

TWENTY QUESTIONS WITH PALOUSE PROACTIVE
SCHHOL BOARD CANDIDATE
AMANDA TANNER

1- My background lends me to being a successful School Board Member because I was raised in a family where education was very important and a major value. Although not a professional educator myself, many in my immediate and extended family are, including my mother, sister, and husband. So, I am familiar with many processes, and have spent countless hours in the classroom and around schools. Now that I am a parent of a child in the Pullman Public School system, I was contribute to the community, and work towards our students being offered the best education possible in a supportive environment.

2- If I am elected to the School Board, I hope to be a part of decisions that are in the best interest of the students, teachers, support staff, and community. I believe it is the job of the school board to ensure the success of the district. I would also like to see some accountability in the decisions being made by the administration.

3- I believe that Pullman Public Schools has done an incredible job at recruiting so many WONDERFUL teachers, and support staff to work with our children. I also think that the district is working to address some of the concerns brought forward last year, especially with having more communication from school board and district office this school year. I am seeing a lot more of a presence of school board members in the schools, which I think is very important. I think that the board members should know the names and faces of all the adults working within their "liaison school". However I think there are still plenty of valid concerns from the staff, parents, and community that I look forward to working together to continue to solve.

4- There is always room for improvement. I think that the district can do a better job of supporting and valuing the faculty and staff working for Pullman Public Schools. We are opening a new elementary school in 2019, and it will be incredibly difficult to hire the best new staff, unless the current staff is secure. I have definitely seen some good teachers not be treated as well as they deserve, and I don't want to continue to see that became a trend. I don't want to see Pullman Public Schools make a reputation for itself, and have it put us in a situation where we can't continue to hire the great teachers and staff that our students deserve.

5- I believe the three greatest challenges facing Pullman Public Schools are going to be:

Hiring for Kamiak Elementary School, scheduled to open in March 2019.

Resolving the ongoing issue of a teacher being on administrative leave for going on 10 months.

Regaining the trust of the parents, staff, and community.

HIRING: As I mentioned in #4, I think we need to get back to staff feeling secure and supported to do their job educating our children, not constantly feeling like they might be in trouble because an administrator comes to visit with them. Once the district can re-establish that support and trust, I think it will be easier to hire, because we can once again be known as a great school district, who treats their staff with respect, and value. I would like to be a liaison between the staff in the schools and the district.

ADMIN LEAVE: I think that a lot of the community would agree, this has been going on for too long. Not only is the district paying a lot of money for a teacher in the classroom, and a teacher out of the same classroom, more importantly, a person's reputation has been damaged. I think this situation needs to be resolved in a timelier manner. In addition, I would like to contribute to a more transparent discipline plan for the future. The way this situation has been handled has not only been unacceptable, it has affected the children in that class in an incredibly negative way, which a lot of them still haven't recovered from after 9 months, and has made their transition the middle school much more challenging.

TRUST: There has been a lot of effort by parents, staff, and the community to speak to the board, and the administrators in the district about various concerns, and these efforts are not being acknowledged enough. Although, as I mentioned above I have noticed a much appreciated increase in the communication (one of the major concerns), there are other concerns. I would like to work WITH the parents, staff, and community to prioritize and address the concerns that are possible to address, instead of continuing to make people feel like these concerns are unimportant. Once the various people of the community feel like they are being heard, I think they will begin to trust again. If one person has an issue, it may not be fixable. When many people have the same issue, I think it needs to be taken seriously.

6- I am not sure how involved the district is in poverty cases within the district, however, I do know that each of the three elementary schools have programs to help children in need as well as their families. I have been very impressed with the willingness of many to step up, and help, when it is needed.

7- I don't think that the School Board is necessarily lacking transparency, however, I don't think things are always communicated clearly, and via efficient avenues. This method worked for a long time, there was a lot of trust and success. However, in the past year, it was realized that that isn't always going to work, and there is not a lot of evolution happening with the growing and evolving community. I also feel like things on the board and district level are often handled on a business level, and not always realized how the decisions affect the PEOPLE involved, ie students and staff. It is like things are operated on a mechanical level, rather than a personal/human level.

8- My ranking of important issues in the district are:

1- Improving teacher relations

2- Improving parent relations

- 3- Expanding class offerings
- 4- Preparing students for college and/or other post graduation opportunities
- 5- Increasing teacher salary while balancing /maintaining the district budget
- 6- Reducing bullying
- 7- Promoting healthy eating and exercise for students
- 8-Closing achievement gaps between students
- 9-Reducing classroom size for all grades
- 10- Promoting technology in the classroom

9- My view on standardized tests is that they are required by the state, so we don't have much wiggle room on whether we test our children, or not. I also think it gives us a way to measure our students, and see where we as a district can work to improve the education we are giving the children.

10- I think that some homework is healthy for children, however I am hearing from parents that on the high school level within our district, students are being given more homework than they can accomplish while participating in extracurricular activities, spending time with family, and needing a healthy amount of sleep. It is not an issue with the homework load necessarily, more an issue with the teachers not communicating with each other and assignments getting piled up. I am sure it would be reasonable to set up some sort of system, where the teachers could communicate, and spread out homework a little more to benefit the students.

11- I am not very familiar with the Pullman Education Foundation, however I hear they offer great support for the schools in the district along with the staff and students. I look forward to leaning more about this organization that seems to be making a positive impact in our community.

12- I think that our school administration should be trained, confident, and held accountable for handling disputes. However, if a situation is escalated, I definitely think that is a time for the school board to get involved. I also think that the school board needs to remember to approach the situation in an objective manner, and not in a manner that automatically defends the administration.... even administrations make mistakes, and if that can be recognized, and fixed, all involved can move forward in a more constructive way.

13- I think we, as a district have been pretty fortunate in the quality of teachers we have. However, I also think that teachers hired need to be set up for success. This means having plenty of training, and more importantly a solid mentoring program, which I understand at this time isn't mandatory. I think mentoring is very important. If there is a rare case of an underperforming teacher, there should be a

documented remediation, with many people involved. In the case of that failing, they may not have their contract renewed, at the end of the year. Removing a teacher from the classroom mid-year for a supposed case of underperformance, can be detrimental to the children involved, as I have witnessed firsthand.

14- I am not sure how merit pay for teachers is handled most places. I would need to learn a little more. If merit pay is something that is standard for teachers, it is something we should look into.

15- I strongly believe that the WSU-PSD spring breaks need to be coordinated to match. I know they matched until a few years ago, when there became a conflict with some WA state standardized testing, which is no longer an issue. So, the largest employer in town (WSU), and all the students in town (PSD) would greatly benefit from this time being synched.

16- I need to learn more about the specifics of the district budget before I could judge where I would recommend budget cuts.

18- I think that Pullman Public Schools has done a good job of trying to prioritize construction projects with school additions, and new buildings. I think the next construction priority, following the completion of Kamiak Elementary is going to be addressing the near capacity of Lincoln Middle School. I think with the high value on land in Pullman, and the already great location of the middle school, I would like to entertain the thought of an expansion, perhaps a second level on the currently single level school.

19- I do not support the idea of offering free lunch to all students in the district. I think the majority of families have the means, and are happy to pay for their children's lunches. If there is a suddenly a surplus of money in the district, I think there are wiser ways we could spend it. I do however support the free/reduced lunch option for students and families who need it.

20- I need to learn more about the specific School Board policies before deciding what I would change. And, I would look forward to learning from the community their thoughts as well.