

Williston Public School District #1

Candidate, Joanna Baltes

Joanna Baltes moved to Williston from the Washington, D.C. area in 2015, and is running to help solve the challenging issues facing this District in ways that will benefit our community so that our children can thrive in schools and be successful in life.

Q. Do you support a merger of District 1 and District 8? Why or why not?

A. Yes. I believe that combining the school districts would benefit the 4,000 plus students in D1 and 500+ students in D8. Both districts schools are at or near maximum capacity in every school and in many cases the schools have class sizes that exceed 30 students. Both districts need more space to accommodate the increase in enrollment, to right size classes, and to provide core spaces that support a learning environment. Joining forces would create better value for our taxpayers by streamlining administrative functions and making use of the best available facilities within each district. Together we can boost our community's reputation for providing outstanding educational opportunities for our children.

Q. Do you support re-configuring the boundaries of District 1 and District 8? Why or why not?

A. I would support re-configuring the boundaries so that they are better aligned with the city boundaries and better reflect the residential population.

Q. Do you support another bond referendum to pay for future school projects?

A. Yes, I would support a bond referendum to pay for future capital expenditures as there simply isn't another source of capital for the District to address the steady increase in enrollment, the class sizes of 30 students (including in Kindergarten), the fact that students are forced to do PE in classrooms, and that staff are reduced to cooking lunch in gym spaces. The annual operating budget for District 1 does not provide any surplus for new construction or renovation. Our building fund does not have sufficient capital to build any new schools or to perform significant renovations of the existing schools. The building fund has already been borrowed against for the high school project and has a limited pool of revenue. As an alternative to the high cost of new construction, I support the acquisition of existing buildings that could be repurposed for schools and focus on renovating existing schools so that the taxpayers get the best value for their investment in our community.