

2023 UA School Board Candidates Responses to UAPA Screening Questions

Q1: Why are you running for school board, what are your qualifications for this position, and what are your top priorities/interests?	
Jenny McKenna	<p>When I ran in 2019 I saw the need for a representative voice for parents of children currently enrolled in our district. My first campaign was centered on the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion, individual well being and empowering all of our students with the tools, resources and support they need to thrive in the world after they graduate. Those issues are more important now than they have ever been, and I remain passionately committed to ensuring they remain at the center of our mission. Over the last four years our world has changed in ways nobody could have anticipated. I am proud to have been an integral part of leading our district through unprecedented times by engaging with members of our community from a variety of backgrounds to open new schools, keep an “all means all” commitment as our core mission and deliver on the core initiatives of our strategic plan.</p> <p>I have learned a lot about our district over the last four years. Not only did we find a way to tap into the community's resilience to lead our children through unprecedented times together, we also faced the challenge of finding a new superintendent to help lead our district into a new era of education and opportunity. As the board liaison that helped lead the search for our new superintendent I knew it was important to find a person who valued DEI, student well being and STEM and who had a vision for how we continue to make our district a lighthouse district in Ohio.</p> <p>The next four years will require our board and district to create a new strategic plan that will encompass the values of balance and belonging, whole learning and continuous improvements. The value of having an incumbent member of our board who has helped to lead our district through the last four years will be of central importance to our success over the next four years.</p>
Sumia Mohamed	<p>I am running for Upper Arlington School Board because I want to give back to the community and country that has given so much to me. I'm running to bring my professional and life experiences as a mother, researcher, and teacher so that we can build on our strong academic foundation, improving their ability to function well over the long-term and ensuring our graduates are ready for the world.</p> <p>I am a Sudanese new American, environmental scientist and practitioner, lecturer at The Ohio State University, project manager, and mother with two sons who are attending Upper Arlington Schools. I have two Master's degrees, one in Environment and Natural Resources with a graduate minor in Public Policy &</p>

	<p>Management and the second in Environmental Science with a specialization in Ecosystem Restoration. I love education, which is why I've volunteered on our PTOs in the teacher appreciation role and Chaired several of our DEI committees.</p> <p>As a mother I know every child is unique. All children deserve to have their wellbeing and identity honored, so they can feel empowered. This is how we will get the best out of them. I'm committed to nurturing our learning environment and ensuring our resources support what makes each child in UA , empowering all Bears and getting them ready for the world.</p> <p>I will bring a patient, steady, and calm demeanor to a Board that community members do not feel is functioning like a strong team, and clear convictions at a time when residents don't know where UA stands on issues like books bans or defunding public schools. I will be a courageous board member who will strengthen the experience of our educators who are the roots of the entire learning process and public education as a whole.</p>
<p>Liz George Stump</p>	<p>I'm passionate about building brighter futures for our kids through empowering teachers to deliver 21st century education. As a parent of a 4th grader and 6th grader in UA Schools, I've been living firsthand the extremist attacks on Upper Arlington's educators in the last few years. I believe it's critically important to bring my leadership capabilities to the BoE to protect our district, so our community can focus on preparing students for adulthood.</p> <p>I have earned a Masters in Business Administration from The Ohio State University after earning my undergraduate degree in English and Music. With two decades of experience in corporate financial services, I have developed skills in process, project, and operations management. At Discover Financial Services, I direct a variety of customer service teams to achieve strategic goals collaboratively.</p> <p>Three core areas will help protect our school and meet the future:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand and Respect Ourselves and Others: Our district must help kids know who they are, who others are, and make it safe for all to belong. 2. Foster Operational Excellence: We must build on our strong foundation and improve the support and tools that our staff and students can depend on. 3. Anticipate and Adapt: Predicting what skills our students need now and in the future, and innovating to meet those needs is critical for their current and future success.
<p>Lori Trent</p>	<p>As an incumbent, an educator, parent and active community member, I am driven to make UA Schools the best we can be! I have proven my commitment to public education and demonstrated my leadership experience by serving in many capacities, as well as board president for the last two years.</p>

In my first term, we have managed a Covid pandemic, expanded our mental health initiatives, and implemented a MTSS system to provide individualized learning for every UA student. With a new superintendent and administration, I have helped ensure that the right changes are being made. I am building bridges to innovative initiatives that provide more options for students and better prepares them for our ever-changing, unpredictable world.

Our work on the Board has paid off: On the recently released Ohio Department of Education 2022-2023 school district report card, the Upper Arlington CSD is 1 of just 8 districts in the entire state to earn a five-star overall rating as well as earning five stars in each of the five separate components on the report card. This is our second five-star overall rating in a row, so we are great and getting better. I am 100% focused on delivering the highest-quality education to our students, and won't be distracted by politics because I am focused on the future, yet respecting the past.

Q2: Are you seeking other endorsements? Why or why not? Have you received any endorsements yet?

Jenny McKenna

Yes. I view the core issues I have been championing and will continue to champion, along with the key pillars of our district's strategic plan as aligned with progressive values.

Public education for all students means that each student must see themselves reflected in their school community and their curriculum. Teachers should enjoy academic freedom, and that we should prioritize inclusivity, social and emotional learning and an "all means all" mentality in our district. Each and every student should be recognized as a valued, respected and contributing member of our community. Teachers should feel empowered and supported by their union's ability to collectively bargain and we should engage with them to understand how we can better serve our core mission and vision.

Our collective vision for our students should be to provide a community of learning that does not suggest that people's identities are controversial. This vision should embody the ideals that regardless of race, religion, or gender we are all equal citizens. Our students deserve equal rights, agency over their choices, their bodies, and the ability to create the type of future they envision for themselves.

Have you received any endorsements yet?

I have received endorsements from the following community leaders:

- Allison Russo, Minority Leader of the Ohio House of Representatives,
- Bill DeMora, Ohio Senator for the 25th District
- John Kulewicz, Upper Arlington City Council Member
- Michaela Burriss, Upper Arlington City Council Member

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kate and Brad Campbell • Dawn and Mike Hofherr • Josh and Anne Houser • Catherine and Steve Kennedy • Sean and Lindsay Mentel • Carol Mohr • Marilyn and Ray Pongonis • Sue Ralph <p>I am also awaiting the Franklin County Democratic Party, Matriots, and OAPSE endorsements.</p>
Sumia Mohamed	<p>Yes. Our community wants to see strong progressive leadership in UA schools who will stand in solidarity on issues that are important to them, and that I am receptive to the policies they champion. This and other endorsements are a great chance for long-term collaboration and a valuable piece of information to voters in Upper Arlington at a time when public schools are under attack by extremists. It communicates a belief in important values like DEI, SEL, supporting teachers' and workers' rights and collective bargaining. I support all these things, strong public schools for all, and lifting up every child and I want to make sure every voter knows it.</p> <p>Yes, I received the following endorsement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Matriots - The Collective PAC - Central Ohio Labor Council - AFL-CIO - Recommended for endorsement by the Franklin County Democratic Party Screening Committee
Liz George Stump	<p>Yes, I have been seeking other endorsements. Endorsements across a variety of constituencies speak to my ability to build coalitions as well as confirm my progressive values. I have received endorsements from the Matriots, the Central Ohio Labor Council AFL-CIO, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, the ReSisters, and Organizing for UA. Additionally, I've screened for the FCDP endorsement, which has not currently endorsed any UA BoE candidates and an endorsement from OAPSE, which has not completed their process.</p>
Lori Trent	<p>I have applied for several endorsements and anticipate receiving several that I have applied for.</p>
<p>Q3: How are you focusing your campaign to persuade residents to vote for you over other candidates?</p>	
Jenny McKenna	<p>As a parent with 3 kids currently in the district and a current board of education member, I offer a unique perspective that our board needs. I have been a unifying and calming voice on the board and will help to provide the stability and continuity our district needs to move our schools forward.</p>

Sumia Mohamed	I'm focusing on community outreach efforts and door knocking. Both are well underway. My canvass launch last week had 17 volunteers who canvassed 700 doors in one day. I am being very collaborative and coordinating data and canvassing with other progressive candidates, making sure our mutual universe of voters is covered and that we're not duplicating efforts. This helps every progressive candidate and issue on the ballot.
Liz George Stump	Voter outreach is focused across multiple channels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct Voter Contact: - Doors: 2300 knocked to date. - Community Conversations: 12 with more scheduled. - Multiple candidate panels, community events, and networked relationships. - Mail: A minimum of three mailers are planned, with potential for an additional. - Digital: Regular social media on Facebook and Instagram and email newsletters.
Lori Trent	Being an incumbent, I have wide community support garnering the most votes of any school board candidate and becoming the first open LGBT person to be elected to <u>any</u> office in Upper Arlington history.
Q4: How much financial support have you received for your campaign? Are you on track to meet your financial goals?	
Jenny McKenna	When I ran in 2019 I raised \$26,000. My budget for this campaign is similar and I am on track to meet my financial goals.
Sumia Mohamed	My grassroots campaign is well resourced, organized, and ready to win in November. With a website up for just over a month, we've already raised over \$23,000, more than 90% of which comes from within UA. I've secured the endorsements of the Matriots, Central Ohio Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and the Collective PAC, as well as commitments from more than 20 neighbors and friends. This is not withstanding my first fundraising event on September 27th and 5 other house parties scheduled before election day. I am more than confident my campaign is on track to meet its financial goals.
Liz George Stump	I've raised over \$28K and am on track to hit my goals. We are able to fund all of our planned activities with the pathway we're on.
Lori Trent	I have already achieved 75% of my fundraising goal thanks to the support of this community. I will continue to push forward on my goal.
Q5: How will you address the different and unique needs of all of the students within our district? How would you encourage an inclusive learning environment in which all students feel equally valued?	
Jenny McKenna	By supporting our students' sense of balance and belonging, we will strengthen their academic excellence. I will ensure that we remain committed to developing future-ready students by focusing on the profile of an engaged learner. I will strengthen and develop our multi-tiered systems of support to personalize each student's academic journey. The next four years will require our board and district to create a new strategic plan that will encompass the values of balance and belonging, whole learning, continuous improvements,

	<p>comprehensive STEM programming for our students K-12, and personalized pathways for post-graduation success.</p>
<p>Sumia Mohamed</p>	<p>Upper Arlington is a thriving school district, with an already great system. My goal as a Board member is to use the holistic system approach I've used my entire life as a scientist and researcher to lead our district. This includes working closely with the other board members, administrators, teachers, and parents to address perceived School Board or UASD malfunctions.</p> <p>Students are more ready to learn and gain knowledge when they are emotionally healthy. If elected, I will use the available data, input from different populations, and measurable objectives to nurture the uniqueness of all our children. Being clear in our School District values help us set necessary priorities that can be reflected in the annual budget before approval. I will strategically evaluate our district budget, growing individualized education and integrated content. I will be a courageous board member and will empower students, teachers, and staff by meeting their current needs while evaluating policy and innovative ideas to further enhance their experiences.</p> <p>I want to further expand UAs connections to the trade unions and other skills programs that will set our children up for success as adults. I will champion every student in their pursuit of knowledge, stand by every teacher in their field of expertise, and partner with every family to ensure every child has the opportunity to be challenged and supported.</p>
<p>Liz George Stump</p>	<p>While UA has made progress, there are still members of our community who are excluded. Defining what belonging means, being able to measure it, and using strong operational processes to drive better outcomes for students who are minorities, LGBTQ+, or have disabilities is critical.</p>
<p>Lori Trent</p>	<p>Being and openly LGBTQ elected official, my top priority is supporting every single student. I am devoted to supporting a culture of belonging, kindness, inclusion, and sincere respect for one another. I believe that every student is talented and gifted, they may just need to have some guidance to help them discover their talents and gifts. I recognize that Upper Arlington Schools are the prized jewel of our community and I am going to keep us on the right path to continued success and recognition.</p> <p>I have worked with countless students over my 30+ years living in this district and I believe that this community shares two very important values – we all care deeply about our children and want what is best for them and we all care deeply about our community and one another. Upper Arlington is a warm, generous, inviting community that truly cares about all of its neighbors. The amount of generosity that I have witnessed over the years in helping one another is unmatched in any community that I know of. Student need to see role models like them in elected positions.</p>

Q6: What is your view of school choice and vouchers in general and the backpack bill in particular?

Jenny McKenna	We already have school choice. Parents can choose to send their children to public, parochial, or private schools. Our tax dollars should be used to fund public schools. I think the backpack bill is dangerous to the institution of public education, which is a pillar of our society.
Sumia Mohamed	This trajectory of diverting tax dollars from public schools to unregulated for-profit entities will hurt public education and UA schools in the long run. The Backpack Bill will drain the money needed for public schools, having a significantly adverse impact on public schools and their ability to meet student needs. The public school design provides community socialization and I have experienced this myself. Legislation like the backpack bill gives more tax resources to families who can already afford it, such as those attending private schools, and leaves public schools further drained. The opportunity for diverse exposure to other people becomes more restricted, and this exposure has value in society. I strongly believe our School Board should take a position on these issues and fight for the tax investment we make in our children and their learning, alongside other schools in Ohio that are doing the same.
Liz George Stump	I oppose using public money to fund non-public schools, which is what school choice and vouchers do. The Backpack Bill is a blatant attempt to defund our public schools and funnel those resources into poorly regulated schools that are not required to support all kids regardless of their needs.
Lori Trent	<p>I have and always will be a champion for public education. I am currently a certified teacher and a former elementary and high school teacher and academic advisor. In my professional capacity, I work for a STEM learning and innovative educational non-profit called PAST, where I advocate and lead STEM initiatives and connect our organization with business and industry partners.</p> <p>As I have demonstrated during my tenure, I am willing to listen all voices in our community. I work to listen to all voices, learn from what was heard, and use the community's feedback to lead the school district into an even brighter future that is why I initiated the List Learn Lead initiative to listen to all voices, learn from what was heard, and use the community's feedback to lead the school district into an even brighter future.</p>
Q7: How would you prefer to receive input from UA residents: public participation during board meetings, emails prior to meetings, or in person meetings with residents?	
Jenny McKenna	I am always open to receiving input from our citizens. I work in service to them. My preference would be for people to contact me in the way that is most convenient and effective for them.
Sumia Mohamed	As a public servant I would encourage the UA residents to share their input through all different channels mentioned above. I understand that not everyone is good at speaking in public or able to attend in person meetings. Accessibility is important, so I am best able to address all residents' needs and consider their opinions and inputs.
Liz George Stump	In-person meetings have the best opportunity for 2-way dialogue that can drive understanding and connection. That said, my preference is not the most critical lens through which to view community input and interaction. While these can all be important mechanisms for the community to voice their perspectives, it is

	critical that the district have multiple pathways for all members of our school community to engage - just these three are not enough. Furthermore, these engagement pathways must be designed around what our community stakeholders need/prefer and where possible, should occur with other organizations (ie, the city) where issues are overlapping.
Lori Trent	All methods.
Q8: What is the board's role versus the administration's role in running our school system?	
Jenny McKenna	The school board represents the community's voice in public education and creates policy. Two of our most important jobs are to hire and evaluate the superintendent and treasurer and to develop the strategic plan for the district. The administration's role is to execute on the strategic vision and manage the day-to-day operations of our schools.
Sumia Mohamed	The School Board is the legislative branch of a separate administrative subdivision which is the school district. My Job as a school board member is to hire, manage and check on the performance of a superintendent who is our lead administrator. Besides the role of managing financial resources, and setting policy and creating legislation for the entire school district. We are the voice of parents and the community in this important democratic process.
Liz George Stump	The Board of Education has three functions: Hire/fire/hold accountable the Superintendent and Treasurer, set the strategic direction through policy development and implementation, and liaise with the community - both gathering feedback and input and providing information that ensures the community is clear on the state of the schools. The administration implements the strategic direction in all day-to-day matters, and works collaboratively with the board to provide educational expertise and respond to community needs.
Lori Trent	The board acts as a member of five, no one member has any more power, including me at as the Board President. We hire the superintendent and the treasurer to conduct the day to day business of the school district.
Q9: Our five school board members are a team of leaders who are charged with improving our school district. Team members do not always agree on solutions. Can you provide us with an example of a time where you had a conflict with other team members and how the conflict was resolved.	
Jenny McKenna	Thoughtful discourse is a requirement for a functioning board. Each of the 5 of us represents a different part of our community. When you have a diverse group of people one would hope that there is a spectrum of perspectives. As a board we may not always seek the same solutions to the challenges we encounter but we all keep our students' well-being and success at the heart of all that we do. The pandemic is an obvious example of a time when we frequently disagreed on the best course of action. We consistently sought input and feedback from all stakeholders and consulted with the experts in our community to guide us with best practices.
Sumia Mohamed	As a new American, I've faced many conflict situations and I've learned a great deal from each of them. I've worked in different countries such as Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and finally the USA. As the co-founder of

	<p>Azza Women and Children Development Organization, I remember many times where myself and the other 3 organization board members had disagreements about the way we should manage the children’s weekend cultural school, the allocation of financial resources, the outreach policies, and more.</p> <p>When these conflicts arose, the first thing I did was stay calm and give the others their chance to talk (all of us love to be heard). Leaning on my experience as a researcher, I then ask questions to understand my coworkers’ point of view, taking into consideration their work experience and seniority (if applicable). After patiently waiting for an opportunity to speak, I would use that moment for a logical discussion on facts (not only opinions) and repeat what I believe I heard from others, to ensure clarity and understanding, before connecting all of this with what is in the best interest for school and everyone integrated in it. This steadiness allows for a calm and patient environment for discussion focused on logic and facts, maintaining respect, and no personal or hard feelings.</p> <p>Additionally, my research focuses on strategically managing shared water resources between countries and I teach my students a holistic thinking approach to manage complex environmental systems. In my research, I studied how the Nile River basin counties in East Africa failed to manage this shared important water resource and got into a system trap known as Policy Resistance. I argue that in this concept the actors in the system (i.e., the Nile basin countries) are pulling the system (i.e., the Nile) in different directions to serve their own agendas. I proved by data that the most effective way of dealing with such conflict is to find a way of aligning various goals and to use a unified system to assess impact. By providing an overarching goal, allowing these countries to break out of their bounded rationality and think for long-term solutions, they can maintain the sustainability of their valuable water resource they share.</p> <p>I hear from our community members that they do not feel our Board is functioning like a strong team. I look forward to bringing these experiences to the Board and our community.</p>
<p>Liz George Stump</p>	<p>Professionally, I was recently part of a workgroup that was charged with recommending solutions to improve the performance of employees that had just completed new hire training. As the conversation progressed, multiple members of the team suggested a variety of ideas, but they were all different and resources weren’t available to implement all of them. Emotions started to run a little high as people advocated for their idea.</p> <p>I intervened on a couple fronts. First, I felt it was important to acknowledge the contributions and perspectives of the different individuals. Then, I asked some clear “why” questions about the various proposals on what led individuals to believe their proposal was the optimal one. After I reflected back the responses, the team quickly came to understand that the solutions were based on single, anecdotal experiences, and not a broad based understanding of the root cause driving the performance challenges. Once that baseline understanding was reached, I was able to lead the team through using some industry</p>

	<p>standard problem assessment and solution design tools to help us scope the problem, understand the causes, and identify the solution most likely to address it. (That solution is being implemented October 1st.)</p> <p>Conflict on teams can come from a variety of places - interpersonal style or communication issues, a process to complete work that is not effective, a lack of clarity on objectives or expectations, or a host of other potential blockers. The key is ensuring that everyone feels heard and valued and approaching places of tension with humility and curiosity. Then, leaders use the knowledge gained to build trust, adjust how the group interacts, and build commitment to improve the way in which the team works.</p>
Lori Trent	<p>We need for our board to be a collaborative, engaged team who is able to work together to solve our district issues. All you need to do is look at my track record and you will see how I have worked to build a community as I have in every other aspect of my life.</p>