

## **Joanne Shum, Democratic Candidate for State Board of Education District 5**

### **1. Describe the qualifications and experiences you would bring to the State Board of Education and how your contributions would be an asset to the work of the Board.**

I have extensive experience working in public education and believe strongly that it is the backbone of our democratic way of life. I understand the many facets of school and will not be fooled or confused by things that come before the board. I will not be a rubber stamp.

I have a Master's Degree in Elementary Education with certification in Supervision.

Currently, I am the Director of Springboard Education Foundation, a 501 (c) 3, and I serve as the coordinator of the Home Instruction Program (HIPPY) in Lowndes County. If elected, should I see more time is needed, I am willing to resign and spend all my time working on school board issues for District 5.

I retired as an Education Specialist with Montgomery Public Schools in 2004. I taught elementary school for 16 years before I left the classroom to work as a Title 1 Resource Teacher. Later, I directed Parents as Teachers, Teen Parenting, an Even Start Child Development Center (the only Even Start Center in AL accredited by NAEYC), a GED Program, Hosted and Produced a TV Show for Parents called "The Parents' Express", and established and directed the HIPPY Program for Montgomery Public Schools as well as statewide. Under my leadership, this outstanding early education and home visitation program spread to 33 counties.

I have worked extensively on issues for children with many organizations. As President of the Floyd PTA and two term President of the Montgomery County Council of PTA's, I initiated and helped insure that the Minors Display Bill was passed, that Gifted Education Programs began, and that free, public Kindergarten was implemented. I have a lifetime of service because I care.

My experience and commitment to strengthening, sustaining, and saving public education will make me a very valuable school board member. This, plus the fact that I want to improve schools and speak for the children, is why I am asking to be elected to serve as Alabama's State School Board Member, District 5.

### **2. As a State Board of Education member, what would you do to improve the academic preparation of students as well as their transition to higher education or other post-high-school training?**

Students can be better prepared academically by:

a. Insuring that Alabama teachers are the best in the business. Our teachers need to want to teach, be well trained, be well paid, enjoy children, regard children and their parents as their clients, and be evaluated accurately to see if they belong in the classroom. (I am absolutely not in favor of RAISE, but we won't improve education if we don't recognize that excellent teachers and amazing principals are key to good teaching. We must staff our schools with the best people we can find.)

b. Recognizing that parental involvement is critical. In every high performing school, parents are partners with the school. This can be a school in a low income area (like George Hall in Mobile) or the highest performing high school in Alabama, LAMP. We must encourage, motivate, and involve parents if we want our students to excel.

c. Making sure all assignments and projects are posted online and kept current. For parents who don't have computers, print the work from the web and send it home at least weekly. Find a way to keep parents in the loop. Communicate!

- d. Having less standardized testing and more creative teaching that inspires and engages students. I want students to love their teachers and enjoy the time spent in school.
- e. Investing the necessary money to make every school as good as the best magnet school. Of course, the legislature will have to stop raiding the ETF and plug tax loopholes.
- f. Beginning foreign languages by third grade, piano, music, dance, art, science labs, and math that is easily understood and fun because of innovative fun teaching.

I'm going to stop now, not because I'm out of ideas, far from it, but I hope you understand my philosophy of how to improve academic preparation. As far as students transitioning to higher education, there needs to be a seamless path for AP classes, a bridge to the two year colleges from high school as well as with 4 year institutions. Students and counselors need to clearly know how to access a clear path to whatever diploma or certification students want to obtain. All of our 2 year colleges and 4 year colleges must work together to make it easy for students to get credit for work and transfer it with full credit. And, let's take the lead in making our 2 year system tuition free. I will pledge to advocate strongly for this.

**3. Please state two or three key goals you want the State Board of Education to accomplish during your term of office.**

Two or three key goals I would like to see the state board accomplish:

- a. Set innovative teaching policy for k-12 and stop the efforts of some to assume these duties;
- b. Reinstitute the school report cards;
- c. Work hard and creatively to attract more students to public schools in areas where this is an issue. We can do that by improving schools and marketing our product.

**4. Do you believe Alabama's current system for funding public education provides adequate support to schools across Alabama? Please explain your position.**

Our current funding system is not adequate as so many schools in the Black Belt are at a huge disadvantage due to circumstances they don't control: lack of public support, low taxes, not many business or jobs in the county, etc. Plus, too many businesses are exempt from taxes that pay for education. Tax loopholes need to be closed. A lottery is a possible solution if the people vote for it.

**5. Do you believe school choice, including public charter schools and tax credit scholarships, improves the education of children in your district? Please explain your position.**

I am opposed to school choice, charter schools, and the Accountability Act. These are all ways to privatize and make money for some special groups or individuals while weakening public education. It hurts Alabama, but it hits District 5 especially hard. I will work hard to educate the public about what is happening and ask for their help in stopping it.

**6. Do you believe student performance on annual standardized tests is a fair criterion to assess teacher effectiveness? Please explain your position.**

STUDENT PERFORMANCE ON STANDARDIZED TESTS CAN VARY WIDELY FROM ONE DAY TO THE NEXT, DEPENDING ON MANY INTANGIBLE FACTORS. To attempt to link student performance from one test for one year to a teacher's performance is asinine. You can look at several years' of students' performance under a particular teacher to get an idea if he/she is doing a good job of teaching what is being tested, but there are many far more effective ways of measuring teacher performance that are easier, quicker, fairer, cheaper, and more accurate.

**7. Do you believe Alabama's public schools, and the people working in schools, are doing enough in our schools to protect and improve the lives of our most vulnerable children, including those at risk due to family poverty and students with disabilities? Please explain your position.**

No, our schools are not doing enough to protect and prepare our most vulnerable children. I began the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPPY) Program in Montgomery in 1993 as part of the Montgomery School System, and I have visited and worked with families in very challenging circumstances. I have been in homes in all ten federal housing projects in Montgomery and have never been treated with anything but kindness. All of these parents, many who had very low literacy and high poverty, had one thing in common. They loved their children and wanted more for them than what they had. Unfortunately, many times they did not receive the help, support or encouragement they needed from school personnel. This can and should change wherever the atmosphere is not welcoming and encouraging.

I have taught students with special needs and have children and grandchildren with learning disabilities. I know how hard it can be to get adequate services. I have a grandson who needed to be tested for dyslexia and dyscalculia. I was surprised to learn that the AL State Dept. of Education didn't test for this. We can and should do more.

**8. Do you believe the legislature or the state board of education should take the lead in proposing major reform initiatives for public education? Please explain your position.**

The Alabama State School Board should absolutely make policy for Alabama as it relates to education. I see no need for the legislature's help in this area.

**9. How can you, as a state board of education member, positively impact the national view of Alabama's K-12 educational system?**

It would be great to have a positive image nationally so our state can attract high quality industry. Alabamians need jobs, and our schools need industries that pay into the ETF. As a board member, I would work to have the best schools in the nation; we know how to achieve this as some of the best schools in the world are in Alabama and in District 5-----LAMP, BTW, Baldwin, Bear, etc. I would promote public education and promote our state.