



2023 School Board Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Peter Hunt

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

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

Our Board of Education is fractured. Any reasonable person can sit in on a meeting, or even watch a rebroadcast can see this.

Political influence is CLEAR (local and national) and in my opinion, the board needs a more balanced composition.

Board members need to WORK TOGETHER for the children, educators, and taxpayers. As currently assembled it appears impossible. Our community is frustrated.

Levelheaded open-minded individuals that can work as a unit, even when there are disagreements, are sorely needed and I believe that I am a perfect fit.

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

A) EXPANDED EXPOSURE TO THE TRADES

Our district is in dire need of a more robust introduction to the trades. Our township is filled with highly skilled tradesman and woman. I for one am extremely proud of the diverse makeup of our community regarding how we make a living.

Not every child will see the return on investment of higher education. More and more we hear of a young adult graduating from a 4-year university, and never working in the field in which they majored in college (My Oldest works in Finance after graduating Summa Cum Laude from Monmouth U majoring in the Literary Arts)

Tradespeople WILL see a return on investment faster. I believe if kids are introduced to the fundamentals of the trades at a younger age that perhaps they can FIND THEIR PASSION earlier in life.

There is a need for plumbers, electricians, carpenters, welders, culinary, mechanics, ironworkers, cosmetologists, the list goes on and on.

Old Bridge has some good offerings, and we have an opportunity to offer more. After reviewing classes being offered in 2023-2024, I am especially impressed with our HS automotive program. I had a great conversation with Mr. Boriello recently and I loved that Woodworking is more than a bird feeder or bookshelf.

It seems to me the next logical step would be carpentry, framing, introduction to electric, plumbing etc. THAT is where the opportunity is.

Yes, County Vocational Schools are an option. However, there are parents and children that are NOT YET READY to make the commitment. Having these introductory classes available can potentially open the eyes of some of our young people.

On college signing day in our High School, WHERE ARE THE TRADE SCHOOLS?

THIS IS A HUGE OPPORTUNITY for the children of Old Bridge Township

B) MENTAL HEALTH of our young people

For MANY reasons, today's children (as well as people of all ages) are under more stress and have more anxiety, depression, and other mental health (diagnosed and undiagnosed) than any generation before. These concerns often lead to behavioral, substance abuse, and addictions of all kinds.

We can look at the pandemic, social media, in person and cyber bullying.

As a LONG-TIME resident of Old Bridge, we have seen more than once, how there will be a tragedy and the community COMES TOGETHER to support the family and each other in the aftermath.

This was topic of a recent meeting of the Alliance Against Substance Abuse of which I was appointed by Mayor Henry this year. We have been discussing how we can bring children TOGETHER, in groups of similar ages, in a social setting that may be experiencing loneliness, low self-esteem, depression, difficult family situations, and yes even those that have been experimenting with alcohol and drugs.

I am keenly aware of how these factors and the affect they have on a young person. I had my first drink at a house party on 6/9/1078 as a 14-Year-Old and struggled with alcohol from the age of 15 till the age of 48. I was an overweight introverted, depressed kid, bullied for my weight and my first drink changed the way I felt (numb and carefree) and I tried to recapture that feeling until June 22, 2012 when I had my last drink.

I have a vision (along with many Alliance members) of school counselors and administrators working hand and hand with the Alliance to develop supportive PEER GROUPS of all ages, helping to cultivate friendships and hopefully, ONE BY ONE, get the kids that may be isolating into social settings where there will be NO judgment, only support.

The Worst outcome we can ever see for our children is for them at any point to have thoughts of sadness/hopelessness and yes suicide.

According to the CDC, in 2011 28% of HS Students had feelings of persistent sadness and or hopelessness, in 2021 42%

In addition, the same study indicates that students seriously considered suicide, making a suicide plan, attempting suicide are ALL on the rise during the same span of time.

ALL these numbers are headed in the wrong direction.

On that note, I hope EVERY PARENT in Old Bridge takes the time to bring their families to support Michelle and Scott Elbaum's 1st Annual Brady's Voice Walk and Wellness Fair on Sunday September 10th at Lombardi Field.

Knowledge is POWER. So much more to come on this subject.

- C) It is my understanding that approximately 18% of our students are special education students. I do not have the numbers, but I am working on having a better understanding of what percentage of the school budget is allocated for children with special needs. If there is a sizable gap between the percentage of money currently allocated for special needs and the number of special education students, this needs to be addressed.

Our Special Education Students deserve more extracurricular opportunities. I am hearing that basketball is being offered starting in in 9th grade. That is GREAT! How about some introductory opportunities for younger kids in elementary and middle school. Additional sports/clubs? It feels like we are lacking opportunities for these children.

Lastly, BOE/ Guidance Dept could be assisting these students of working age find local employment opportunities. Is there any conversation with local businesses going on for employment opportunities?

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

First and foremost, both the township and union MUST come into good faith negotiations with some CLEAR ideas where the primary focus is on both sides.

I completely understand that the township has budget restraints and that our teachers are deserving of reasonable increases and good benefits. WE MUST offer our educators competitive compensation, or we risk losing our talented teachers.

Before coming to the table, both sides must ask themselves, "How does this specific proposal benefit the children of the community".

In my opinion, if the children do not benefit, WHY is the item of negotiation being brought to the table?

- 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?

Our Paraeducators, Cafeteria, Custodial, Security, and Drivers are a vital part of our educational system.

Having some these positions subcontracted is in my opinion a bad idea.

While outsourcing may save the township some money regarding salaries, it benefits our community having LOCAL appropriately trained and certified individuals working alongside our teachers to serve our children's needs with consistent care.

Paraeducators, substitute teachers and Security should in my opinion be vetted and hired only by the Township of Old Bridge. These positions are vital to the safety and development of our kids.

I do believe that the township should consider potentially outsourcing some other services like transportation and custodial services IF it makes financial sense to do so.

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

I am an Old Bridge resident for 92% of my life. I have four children that have successfully navigated our school system and one that will be a junior at OBHS this fall.

My wife Ann and I also attended OB Schools. Each of us has had our own unique experiences. As does every family.

Our roots are deep, and we want only the best for the children, educators, and taxpayers of Old Bridge.

As a board member I give you all of me. As a long time, board member of the Old Bridge Rebels, I gave them all of me. As a member of the Old Bridge Alliance for the prevention of substance abuse, I give the Alliance all of me.

Here is what you get.

- 1) After receiving, digesting, and analyzing data, I will put forth my best thought out opinion/decision/vote on all subjects. You will not get political talking points, as I stopped digesting opinion-based news sources years ago.

- 2) I will assume nothing. Get ready for a LOT of questions.
- 3) If I do not know, I will find out. Anyone with all the answers is questionable in my mind.
- 4) I WILL NOT be influenced by Old Bridge Township's council, mayor, past council members. This for me is NON-NEGOTIABLE.
- 5) I will always do my best for the Children, Teachers, Administrators, and Taxpayers (Those with and without children in our schools). ALWAYS

Candidate Name: Peter Hunt Date 8/12/2023

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