

Region 1 Candidate
Tamara Allen-Thomas, Ed.D
Clairton City SD Superintendent

Education

POST-SECONDARY - Doctorate from Point Park University, Masters from Carnegie Mellon University, Bachelor from Edinboro University, SECONDARY - High School Diploma from Westinghouse High School, PRIMARY - Winnetka Elementary in LA, California

Work Experience

Since 1994 I have worked with youth. I began my career as a prevention specialist at the Homewood-Brushton YMCA in 1994. I then began working in the Pittsburgh Public School System for 13 years in a variety of roles from teacher, math coach, Instructional Teacher Leader, Co-Principal, Director of the district math curriculum 6-12 and presented various Professional Development. I later worked as principal at Penn Hills Charter School of Entrepreneurship for 9 years where I managed the day to day operations from hiring, budget review and decision making, to curriculum and data accountability procedures and processes. I am currently the superintendent at Clairton City Schools where my responsibilities include fiscal management, staff development, community relations, student achievement and maintaining a productive board relationship.

Community Involvement

I have participated in peace marches in various communities (Braddock, Homewood, Penn Hills). I am a member of PROOF a network of professional women that provide training, coaching, and leadership skills. As a board member of Nahbi ministries I participate in toys for tots, coat drives and other community needed programs like housing and utility resources. I have been a PTA member at PHCSE. A Leadership Pittsburgh XXXIX where we look to solve community issues.

Why are you running for School Board?

I m running for WHSD School Board to be a resource to the district with my vast experience and knowledge of the education system. I have been in the education field over 20 years in a variety of roles. I want to ensure that our district continues to move forward in the great work that has been started and discontinue what is not working. I want to be part of making sure that ALL students are able to have access to an Excellent Education experience by having highly qualified, competent caring adults in front of them. I want to make sure we are fiscally responsible by making sure our resources are used to assist in the growth and development of staff and students. I am running to be part of the solution to make WHSD a premier school district that will attract families and grow our economy.

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Why is quality public education important to you and your family?

Quality public education is important in creating an economically, healthy and sustainable community. A quality public education allows access to unlimited opportunities. When students are given access to high quality education the ability to create wealth increases that breaks the cycle of generational poverty that some communities experience. My family has been part of the public education system and I have spent over 20 years working in public education.

What are 2-3 strengths of WHSD you would work to support & maintain?

I would like to support and maintain the following strengths of WHSD 1) School pride in the sports and art programs 2) Community partnerships 3) Committed staff

What are 2-3 challenges WHSD is facing and what potential solutions do you have for those challenges?

The three challenges that I see WHSD facing are 1) The lack of teaching staff diversity. I would like to assist in working with Universities and colleges in creating a pipeline of diverse teaching candidates. I would also like to ensure that teaching is a viable career choice by allowing interns and job shadowing to occur with our high school students. 2) Negative perception of the district. I would like to assist in creating a plan that allows for accountability, consistency, and transparency in order to build trust. The plan will allow taxpayers to know the challenges we face and allowing them to assist in creating a solution that benefits all students in the various neighborhoods that WHSD serve. 3) Safety and mental health of students and staff. I would make sure that our all stakeholders had a voice when it came to making decisions around how we could ensure a safe and welcoming school environment that supports the mental health of students and staff. This would include quarterly check-in with the committee as well as reports at board meetings regarding wellness checks conducted by H.R. and administrators. All of these challenges are opportunities that involve the input of all stakeholders to create a lasting impact through consistent evaluation of effectiveness.

When faced with conflicting interests, how would you find balance between stakeholders (teachers, administrators, parents, community members, students, Board members) and make decisions?

Conflict is not a negative thing. Conflict is an opportunity to creatively solve challenges. 1) Gather data (attendance, discipline, demographics, etc.) that is related to the challenge. 2) Identify the stakeholders (teachers, administrators, parents, community members, students and Board members) to be part of the decision making process. A school comprehensive plan is required by each school and should include all stakeholders when making decisions for five years. 3) The

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stakeholder group should analyze the data to determine the root issue and not the surface problem. 4) Once all the results are gathered possible solutions are explored and supported by data to identify what direction the district needs to consider. 5) Finally, a transparent process of voting is held to make the best decision based on the mission and vision of the district. The bottom line of decision making is doing what is right for children in alignment with our mission and vision.

Explain the role the school board should play in determining the curriculum and what is taught in the classroom.

The role of the school board is to provide governance. School boards assist in making sure that the district is making fiscally sound decisions. The board makes sure that policies are current and enforced. The board serves as advisors and a resource to the administration. Curriculum is an important responsibility of the board to ensure that policies and mandates are followed. Board members should listen to the stakeholders in determining the goals for curriculum. Curriculum is how we teach not the programs used so curriculum is vital to the advancement of student performance and competitiveness within the education system. The board should participate in curriculum committee meetings to gather the data and recommendation of the superintendent. The board representative then is able to assist with the identification of the funds to support curriculum decisions.

If elected, at the end of your term, what lasting impression would you hope to have left behind?

I would like the community to know that I was accountable, consistent, and transparent. I would be remembered for holding everyone to the same standards of accountability, consistency, and transparency. By holding these values as the foundation of our district our children and community will be provided with an "Excellence for ALL Education."