



2020 Pinellas County School Board Candidates Bios

District One - At Large

Laura Hine – is currently the Executive Director at the James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art. Hine, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy who has an MBA from the University of South Florida, was the project director of the \$65 million, 132,000 square foot facility that now houses the James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art, which opened in 2018 in downtown St. Petersburg. She became the executive director of the museum last year.

The mother of two school-age children, she was the founding president and director of the Friends of North Shore Elementary Inc., created in 2015 to help improve the struggling public school in northeast St. Petersburg. As president of the school's parent teacher association, she helped create a vibrant after-school program and a program to provide a \$300 professional development budget for each teacher.

She's never been a classroom teacher, but she has a keen grasp of the major issues facing Pinellas schools. One of her top priorities is to ensure teachers, schools and communities have room to make needed changes. "While meant for improvement in outcomes, the focus on restrictions and measurements over the recent 30 years have come at a cost, and that cost is love of teaching, love of learning and the localized agility required to meet and raise all students. For more information, visit Ms. Hine's website at: votelaurahine.com/ or email her at: laurahineforeducation@gmail.com.

Stephanie Meyer - currently a teacher at private Keswick Christian School, had a long career in sales and marketing, including at Procter & Gamble, before recently "falling in love with teaching". Mother of two at Keswick, she believes in school choice, saying that charter and private schools "are not the enemy" and would like to "end teaching revisionist history and focus on facts and primary sources." "I am in favor of implementing a back to basics approach that instills the lifelong love of learning. Frequent, rigid testing causes many students anxiety which prevents them from enjoying the process of learning."

Educational background: A.A. St. Petersburg College B.S. Political Science Minor in History Liberty University M.Ed. Curriculum and Instruction - History (to be completed 2021). For more information on Ms. Meyer, visit her website: votestephaniemeyer.com or email her at: StephanieGMeyer@gmail.com.

Tom Topping – has served for 23 years as a Pinellas County school teacher, coach, and district administrator. He spent a few years in administrative and technical support roles in Pinellas and Pasco counties. Now a corporate trainer and business coach, Topping speaks authoritatively about improving teacher training and closing the achievement gap.

His public service includes being a member of the Society for Human Resource Management, past President of Suncoast HR (Pinellas County's SHRM chapter.) He is currently a District Director for HR Florida, serving as a liaison for the 3 Tampa Bay chapters. His education includes a Bachelor Degree in Education from Stetson University and a Master of Science in Human Resource Management from Strayer University. For more information on Mr. Topping, visit his website at: electtomtopping.com/ or email him at: Tom@ElectTomTopping.com.

District Four - Single Member

Eileen Long - is the incumbent and Vice-Chair of the Pinellas County School Board. In her second term, she wants to focus on the mental health needs of students, which could help close the achievement gap by putting students in a better position to learn. To that end, she also wants to try small group training sessions for parents — online or in-person, when it's safe — to ensure they have a basic understanding of the technology their children are using, including \$21 million in new laptops and tablets the district recently approved.

Long remains a strong advocate for faculty and staff and won the endorsement of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association, as she did four years ago when she was first elected. And she has some sensible ideas for balancing safety and learning during the coronavirus crisis, including requiring children to wear masks when they come to school.

She earned her degree in Special Education from the University of South Florida and has added Reading and ESOL to her teaching certificate. Eileen has over 33 years in teaching, with all but two years in the Pinellas County School system. She has spent her entire teaching career in middle schools, teaching students with special needs and in dropout prevention programs. She was a Varying Exceptionality Specialist for nine years as well. For more information visit Ms. Long's website: EileenLong2020.com/ or email her at: EileenLong2020@gmail.com.

Chris Hardman – Chris is a resident of Dunedin and has been a high school teacher and coach since 2002. A teacher for over ten years in the Pinellas County School system, Hardman also has twenty plus years of business experience. His background in public and community service as a founding member of the Clearwater YMCA and a Sertoma Club member. He ran for school

board in 2006, 2008 and 2016 unsuccessfully. His priorities include improving pay for all teachers and examining high school start times.

Educational background includes a Bachelor of Science degree in business management from Florida State University. For more information, email Mr. Hardman at:

CWHardman01@gmail.com.

District 5 - Single Member

Carol J. Cook - Unopposed Current Pinellas County School Board Chairperson

Ms. Cook was elected to the School Board in 2000 and re-elected in 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016. Mrs. Cook served as Vice-Chairperson of the Board in 2003-04, 2004-05, 2009-10, 2011-12 and 2017-2019. As Chairperson of the School Board, Mrs. Cook served in 2005-06, 2010-11, 2012-13 and 2013-14 school year. A graduate of the University of South Florida, she taught elementary school in Pinellas County for ten years. Prior to her election, Mrs. Cook served on the Florida PTA Board of Directors for nine years, during which her service included Vice President for Regions and Councils and Vice President for Leadership. Mrs. Cook is a former President of the Pinellas County Council of PTAs. Mrs. Cook serves on the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) Board of Directors in her role as Chairman of the Board Development Committee. She has also served as Chairman of the Functions and Services Committee, Vice Chairman of Advocacy, and on several task forces for the Florida Department of Education. As the representative of FSBA Mrs. Cook serves on the Florida School Music Association (FSMA) Board of Directors.

Florida School Boards Association has awarded Mrs. Cook the Certified Board Member recognition and the Advanced Boardmanship Certification. The Advanced Boardmanship Certification is a distinction currently held by five other board members in the state. She is currently serving on the MPO School Transportation and Safety Committee and Value Adjustment Board. In addition to her Board responsibilities, she has served on the Partnerships for a Healthier Pinellas Board of Directors and Clothes To Kids Board of Directors. Ms. Cook's email is: cjcook928@gmail.com.

District 7 - Single Member

Caprice Edmond - is a science coach and lab teacher at Fairmount Park Elementary who won the union backing of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association. Mother of four, she has worked as guardian ad litem and speaks passionately about bettering children's lives inside and outside the classroom. She would like the School Board to devote more resources to support mental health and wrap-around services that help students stay in school and on track.

Educational background: A proud graduate of Gibbs High School; Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, Master of Elementary Education, Master of Educational Leadership and a Certification in Infant Family Mental Health from the University of South Florida. For more information about Ms. Edmond, visit her website: edmondforeducation.com/ or email her at CapriceEdmondDis7@gmail.com.

Corey Givens Jr. - works for the Pinellas County Job Corps. He has an abundance of energy and would like the school system to provide more opportunities for kids to intern and perform community service. As the youngest candidate, he also thinks the School Board could use a member who is young enough to really remember what it's like to be a student.

His main priorities for the Pinellas County School Board are: 1. Focus on getting a variety of representation from community social groups, organizations, and businesses. 2. Pursue parent dialogue and input, not just during the budget process, but throughout the entire school year. 3. Devise a long-term plan for our schools.

Educational background: Lakewood High School CAT Program attended Florida State University & graduated with a B.A. in Communications in Communications from the University of South Florida St. Petersburg. For more information on Mr. Givens, visit his website: CoreyGivens.com/ or email him at: Corey@CoreyGivens.com.

Sharon D. Jackson – is a retired principal who also worked as a special education teacher and counselor. She would bring decades of educational experience and a firm grasp of the major issues facing Pinellas County schools.

Her educational background includes Bachelor of Arts in Special Education-University of South Florida Master of Arts in School Counseling-University of South Florida and a Doctor of Education - Educational & Org. Leadership - Nova Southeastern University (Ft. Lauderdale). For more information on Dr. Jackson, visit her website: SharonJackson4SchoolBoard.com/ or email her at: SharonJackson4SchoolBoard@gmail.com.

Karl Nurse – Karl has spent ten years spent on the St. Petersburg City Council leaving office in 2018. Nurse owns a successful printing business with nearly 50 employees and has been actively involved in the community for decades, including with the Council of Neighborhood Associations, the city Planning Commission and the Living Green Expo. He's a current board member of the local Habitat for Humanity branch and is a strong advocate for more affordable housing options.

When asked why he was running he stated “I expect budget cuts and possible extensions of remote learning to linger as major challenges resulting from the pandemic. I want to be on the front lines of making the difficult choices that are sure to come.” He would push for programs that help struggling kids catch up by the third grade. He also wants schools to better prepare kids who aren’t headed to college by incorporating more apprenticeships and real-world internships. He says he’s humble enough to know that he won’t understand everything about what it’s like to be a teacher. “I bring other needed skills to the table,” he said.

Educational background: BA, USF, St. Petersburg, Major in Political Science. AA, SPC, High School - Clearwater High School. For more information on Mr. Nurse visit: electkarlnurse.com/ or email him at: KarlNurse2@icloud.com.