

SCHOOL BOARD - DISTRICT 11 JACKSON CARTER



1. Why are you running for this position?

As a recent graduate of Maury County Public Schools (MCPS) I have a unique understanding of the problems and issues faced by MCPS. I've seen firsthand the issues and difficulties that plague our school system, and how the members of the Board of Education can work to make an impact on the real issues faced by our students. I know that with increased transparency, accountability, and action, our schools can become the best place in Tennessee for students to receive an education. Our county is the fastest growing in the state, and our education system continues to lag behind others in the state. That is unacceptable. I'm running to ensure MCPS is providing students with the resources, opportunities, and most importantly the knowledge, to be competitive in the workforce, higher education, and any avenue their life takes them.

2. What specific experience and qualifications do you have that make you the ideal candidate for this position?

Out of every candidate running for a seat on the Board of Education this August, I feel that I have the most unique experience and qualifications. I graduated from Spring Hill High School in 2021, meaning I am just over a year removed from the very system I aspire to serve. This recent exposure gives me a unique edge over other candidates. I can truly say that I have seen the triumphs and struggles associated with being a student, and from my time as a student, an educator, in Maury County. I know what it's like to walk into our schools every day and work with the resources our students and educators do (and oftentimes don't) have. Knowing this gives me an exceptional base on which I can provide insights and opinions that will help our students, educators, and county prosper. This year, the Tennessee General Assembly also passed the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement Act (TISAA) which means that nobody, even incumbent members of the board, has any real experience in school funding under our new formula. This makes my unique experience as a student even more valuable because everyone, both those on the Board and those of us seeking election for the first time, is on a level playing field when it comes to the Board's most important function—funding our schools.

3. In your opinion, what is the most important role of the Maury County School Board and, if elected, what will be your most important role as an individual board member?

In my opinion, preparing students for life after the classroom is the most important function of the Board of Education. While this role may sound simple, it is truly the best service we can do for the future of our citizens, our county, our state, and our nation. Preparing students for their post-education life means giving them the skills to become competitive in the job marketplace after graduation, teaching them how to be good citizens, and teaching them to master the most basic skills of life: reading, writing, and arithmetic. When I am elected, I will fight day in and day out to ensure students are learning these things in school, and I will seek these ends by whatever means necessary. I will work to make sure our students are being educated, not indoctrinated, in our schools, and I will work to make sure our schools are truly serving the futures of our students.

4. What do you see as the top 3 priorities for Maury County Schools and how do you plan to contribute to accomplishing those priorities?

I believe that the three most important priorities for MCPS should be transparency, accountability, and action. These three things, in my opinion, encompass all of the functions of the Board. Looking at transparency, the Board of Education is ultimately beholden to no one except the people of Maury County. By being transparent with all of our decisions, we can prove that every venture on which we embark has the best interests of students in mind. Transparency is vital to trust-building, and without the faith, support, and confidence of the people of Maury County, the Board of Education can't accomplish anything. With concern to accountability, it is vital that the Board owns its actions and sets a standard of accountability for our district. Having accountability will help MCPS to better understand our successes and our failures. Accountability also allows us to commend those who succeed and help those who fall short to get back on their feet and find success again. We're all human—no one is perfect—and while we can't expect perfection, we can expect accountability in all that we do. Lastly, concerning action, things have to get done. One of the biggest critiques of MCPS is always the Board's lack of action. While all issues should be thoroughly debated and considered, action must still be taken. As a member of the Board of Education, I will be as transparent as legally allowable about my actions, views, comments, and votes. I will work to help set a standard of accountability by leading by example. I will accept and own my shortcomings, and I will encourage my fellow members of the Board to do the same. I will support action by doing everything in my power to take action on items as soon as action can be taken. When elected, I will do everything in my power to ensure that action is taken on issues that matter to our students, teachers, and parents. When I win, I promise to do my best to bring transparency, accountability, and action to the Board of Education.

5. How do you plan to work collaboratively with the School Board, the Superintendent, and the County Commission to ensure financial stability, student success, and alignment with community expectations?

I believe that the best thing I can do to improve relationships between the Board, Superintendent, and County Commission is to heed the School Board's Oath of Office. In this oath, a section reads, "[I will] [w]ork to build trust between and among board members and the superintendent by treating everyone with dignity and respect, even in times of disagreement." By treating everyone with dignity and respect, I truly believe that any relationship can be improved. Shoring up these crucial relationships will lead to increased financial stability, student success, respect, and trust in our community.

6. Maury County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state and country. This tremendous growth puts a strain on our school system. How do you plan to provide new schools and improve existing facilities?

Having seen the burden of growth, facilities are very much on my radar as a candidate for the Board. I believe the best thing the Board can do to provide new schools and improve existing facilities is to be proactive, rather than reactive. Addressing first the issue of providing new schools, I feel that the Board should work to better time its decisions on when to build new projects. I also feel that building entirely new campuses should be considered only after all other viable options have been considered. I am not anti-building, I simply feel we should exhaust all of our other options so that at the end of the day we're spending only what we must on new construction and can focus our dollars on other investments into our students and educators. Addressing existing facilities, it feels that a lot of issues are left to snowball into even greater troubles than when they are first discovered. I believe the smartest thing the Board can do to improve facilities is to work

to create an easier pathway to find, repair, and pay for damages before they have the opportunity to become bigger and more costly problems. I also believe the Board should review its budget to increase funds allocated to repair work so that MCPS has the liquidity to knock out issues before they worsen. Doing this will keep our existing campuses thriving and a safe learning environment for our students and educators.

7. Understanding that the Maury County Commission is ultimately responsible for providing funding to the board for both operations and school facilities, how do you plan to improve collaboration between the School Board and County Commission to ensure appropriate funding is provided?

I believe the best way to improve collaboration is through building a better rapport than has previously existed between the Board and the County Commission. In the past, there has been a lot of distrust between these two bodies with respect to financial burdens and requests. I believe the best way to remedy this is to hold ourselves as a school board more financially accountable and transparent. This may include increased auditing and an emphasis on honoring our word when dealing with financial requests from the County Commission. By doing exactly what we say we are going to do with our funding, we can hopefully build a better collaborative relationship with the County Commission while also improving the financial management of MCPS.

8. The financial management of the district has been a point of emphasis for several years. What solutions do you propose to address this issue?

See Answer 7

9. How do you plan to interact with the community and the schools in your district in order to understand their specific needs and ensure those needs are being addressed?

I believe the best way to understand the needs of my community is to have open and honest conversations with the people in my community. I will continue to be at community events, interacting with constituents, and I encourage members of my community to reach out to me personally to have these types of conversations. I can be reached by email at jacksoncarterdistrict11@gmail.com, or on Facebook and Instagram by searching carterfordistrict11.

10. What does a successful term look like to you?

A successful term, to me, will be one in which I feel that I have served the students of Maury County well. Success to me includes doing everything in my power and authority to ensure that our schools are providing a better education at the end of my term than at the beginning. Success also looks like improving the financial health of MCPS, as well as increasing the rapport and respect between MCPS and our constituents, communities, and the Maury County Commission.

11. Quality education and a successful school district are top priorities for Economic & Community Development. If elected, how do you plan to partner with the Maury County Chamber & Economic Alliance to improve the Maury County School District?

Given the important role that the Maury County Chamber and Economic Alliance plays in the economy of Maury County, when elected, I would love to look at ways to pursue partnerships with the Chamber to fill crucial gaps in student needs that the Chamber can help fix in conjunction with the Board of Education.

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