

CCSD District 9

CANDIDATE SURVEY FOR CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 9 (James Island area)

Candidates running for this seat are:

- **Karen Luhrs** Website: none provided
- **Carol Tempel** Website: caroltempel.com

Candidates were asked to respond to questions in 100 words or less. If they exceeded 100 words, their response ended at 100 words, as indicated by (100).

1. If elected, will you vote against going into executive session except for extraordinary personnel matters? Please explain your answer if it includes the possibility of doing business in private.

Luhrs: All deserve ultimate transparency in any instance unless the law requires executive session. The school board has a duty to instill and maintain trust in all who voted for each of us. We need to continue a spirit of openness, transparency, and responsible accountability which I will support, if elected.

Tempel: I strongly support conducting the public's business in public. There are, however, times when executive session is appropriate and necessary. I follow CCSD policy BE, which permits specific purposes such as: student actions, personnel matters, contract negotiations, acquisition or sale of property, legal advice, matters of security, and investigations of criminal conduct. No formal action, vote, or polling of its members may be taken in executive session. Board members are duty-bound not to disclose matters discussed in executive session. A quorum of board members are prohibited from meeting privately to conduct board business. Transparency and public trust are fundamental to (100)

2. What long-term impacts do you foresee in the rising use and popularity of generative AI tools like ChatGPT over the next four years?

Luhrs: We need to realize that the future is already here. The job market in the future will look different than it does in today's world, however, literacy and mathematics are the foundation of critical thinking and now more than ever we need to emphasize this with our children so they have these skills and more. It is our responsibility to our students to use this tool wisely and honestly while continuing to guide them in the development of their own critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Tempel: Generative A.I. I may be one of the most important challenges school boards will face over the next four years. Although evidence of its impact on teaching and learning is evolving, CCSD developed a policy and balanced learning technology framework to guide its use. As A.I. use emerges, we must ensure that students are learning academic subjects, thinking critically, solving problems creatively, and collaborating with others. We must protect academic integrity and teach students to use A.I. generated information critically. Educators will need ongoing training to help students use AI safely, ethically, and effectively.

3. If you use generative AI for matters related to the school board, will you apply student standards to your use of it?

Luhrs: Yes, but I would always hold myself to the standards expected of students in our district. Should I use AI to help write papers, organize any thoughts or ideas, I acknowledge my responsibility to check facts, protect confidential information, and standing behind every word written for submission. I also realize that AI cannot listen, decide any decisions, nor think for me.

Tempel: Yes, I will follow the same standards we expect of students. CCSD Policy GBEBD provides guidelines for acceptable use of generative A.I. such as using it safely, lawfully and ethically for business and educational purposes. I will use only district

authorized software and applications, protect the privacy of student and employee data, and be responsible for the accuracy and integrity of my work. As A.I. continues to rapidly develop, the district will need to prepare students, educators, employees, and board members to use these tools responsibly in our work.

4. There's a sense in the community that the board has turned over much of its oversight authority to the superintendent. If you agree, how will you recapture oversight?

Luhrs: It is the responsibility of the board to allow the superintendent to lead the district and keeping its duty of setting direction and measuring data results. Candid discussion, questions, and clear goals all promote an effective oversight with the superintendent. A thorough examination of student achievement, staffing, financial concerns, and board progress should direct our journey and continued or changed vision. When concerns are voiced, I would address each one of them directly and respectfully. The community is best served when there is a sense and evidence of decorum, engagement, and accountability for all action taken.

Tempel: There is a difference between governance and management. The board governs the district; the superintendent manages the district. However, this does not diminish the board's responsibility for oversight. The board hires and evaluates the superintendent, establishes policy and strategic goals, and oversees student outcomes, operations, and finances. The superintendent manages the day-to-day implementation work. We can strengthen oversight with an annual calendar to review student achievement, finances, operations, capital projects, staffing, and strategic goals. Work sessions strengthen relationships with opportunities to discuss major initiatives, ask questions, raise community concerns, and plan for improvements. Good governance requires collaboration, transparency, and accountability.

5. Do you believe the school board has been overly politicized? If so, how will you rein it back into focus on local education issues?

Luhrs: Every action of the board should lead with this question: Does this help the children? Too much focus is placed on divisive political issues that only serve to distract from the work we should be doing to support the district in educating children.

Tempel: Yes, my first year on the board was challenging. We were hiring a new superintendent while debating curriculum, advisory committees, policies, and appropriate boundaries between governance and management. We became more effective when we put student outcomes at the center of the agenda, made decisions based on evidence and local needs, accepted fiscal responsibility, operated more transparently, and respected the superintendent's management role. Board members do not have to agree politically to govern effectively; thoughtful disagreement is part of good governance. Our responsibility to provide excellent public schools for the children families, and the Charleston community we serve.

6. What are some issues that you personally want to address and repair during your time on the board?

Luhrs: I want to support the district and the superintendent as we have seen unprecedented results and improvements in education. Harvard rated the district's post Covid recovery as the best in America. This is the best district in the state. We need to support these efforts and not find ways to oppose them or stand in the way of progress. I also want to bring a mutual sense of respect and decorum to my fellow board members. And it is important that I listen with respect and integrity during any points of discussion.

Tempel: I would continue putting students first. However, we need to improve shared leadership on the board, respect differing viewpoints, strengthen board policies, operate transparently, and value public input. Retreats, work sessions, and regular board self-evaluation could strengthen our effectiveness. I would also encourage the board to ask thoughtful questions before major decisions: How does this affect students? What does the evidence tell us? Does it align with our strategic plan and policies? What are

the costs? What does our community think? Consistently asking these questions encourages thoughtful, evidence-based decisions and makes it harder for ideology to drive our work.

7. What is your plan to ensure the school district is able to continue serving a growing student population as Charleston County attracts more and more residents?

Luhrs: We need to pass the referendum this November so we can update facilities and provide quality places to educate our children. As our population grows, we need to have the best classrooms possible so that our kids can focus on learning. It is important to examine enrollment projections alongside any housing development plans, transportation, and the condition of existing buildings.

Tempel: Planning for growth requires looking ahead, not simply reacting to overcrowded schools. CCSD should regularly analyze enrollment projections, residential development, school capacity, transportation, and staffing to anticipate where growth will occur. Long-range capital planning—including projects proposed through the upcoming capital referendum—can address renovations, expansions, new schools, and major maintenance needs. We must also recruit and retain excellent educators and ensure growing schools have the programs and resources students need. Working with local governments and communities as development occurs will help us plan responsibly, protect taxpayer investments, and maintain strong neighborhood schools with high-quality opportunities for every student.

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