



## 2023 School Board Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Elena Francisco

*Please complete this questionnaire and return via email to [OBEAPresident@gmail.com](mailto:OBEAPresident@gmail.com) by 6:00 PM on Sunday, August 13th.*

1. Why are you seeking a position on the Board of Education?

I am seeking a position on the Board of Education to support our students in receiving an excellent education and our staff in providing it to them. My passion and expertise has always been in education. I was a teacher for ten years and while I'm not currently teaching, I can apply my knowledge and assistance in this capacity as a Board member. I hope to place a strong focus on academics and a connection with families and the community. Parents should be involved in every aspect of their children's education. Teamwork, honesty, and consistent communication are essential for their success.

2. What do you see as the top three education issues the Old Bridge Board of Education must address?

To begin, I believe that our Board of Education must help keep academics at the forefront of all we do. It is after all, the purpose of the education system since its inception. I feel that we sometimes lose sight of this fact and want to make sure we are providing all our students with classes and programs that build their capacity for future success. This will look different for all children, and I want to make sure we have curriculum and plans in place to help each student succeed.

Second, finances are always an area of concern for many districts, and ours is not exempt from this hardship. Our district has lost millions of dollars from the state over the last few years. If elected, I hope to pay very close attention to where money is being spent and hopefully come up with creative ways to make what we do have, go a long way.

Lastly and most importantly, would be the teacher shortage. This is what hits close to my heart as an educator. I couldn't wait to become a teacher when I was in college. I look back at my teaching years fondly, however I feel that the expectations of teachers have grown to be almost humanly impossible. Educate students, know their individual needs, create engaging lesson plans to reach all learners, assess and document progress to define strengths and weaknesses, take home your work to grade assignments and

plan future lessons, buy your own materials and supplies, keep ongoing communication with parents, reach the social and emotional pathways of each child, motivate and model for students to be productive citizens, spread love and kindness all around...and the list goes on. As a society we expect all of this with pay that doesn't equal the workload. Now throw in hurdles like the ones we've had the past three years and we have ourselves a shortage. If it was an easy fix, we wouldn't be in this predicament. So I hope to work together with other Board members and administration to help attract and retain great teachers.

3. What is your philosophy on the collective bargaining process?

Collective bargaining can be quite complex and has its pros and cons. Again, as a past educator, I have a huge respect and appreciation for the teaching profession. I believe it's important to support teachers in receiving appropriate pay and working conditions. With this can come conflict between the union and the Board, which is a frustrating, yet a necessary part of negotiating and reaching compromises. I haven't been a part of collective bargaining in the past, but would look forward to learning the process and being a part of it.

4. Explain your understanding of the role of educational support professionals in our school community. What is your position on subcontracting or privatization of these services?

Educational support professionals are essential in education. They are a huge support to the highly demanding job of a teacher and the needs of our students as well. While privatization might be beneficial in other business settings, I do not believe it should exist in education regarding educational support professionals. These individuals need a place where they feel they can place their roots and grow, and not be shuffled around by an outside entity. Our students, many of them with special needs, depend on consistency of our support team. That being said, I believe it is best for our district to hire and employ this group of professionals.

5. What else would you like the Old Bridge Education Association to know about you as you run for this very important office?

I have been an Old Bridge resident for over 30 years. I moved here when I was 8 years old and started school in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at Schirra. I then went on to attend Salk and I am a proud graduate of Old Bridge High School.

I received my teaching degree from The College of New Jersey. I taught for ten years in Perth Amboy in 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades. I was a general education teacher in an inclusion

classroom, team teaching with a Special Education teacher each day. I was a mentor for new teachers and had many leadership roles working directly with administration. I also have experience writing and implementing curriculum. Lastly, I have an administration and supervision certificate from Rutgers University and am a Nationally Board Certified Teacher.

I have the utmost respect for the teaching profession. Unless you actually teach or are a building staff member, it's quite difficult to grasp what truly goes into educating our youth. I know firsthand just how hard our teachers work and will be able to be a voice for them simply because I have walked the walk. I am very serious about educating our youth and supporting our staff.

Elena Francisco

8/10/23

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Candidate Name

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Date

*Once again, thank you for completing this survey. Best wishes on the upcoming election.*