

## **Worcester School Committee candidate profile: Jack Foley**

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*The Telegram & Gazette is running profiles of the candidates for Worcester School Committee in this fall's election. All 13 candidates who are on the ballot for the city's Sept. 10 preliminary election were given an opportunity to answer a questionnaire.*

**Name:** Jack Foley

**Occupation:** Vice president for government and community affairs at Clark University

**Political experience:** Elected member of the Worcester School Committee for 10 terms (20 years)

**Connection to schools:** All three of my children are graduates of the Worcester public schools

**What are your top three platform issues?**

1. The critical need for additional funding for Worcester public schools to achieve the levels of funding and support identified in the Foundation Budget Review Commission's report.
2. To look strategically at the student achievement goals, outcomes and trends and make the necessary budgeting and staffing changes to address these needs. The goals outlined in the Strategic Plan for the Worcester public schools are a good beginning set of benchmarks. Obviously, additional funding makes this more possible as well, but we need to look at outcomes and trends.

3. The need to engage parents and families from across the city more significantly in the educational success of their children and their schools. There are schools that have done tremendous work in this area with academic success. If the parents/families understand the importance of their engagement in their child's success and if they are given the real opportunity to be a partner with the public schools, we will see that level of involvement and subsequent academic success rise.

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

The primary issue for me remains adequate and equitable funding for Worcester public schools. The case has been clearly made that we are severely underfunded and there is much more than can be achieved with additional funding: smaller class sizes, especially in the K-2 years; additional Advanced Placement classes and more rigorous coursework for high school; technology improvements; additional co-curricular opportunities; and much more. This is an issue that will require a strong public and political push to achieve equity with wealthier school districts. Absent the issue of funding, the most significant issue that affects student achievement is the negative impact of trauma and adverse childhood experiences on the success of young people. We are taking small steps to address this issue in our schools with a new focus on social and emotional learning, but this will be a critical item to be addressed in the years ahead.

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

I bring to the School Committee a thoughtful, reasonable approach to the complex issues facing public schools. My background in education and finance at Clark University has provided me with the experience to be a successful member of the committee. My work with nonprofit organizations across the city, such as the YMCA of Central Massachusetts, the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the Main South Community Development Corporation, has given me a broad perspective on the issues facing families and children today. My work with the schools as a parent of three graduates has given me the consumer's perspective of the great work that can be accomplished working with teachers, administrators and students. There remains much more work to be done in our city.