



Worcester School Committee candidate profile: Brian O'Connell

By Scott O'Connell

Telegram & Gazette Staff

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Name: Brian A. O'Connell

Occupation: Attorney; chief financial officer and business manager, Montrose School

Political experience: Member, Worcester School Committee

Connection to schools: Past president, Massachusetts Association of School Committees; member, Resolutions Committee, Legislative Committee and Board of Delegates of MASC; past regional vice president, American School Boards Association.

What are your top three platform issues?

1. The Worcester School Committee must provide “equal educational opportunity” to each of its 25,415 students, challenging every student to reach the most ambitious level of academic achievement of which that student is capable. As committee members, we must nurture, support and sustain a culture within each of our schools that focuses both on superlative academic performance, and on cultivation of the skills, talents and values that are essential to a lifetime of distinguished professional achievement. We will be most effective here when we welcome parents and guardians into our schools, when we cooperate with them, when we empower them as members of our advisory councils, and when we give our staff members the professional development training and support they welcome to make this possible.

2. To sustain and enrich the future of the schools, we must take aggressive, thoughtful and imaginative steps to diversify over time the professional staff in multiple areas of concentration. This includes diversity on socioeconomic

background and ethnic, racial and linguistic origin; however, we also need more male teachers at the elementary level, and more female instructors in the secondary level “hard” sciences, where they will serve as vital role models.

3. We must continue to advocate for implementation of the state aid funding proposals of the Massachusetts Foundation Budget Review Commission, and, until they are enacted, work cooperatively with other urban communities to seek a court order that the current state education funding system fails to meet the state constitutional guarantee of an “adequate education.”

What is an issue in the schools you feel should get more attention?

All three issues detailed above need forceful, consistent and imaginative attention by the School Committee during the next term. In addition, the committee will be formulating plans for replacement of secondary schools (Doherty, Burncoat, perhaps Worcester East Middle School). It must make sure that these schools – the construction of which will be largely state-funded – are superlative, state-of-the art facilities custom-designed and meticulously equipped to meet the needs of Worcester students for the 21st century.

Why should voters pick you to serve on the School Committee?

My combined background and expertise in law, education, finance, school administration, legislative advocacy, and community service are unique on the current School Committee, and will remain so during the next term. I place the welfare and well-being of Worcester schoolchildren at the forefront of committee deliberation, and I advocate for an expanded range of opportunities for our students at all times, even when that is not always politically popular.