

2009 SPPACE QUESTIONNAIRE

Rhonda Lennon
CMS Board of Education - District 1

1. **What are the top three issues facing our school district? How would you propose to tackle these issues?**
 - a. Fiscal Responsibility: CMS needs a transparent budget that emphasizes a balanced scorecard approach and evaluates every program for efficacy. We need to find savings in the operating budget to prevent future cuts in teacher positions. We need to review the capital budget to reduce wasteful spending and build schools where they are needed.
 - b. Student achievement: CMS Programs from Pre-K to High School need to offer opportunities for academic success for every student, regardless of ability or demographic background.
 - c. Student Assignment: CMS needs a program that is logical and predictable and also provides continuity with feeder patterns.

2. **Why are so many students (especially low-income and minority youth) failing state exams and dropping out, and what can Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools do to change that?**
 - a. I frequently hear from teachers that EOC tests are not good measures of success and I support lobbying the state to change the way they are implemented. Students unable to pass the basic 9th grade courses fall behind, then age out and eventually drop out. We need to start in middle school to identify and intervene with these students.

3. **How do you believe Mecklenburg County should fund school capital costs, parks, roads, transit, police and fire protection needs for the County? Should purchasers of new homes be responsible for funding these services for the entire County? Do you believe that these types of proposals are a fair way to pay for required services to existing taxpayers?**
 - a. New homes do not cause excessive capital spending as CMS spends nearly as much per student to renovate existing schools for students in existing homes as to build new schools for students in new homes. I do NOT support transfer taxes or Impact Fees to pay for capital needs.
 - b. I support joint use projects that combine services between publicly funded capital groups; such as at Barnette Elementary which has an upgraded gym paid for by Huntersville Parks and Rec and is used by the community in the evening and on weekends.

4. **What would you propose to do to reduce expenses in line with the reduced funding from the state?**
 - a. Our budget cuts should focus on areas OTHER than teachers and outside the classrooms. Areas to focus: administration for possible redundancies and excess, Consolidate CMSTV with the county funded TV station, and study consolidation of other services with county such as HR and facility maintenance.
5. **Would you support the use of an accounting system that tracks per-pupil/per-school expenses and student performance at the individual school level for comparative purposes?**
 - a. I support a transparent budget that follows a Balanced Scorecard model. Yes, expenses per student should be tracked to the individual school level so that we can use strategic analysis to determine if specific schools and programs are giving us high return on our investment. I would propose a pilot study in one Area Learning Center to evaluate the practicality of the “per pupil/per school” approach.
 - b. We now track student performance based on factors outside the student’s and family’s control like race, gender and family income. I would like to also correlate student performance to factors that the student and family can control, such as absenteeism, conduct, and homework completion.
6. **What are your suggestions for innovative new funding sources for school capital projects?**
 - a. Explore private sector funding sources such as
 - i. Lease purchase options
 - ii. Partnering with developers for land donations or transfers
 - iii. Joint use projects with other county funded agencies where appropriate
 - b. Review capital program to reduce costs on all projects and increase efficiency.
7. **What suggestions do you have that would reduce transportation costs for the District? Do you support allowing older children to use public transportation to get to and from school?**
 - a. School attendance zones need to be compact and logical and reflect traffic patterns and normal egress routes in the communities
 - b. Increase walk zones where appropriate
 - c. CATS operates far fewer busses than CMS does and current public transit does not work well for school children, but I would be willing to examine joint use for high school students only.
8. **If elected, how do you view your role as School Board Member?**
 - a. I will be an innovative thinker who will be open minded and work toward consensus with my fellow board members. I firmly believe that even people with opposing views can sit down together and find some common ground and agree to work together. The Board needs to be a positive role model to the very students we strive to serve.