

School Committee Candidates

If no candidate profile is shown, the candidate did not submit a profile.
(* indicates incumbent)

School Committee Candidates

Two to be elected for 3 years

Carey Sue Barney

Candidate Statement

What skills and experience would you bring to the School Committee?

I have been a parent association president at both Lincoln School and McCall Middle School for a combined six years. In my career I also focus on process improvement and systems implementation.

What are the three or four issues facing the Winchester Public Schools that you think are most important?

Literacy Curriculum Standards

Communication on and Acceptance of Standards Based Grading in the Middle School

Nutrition – School Breakfast/Lunch

Is there an important issue facing the Winchester Public Schools that is not being addressed or that you think could be addressed in a better way? What approach would you take to address it?

I believe school breakfast and lunch nutrition has been a neglected issue in Winchester because so many families can afford the expense and time of making their own lunches for their children. However, for those who cannot, there are few choices for healthy foods available through the schools. Since the pandemic, when school breakfast and lunch became free for all students, even more of our community is partaking in the offerings and I feel a healthier approach is necessary. Like any issue, there are many factors to consider and I am sure there is much I do not know about how this system works. I would be interested to research this and find out even small steps that could be taken to improve the offerings to our children.

Tom Hopcroft

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Community Activities

- **Local Activities** - Chair of Winchester School Committee; Vice Chair of School Committee's Finance Subcommittee; Winchester Town Meeting Member
- **State Activities** - Board of Visitors, McLean Hospital; Board of Directors, MassRobotics; Board of Directors, Net Zero Institute; Charter Catalyst, Innovation Trail of Boston
- **Past Leadership Roles** - Massachusetts Board of Higher Education; Board Vice Chair, Tech Councils of North America; Board Chair, MassTLC Education Foundation; Board Member, Friends of Winter Pond

Candidate Statement

What skills and experience would you bring to the School Committee?

As a Massachusetts attorney, business executive, and community leader, I bring extensive experience in consensus-building and policymaking. As a father of children with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and executive functioning vulnerabilities, and serving as former state education policy leader, education foundation chair, and current School Committee chair, I bring a range of unique and valuable skills, perspectives, and experiences to the district.

Serving on the School Committee for the past three years, most recently as chair, I've modeled integrity and an inclusive approach. I prioritize patience, positive intent, and respect in creating environments where everyone's voice is heard and valued. My leadership style emphasizes fairness, data-informed decision-making, and the cultivation of community trust and support. I seek diverse viewpoints when tackling complex issues, fostering continuous learning, and crafting fiscally responsible policies that ensure each student can achieve their full potential.

What are the three or four issues facing the Winchester Public Schools that you think are most important?

- **Early Childhood Literacy** – There is a lot of conflicting information from parents and educators around the district's approach to teaching literacy in Winchester. We need to understand where we really are as a district, where we need to be, and implement an actionable plan on how to get there. As the parent of a child with dyslexia and dysgraphia, this issue is important to me personally as well as professionally in my role as School Committee Chair.
- **Equity Across the District** – Our neighborhood elementary school strategy is designed to build a sense of community for our earliest learners. We need to ensure that opportunities are evenly distributed across our schools and across subgroups within our schools. We also need to continue our review of fees for athletics, transportation, arts, STEM, and other programs to ensure the most equitable approach given differing needs.
- **Safety and Sustainability** – Our top priority is the safety of our students, athletes, and educators. We must maintain state-of-the-art facilities that meet program needs and are safe and accessible. We must also conduct regular building and district level training to minimize risk and protect those who are using our facilities. We must also implement sustainable solutions that prioritize fiscal responsibility and improved health benefits.

Is there an important issue facing Winchester Public Schools that is not being addressed or that you think could be addressed in a better way? What approach would you take to address it?

Early childhood literacy holds profound importance for Winchester families, including myself as a parent of a child with dyslexia and dysgraphia. Regardless of learning abilities, all parents want to see their children learn to read proficiently and foster a love for reading. While progress has been made on literacy during my tenure, there is more work to be done.

When I joined the Committee three years ago, we were still in remote learning and a pressing concern was the absence of a universal screener for identifying students needing additional support. During my tenure the district selected DIBELS, 8th edition, as our universal screener, commissioned a third-party review of our Language Based Learning Disabilities (LBLD) program, and, while Heggerty phonemic awareness instructional materials were already in use, initiated a pilot and rolled out UFLI Foundations for Phonics and Phonemic Awareness.

Personal struggles can intensify emotions and chill constructive dialogue. I have heard from parents and staff with divergent views that they will not engage publicly due to the heightened emotion around this issue. A pivotal moment for me was when, despite spending hours with our best teachers, a *Boston Globe* writer was unable to find anything positive to report. It drove home for me the polarization on this issue and the deficit of trust in our community. And it underscored the need for a more proactive approach to communication around district strategy, including the district's work to identify student vulnerabilities and support our early learners.

Restoring community trust and repairing a fractured relationship between parents, educators, and administrators is essential as our success is built upon collaboration. I've invested dozens of hours in the past couple months working with district leadership to develop an inclusive, fact-finding approach that involves gathering input from a broader cross section of parents and educators across all five elementary schools in a transparent and confidential manner.

We are making an honest effort to remove barriers to participation – including hiring a third-party research firm to work with a design team comprised of parents and educators from across the district to collect and analyze data – so we can include the broadest range of voices and people can feel comfortable sharing openly without concern of their responses being associated with them. We are committed to an open process that restores confidence and delivers a reliable set of facts, from which we can analyze equity and performance issues, and chart our path forward.

Timothy J. Matthews

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Community Activities

I serve Precinct 1 on Winchester Town Meeting; was a member of the town's former Traffic and Transportation Advisory Committee; am a Trustee of the Winchester Community Music School and Network for Social Justice; and attend Trinity Episcopal Church in Boston, where I chair the Children's Ministries Committee.

Candidate Statement

What skills and experience would you bring to the School Committee?

I am a developmental and educational psychologist whose research has focused on early and elementary education, particularly around literacy development and the preschool / elementary experiences of LGBTQ+ families. After eight years in non-profit fundraising and corporate marketing, in 2011, I transitioned to a new career in education. Since then, aside from time spent pursuing graduate studies, I have worked in Curriculum and Instruction for the Boston Public Schools' Central Office, as a postdoc at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, and as a freelance curricular and organizational consultant. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I tackled the most rigorous job of all: stay-at-home parent for two young children!

My educational background includes a BS in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell (2000), graduate degrees in Education Policy from Brown (2012) and in Language & Literacy from Harvard (2018), culminating in a doctorate in Human Development & Education (2020), also from Harvard's Graduate School of Education. An avid gardener and choral singer who is always happy to travel and explore new places, I live near Winchester Hospital with my husband, Dr. Greg Sawicki, and our two young children (ages 7 and 3).

What are the three or four issues facing the Winchester Public Schools that you think are most important?

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted so many of the settled assumptions and comfortable routines our society had developed over many years. Across the developmental spectrum, from birth to young adulthood, children and their families were forced to navigate an ever-changing and stressful landscape in parallel with educators, who did herculean work adapting to rapidly changing modalities for delivering instruction while helping students navigate the emotional burdens of a changed world. We are all still feeling the burden of these rapid, once-in-a-generation shifts, and must adapt proactively to meet the needs of this moment in our shared history.

The Winchester community has long been synonymous with particularly high quality public education, even in Massachusetts, which routinely tops US rankings of states' educational attainment. However, in the face of headwinds and changes resulting from the COVID pandemic, this community needs to invest wisely to avoid falling behind. In my view, three themes emerge as important areas that our schools and their (elected and appointed) leaders should address:

- (1) **Adequate funding to maintain Winchester's position as a district of choice:** WPS's per-pupil expenditure on public education is one of the lowest among peer communities in Massachusetts. Accordingly, a variety of unmet needs face our students and families: e.g., a lack of cost-free, supplemental literacy and mathematics tutoring for those who struggle; a need for more (specialist) educators to provide supports to students and classroom teachers; updated curriculum and professional learning to support transitions from old to new; sports fees being borne by parents; the lack of funding for theatre arts at the middle school level; unfulfilled hopes of expanding world language offerings, among others. Our town's strong financial position could allow Winchester to invest incrementally, strategically, and thoughtfully to enhance students' access to opportunities for enrichment following a sustained campaign that explains why prioritized investments are vital. I commend the current School Committee and superintendent for recently starting this important conversation, and would partner with school leaders and other elected officials to continue advocacy were I to be elected.
- (2) **High quality, updated curriculum:** National and local media have called attention to critical issues with some literacy curricula and instructional approaches commonly used for teaching children in the early grades. Researchers have highlighted that we know very little about the *science of teaching reading*, though we do know from cognitive science which approaches use disproven strategies or are lower-quality. One now-discredited curriculum is currently authorized for use at WPS, and could in some schools still be integral to elementary literacy practice. Winchester's children should universally have access to updated, evidence-based, cutting-edge curricular supports; in parallel, an extra investment in teachers' professional learning would empower the district's outstanding educators to transition from old to new while enhancing their toolbox of instructional strategies and allowing for cross-pollination of best practices within and across schools.
- (3) **Supporting vulnerable students:** American children and teenagers are in the midst of an unprecedented epidemic of mental health challenges. We must ensure that strong mental health supports are in place and constantly reviewed for efficacy and reach. We must also be sure that neurodiverse, marginalized, and/or struggling students are provided the tools and differentiated strategies they need to succeed, to grow, and to develop a love of learning. Certain vulnerable subgroups, including LGBTQ+ youth, can be subjected to particularly

harsh harassment and bullying, as attitudes and policies aimed at reducing their visibility and safety emerge — even here in Massachusetts and New England more broadly.

Is there an important issue facing the Winchester Public Schools that is not being addressed or that you think could be addressed in a better way? What approach would you take to address it?

The Communications Study Committee, which presented its report to Town Meeting this past year, highlighted a critical need for enhanced communication across Winchester’s town government. Efforts both within and outside of government, including the formation of a non-profit, local news source, have amplified knowledge of what’s happening and how things work.

I would say that the School Committee and district administration have employed tools to enhance communication and sharing (e.g., messages sent via ParentSquare, holding listening sessions with school-based PTOs, sharing DIBELS results with struggling elementary readers’ families, the efforts to publish a COVID dashboard during earlier phases of the pandemic) — but further strides in these and other areas will further build up collaboration and trust. If elected, I would hope to partner with district leadership and other members of School Committee to grow and develop this vital work of family-school partnership.

My Linh Truong