measure and see the benefits of those programs and how they benefited our students. The first rounds of students who grew up with them are graduating, entering the next chapters of their lives prepared for life after high school. The value of a TCS diploma will mean even more than one graduated. It will demonstrate that our students are more than prepared to enter secondary education, the workforce, and/or the military. Literacy rates are well above grade level. There is no stigma related to one school being better than others in the System, as all are performing above expectations. Further collaborations with UA / Stillman & Shelton are allowing TCS to be successful in recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining the best and brightest graduates to teach our students.