

# Rock PAC Candidate Questionnaire Responses



Question	Patrick Fassnacht	Patrick Phillips	Jill Woerner
Job Title/Employer	Principal, Inspire Academy	Director of Onsite IT Support/Indiana University	Director of Education and External Outreach, AFS-USA
Position Sought / District	School Board, At-Large	Westfield School Board/District 2	School Board - District #4
Do you support the upcoming referendum? Why or Why Not?	<p>Yes. Absolutely. We have to bring as many resources to our work as possible. People, teachers, and human capacity are essential to our success.</p>	<p>Yes!</p> <p>This is why I am voting for the 2022 WWS Operating Referendum, and you should too!</p> <p>In 2008, the Indiana General Assembly, at the direction of then Governor Mitch Daniels, enacted property tax caps and shifted most school funding from local governments to the state. The result was twofold – on the one hand most people's property tax bills were significantly reduced, but on the other hand rapidly growing school districts, like Westfield, saw their per pupil funding drop and budgetary shortfalls emerge.</p> <p>Fast forward to today, property taxes are still capped at 1% for most homes in Westfield, and our district's growth is still outpacing the dollars. The state legislature continues to siphon money away from public education and funnel it to charter schools and other public-school alternatives instead, but Westfield keeps growing and our operating expenses do too.</p> <p>The reason Westfield keeps growing is quite simple. It's the schools! And this is unfortunately a double-edged sword. The more people move to Westfield for the schools, the more the schools suffer because of the way the state distributes money to schools. Our district is perpetually punished for our rapid growth. Westfield receives about \$500 less per student, per year, than the average Indiana school district, and this gap widens as the growth continues and the funding formula cannot keep up.</p> <p>Westfield Schools are regularly ranked among the top in the state in multiple categories from college preparedness to graduation rates to athletics and various measures in between. Our teachers are the best in the business, but because of the burdens we've put on them, whether it is making them beg for money on crowdfunding sites for basic classroom necessities, not providing adequate coverage in their classrooms to cover the needs of all students, or perhaps worst of all, not paying many of them a living wage to teach our children and prepare them to go into our community one day, we are losing them at an alarming pace.</p> <p>That same state legislature has effectively eliminated all barriers to entry for schoolteachers in our state, yet as of this writing we have no less than 79 positions unfilled in the district. I hear from teachers they cannot get subs to cover for the meetings they are required to attend during the day. I get a phone call almost every morning telling me that due to a driver shortage, my son's school bus is going to be late picking him up and getting him home from school. Our school grounds go longer without mowing and weeding, our school buildings don't get cleaned as often, and maintenance requests go unanswered, all because we simply don't get our fair share of the state education dollars. And this is what it's like with an active operating referendum in place! Imagine what would happen if we didn't have that additional ~\$11,000,000 bolstering our budget every year.</p> <p>Our students deserve reasonable class sizes, access to stimulating and fulfilling extra-curricular activities, transportation that gets them to school on time, and clean, safe schools and grounds. Our teachers deserve the respect and decency to be allowed to do what they were trained and love to do, to teach, without all the unnecessary distractions. And last of all, the citizens of Westfield deserve the schools many of them moved here for, and the reason most of their homes are worth what they are worth.</p> <p>I will be voting to renew the WWS Operating Referendum in the upcoming election because we can't afford not to, and I believe our students and our teachers are worth it. I hope you will join me.</p>	<p>Yes, given the financial implications of the property tax caps from 2010 and the rapid growth in the Westfield community, this referendum renewal will allow the district to maintain its current level of commitment to students and teachers AND improve class sizes and the variety of course offerings available to students.</p>
If the district's budget became unbalanced, what programs/services do you think would be most important to conserve?	<p>Science of Reading. Effective coaching and teacher support. Counseling, mental health, social resources, mentoring, and character education.</p>	<p>Classroom resources, and those that directly impact students, are most important to conserve. The district should put forward a clear plan that highlights the administrator positions and underutilized, non-classroom programs, that would be eliminated before any teachers, instructional assistants, substitutes, etc. are impacted in case of an unbalanced budget.</p>	<p>Programming and resources that support student safety (physical and mental) should be a high priority. I also believe small class sizes are a critical element to allow for the individualization of student learning so every student can reach their full potential. Any programs that have been built to retain and recruit strong educators must be preserved.</p>
Please explain what you feel the role of a school board member is.	<p>Generally, to aid in setting policy and hiring/supporting the Superintendent. Beyond that though, it is about supporting the District and our Community. Engaging people, seeking input, hearing and amplifying the voice of others, and seeking ways to ensure everyone has a seat at the table. Aligning people and our skills toward the Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles. Ensuring that we stand for what we say that we believe in. As a Board Member, we are committed to supporting leadership, our team, and our mission. We are invested in finding solutions and making more successes happen. For ALL of our people. All of our kids. All of our families. Into Tomorrow.</p>	<p>I believe the role of a school board member is to set the vision and goals for the district, adopt policies that give the district direction to set priorities and achieve its goals, hire and evaluate the superintendent's performance, and to adopt and oversee the district's annual budget. All of these should be done in consultation and partnership with parents, community members, teachers, and many other stakeholders. I also believe transparency is an imperative quality of a school board member.</p>	<p>I believe a school board member plays a critical role in...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>...establishing policies that provide a safe and academically innovative environment for students.</li> <li>...respecting, retaining, and recruiting the best educators.</li> <li>...providing a voice to the parents and members of a community.</li> <li>...providing responsible fiscal oversight.</li> </ul>

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<b>Short Biography (250 words or less)</b>	<p>A long-time educator, school leader, and network admin... I am seeking your support in my effort to be even more involved in my home and community. I came to Westfield, fresh out of Purdue University, to teach at WHS in the very first year of the new high school building. Seeing our high school leap quickly from about 550 Ss to the nearly 1200 in my 5 years at the high school, my wife and I raised 2 amazing children throughout the subsequent growth. We invested in the schools (through volunteering, her work as a long-time para-- and now Teacher) to where we are today... seeking an even larger investment into our next growth.</p> <p>Serving in urban, suburban, and rural schools... in traditional public schools, charter schools serving urgent missions, alternative education programs, and adult education programs... throughout numerous communities throughout the state, and a couple of other states... I am still learning about how best to educate and support people. Incredibly fortunate to have served with many superstars and learned with some tremendous leaders, I have been able to empower and enable a number of successful turnarounds. I have facilitated a number of growth opportunities and expansions. I have been tasked with building systems, supporting regions, and developing leaders in our work.</p> <p>From all of this, I am most proud of helping people meet success. Individually and collectively. I am most excited for having found successes where people previously have not. I am most in my groove when tapping into people's potential and nurturing it into even bigger and better things. and, for, leaving my schools/campsites in better positions than which I found them.</p> <p>This is my work. This is my calling. This is what drives me, inspires, me, and urges me on to help spark others. This is me.</p>	<p>I was born and raised in Kokomo, IN, and moved to Marion, IN in 7th grade. I moved to Westfield my sophomore year of high school and graduated from Westfield High School in 2000. I am a longtime (14 years from 1998-2000 and 2011-current) Westfield resident and a parent of a current WWS student, Ben, a 6th grader at Westfield Intermediate School. My ex-wife and lifelong friend, Jenny Phillips, is a developmental preschool teacher in Westfield for the past 16 years. Additionally, my father was a business manager and then personnel director at WWS during Mark Keen's time as superintendent. I grew up in a family of public servants and have been one for the majority of my professional career.</p> <p>I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Informatics from Indiana University in Bloomington and a Master of Public Affairs degree with a specific focus on Public Management from the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at IUPUI. My MPA studies included public finance and accounting, organizational leadership, negotiation and dispute resolution, and more. I have 15+ years of professional leadership experience, and I am currently leading a team of ~125 IT professionals providing the highest level of concierge IT support for faculty, staff, and students at Indiana University schools, departments, and units across the state.</p> <p>I am uniquely qualified to help lead our school district during a time of record breaking growth and unprecedented challenges. I understand and respect Westfield's rich history and I embrace the reality of our rapidly changing community. The future is bright in Westfield, but parents in our community are at odds on important issues and our children are being unfairly impacted by the whims of adults. I can change this.</p>	<p>Jill Woerner, the national Director of Education and External Outreach for AFS-USA, previously served as a Spanish teacher and school administrator. Jill is the former World Language and Global Learning Specialist for the Indiana Department of Education where she implemented Indiana's Seal of Biliteracy, facilitated the Dual Language Immersion grants and programs and led numerous workshops helping Indiana world language teachers shift their practices toward a more communicative approach. Jill was the Regional Language Teacher of the Year in 2012 and now serves as the Board Chair for the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (CSCFTFL). Jill volunteers with a variety of state, regional, and national organizations that support the cultivation of global citizens. Jill is bilingual. She also enjoys traveling and documenting those travels through scrapbooks. She has been a Westfield resident for more than 8 years.</p>
<b>Students from priority populations (students of color, students with disabilities, emergent bilingual students, students in foster care, homeless students, and students navigating poverty) have been steadily growing within Westfield Washington Schools. (W)</b>	<p>Carefully, Intentionally, Scientifically, and Humanely. This is where I have spent most of my career. Chasing these 'groups' and 'demographics' and PEOPLE... in order to be sure that we not leave them behind. To help people pause in our press forward... and make sure that we are building a bigger table. That we hear, learn, and SEE everyone. That we provide people a Hand Up from all that we have learned and been blessed with.</p> <p>Lots of experiences here to draw from. Lots of heart here to make sure that people hear them and see them. To check our Privilege at the door and to give to our neighbor. We are only as good and as honorable as what we do to empower others.</p> <p>The above things are not easy. Make no mistake, priorities must be intentional. I am here to help this.</p>	<p>We can acknowledge our past, but we must embrace our future if we are to educate and prepare our young people for life after WWS. We must focus on attracting teachers, administrators, and support staff that look like our students and have backgrounds as diverse as our students. We must provide resources in our libraries and prepare our counselors to better understand the issues historically under represented minorities face in our schools, community, and world. We must move forward and evolve, just like our district has and is.</p> <p>I believe we should address matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion head on. DEI is not a fad, and this is not a fleeting moment. This is real life. Our local, national, and global community is ever evolving, and the sooner we embrace this, the sooner we can be a part of this exciting evolution. DEI is not something that stops when you collect your high school diploma. It's a part of life whether you go straight to work, to college, to the armed forces, or anywhere in between.</p> <p>Westfield looks different in almost every way than it did when I graduated, along with about 140 other seniors, back in 2000. What were farmlands are now neighborhoods. What were empty parking lots are now businesses. What were houses are now restaurants. What was once a non-diverse community is now more diverse in every way. What was once conservative is now more progressive. What was once older is now younger. And these are not bad things! These are our reality!</p>	<p>The research is clear about the benefits to the subgroups listed above when a dual language/immersion program is implemented well in a school district. These kids, regardless of income, race or background, graduate from high school bilingual and with a higher ability to problem-solve and think critically. To that end, I would suggest the introduction of a dual language or immersion program at the elementary level. Below is an article that highlights the choice of one school district in North Carolina. Indiana's General Assembly has allocated money for these programs since 2015. I have also included a list of books and research articles about dual language and immersion validate what is shared in the news article.</p> <p>News Article - <a href="https://www.edweek.org/leadership/school-successes-inspire-n-c-push-for-dual-language/2014/10">https://www.edweek.org/leadership/school-successes-inspire-n-c-push-for-dual-language/2014/10</a> Books - <a href="https://www.thomasandcollier.com/general-2">https://www.thomasandcollier.com/general-2</a> Research - <a href="https://www.thomasandcollier.com/articles">https://www.thomasandcollier.com/articles</a></p>
<b>What are 2-3 needs that must be priorities for our district to address? Why do you see these as needs?</b>	<p>Reflecting, learning, and growing better. Not taking our successes for granted and being carefully intentional about how we move forward.</p> <p>Systems, routines, accountable actions. We have to be more streamlined in our systems and organization. We need leadership to connect the pieces and to put people in positions of success. We need to be science, research, and outcomes based... in ways that are authentic. (Not nearly the same as standardized testing!!) We have to be better at what research and practice tells us about learning, teaching, and environments of support.</p> <p>Putting people at the center of our work. This absolutely has to be much more than lip service. While all teachers claim to have entered this career for the kids and the families... there are some who back it up with regular, informed, and relentless action. There are some systems where Leadership empowers other leaders to do the same. Where we know the science, know the pedagogy, have systems in places... and move forward, meeting people where they are, their needs in mind, and adjusting ourselves to make sure that they can join in our work. Supporting people's growth areas, leveraging their strengths, and creating a culture where we support one another in using our special talents to help each other in meeting our professed goals.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Classroom Resources - We have teachers who cannot take time off because there are no subs to cover their classrooms, and classrooms and kids that are under resourced because we don't have enough instructional assistants. We must do better in this area. We must find creative ways to attract non-certified staff to serve the most important roles they do in our schools and support our students and teachers.</li> <li>2. Transportation - Like every other school district around us right now, we are struggling to provide safe and reliable transportation for our students. We must identify creative ways to attract more bus drivers to ensure routes are running on time and students are as safe on the buses as they are in our school buildings.</li> <li>3. Space and Facilities - Our enrollment continues to increase at a rapid pace, and we are bursting at the seams in our elementary schools. We likely need additional elementary schools, and we must plan for more expansion at the high school. I do not want to see two high schools in Westfield, so careful planning is needed to ensure we can accommodate the growth responsibly and keep our community united.</li> </ol>	<p>Recruiting and supporting staff members that reflect our community and bringing forth innovation and flexibility in initiatives that serve non-traditional learners are needed to help the district prepare students to fully engage in society after high school.</p>
<b>What are 2-3 strengths of which our district can be proud? Why do you see these as strengths?</b>	<p>High-Quality teaching staff. Invested and committed people who give of their best selves.</p> <p>Options and connections to real-world learning opportunities. Programs, clubs, technologies, and people that are world class... and who can leverage more resources and opportunities.</p> <p>Political, Social, and Educational clout. We are positioned well to network and partner throughout the state and nation. We have the foundation and investment that provides a magnet for others to wish to join. WWS has a professional and high-caliber reputation as a Destination. We need to be more intentional about reflecting, defining, and projecting into our bright future. To maintain an urgency about our work. To continue to frame-- and artfully support!-- our path forward.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Our students - They are the best and brightest amongst their peers, they care about our schools, our community, and each other, and they represent us well on every stage.</li> <li>2. Our teachers - They work tirelessly to ensure our kids are safe, cared for, and educated, and they often do this to their own personal detriment.</li> <li>3. Our facilities - Our school buildings (education spaces, theater and performance spaces, vocational spaces, athletic spaces, etc.) are second to none in the state and beyond.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Strong parental engagement and support for district initiatives are strengths. This collaboration ultimately benefits students by modeling collaboration and also by providing students with the resources they need to be successful.</li> <li>*High levels of academic achievement should be considered a source of district pride because they factor into the overall community success.</li> <li>*Westfield-Washington School District has a high number of compassionate teachers who are invested in student success.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>What role do you think parents/guardians should take in their child's education?</b></p>	<p>A lot. Every day. Every moment. Every aspect. Even when they are uncomfortable, and when it makes us uncomfortable. Parents send us the best that they have, the best that they can give, and are not the reason, or excuse, for us not meeting success with their family. Parents are doing the best that they know for their family. We should be as well. Whole-heartedly, without judgement, and in spite of what we think is best. We have to be better at hearing them, at trying to understand, and in being in regular, ongoing, partnership with them. Often, on THEIR level and need.</p>	<p>I think parents and guardians should take an active role in their child's education, but there are limits. I believe schools play an invaluable role in a child's education, and parents should understand and respect that. Parents should not be hovering around and dictating everything that happens at school, but they should be engaged, ask questions, and participate where opportunities exist.</p> <p>I believe we should hire the best and brightest teachers, and then get out of the way and trust them to educate and care for our children during the day. Parents should be informed of what their kids are up to, and they should make sure they get to and from school every day, but they cannot micromanage our teachers and schools.</p>	<p>Parents/Guardians should be working alongside the school in helping their children grow into respectful and engaged members of society.</p>
<p><b>What stakeholders, research and resources do you rely on for your education platform/priorities?</b></p>	<p>All of them. Anyone/thing that can provide an insight, resource, research, and 'answer.' Or parents, our students, our businesses, regional stakeholders, colleges and professionals in their various fields. People who we believe in... people who we are curious about... and people who disagree with us. Years of experience in serving people of all walks of life, in various educational settings, throughout the Midwest, in other states/regions, and other countries. My kids, other people's kids, and kids throughout the world. Research and good practice definitely should guide us, but then, the persons in front of us call on us to adjust, adapt, and be better... in serving them into positions where they can authentically access the future.</p>	<p>In addition to my own experiences as the son of a WWS administrator, and partner of a WWS teacher, I have a group of teachers from WWS and other surrounding districts advising me regularly. I also rely on school law and policy resources from IASBO (<a href="https://www.indiana-asbo.org/">https://www.indiana-asbo.org/</a>) and the Center for Public Education (<a href="https://www.nsba.org/Services/Center-for-Public-Education">https://www.nsba.org/Services/Center-for-Public-Education</a>).</p>	<p>I rely on my personal experience as an education professional (teacher, administrator, specialist at the Department of Education, and parent). I routinely refer to educational journals, books, and articles so I can access the research about a topic. I also believe in hearing from the stakeholders in the community, including students, about decisions that impact them and their children.</p>
<p><b>What would be the top 3 investments/programs you would prioritize in the education budget, and why?</b></p>	<p>Reading. Science of Reading. Explicit training, embedded support, and ensuring all students can read at a successful level. Such a CRITICAL foundation for all learning.</p> <p>Alignment, Development, and systemic systems of support. Making sure that the pieces align and connect. Ensuring that we are keeping our eye on our Guiding Principles, our systems and routines, and ensuring that they are doing what we plan them to be doing. Setting and monitoring measurable outcomes and defining what Success should be looking like! Ensuring that we are not continuing to add one program after another, one trendy buzz after the other, or efforts in name only. Keeping the Important Things... the important things. And supporting them!</p> <p>Inclusivity. Making sure that ALL means ALL. That our Guiding Principles mean more than wall art. That our actions and programming supports a supportive environment. That admin and teacher leaders have a real pulse--and the support, resources, and training--to know our community... to hear our people... to understand the needs... and be in position to help people to really engage. To seek out our gaps and misses... to draw everyone in. Being intentional about meeting people where they are and providing them the Hand Up that they need to enter our work.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Substitute teachers, instructional assistants, and support staff</li> <li>2. Transportation</li> <li>3. STEM and other extracurricular programs for students</li> </ol>	<p>I would prioritize...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*...initiatives that would both retain and recruit strong educators</li> <li>*...programs that prioritize student safety</li> <li>*...innovative course and program options for students</li> </ul>