



School Board Candidates' Forum 2021

What are your qualifications for the Pittsylvania County School Board, and what issues or policy position would best define the difference(s) between you and your opponent?

Raymond Ramsey: I am a lifelong resident of Pittsylvania County. I attended the county schools where I graduated from Northside High School. I taught school in the county and also served as a school administrator at Mt. Airy Elementary School and The Danville-Pittsylvania County Regional Alternative School. I am currently completing my first term as School Board member of Banister District.

Calvin Doss: I have been a member of the Pittsylvania County School Board for 18 years serving as chairman for 10 of those years. I am a life member of the Gretna Volunteer Fire Department, currently serve as President of the Ramsey Memorial Medical Foundation, and have served as a member of the Gretna Town Council, Pittsylvania County Service Authority and Gretna Rescue Squad. I am a graduate of Gretna High School, attended Danville Community College and retired with 37 years of service from Abbott Laboratories. I have been married for 43 years, and my wife is a graduate of Gretna High School. My two sons are graduates of Gretna High School. Both continued their post-secondary education with one graduating from Lynchburg College and the other graduating from Danville Community College and Old Dominion University. I currently have a grandson attending Gretna Middle School. My opponent did not attend public schools and is campaigning on supporting home school or private schools. I fully support a parent's right to choose where their child receives their education, but it is the job of a public-school board member to work for the betterment of public education and not spend their time promoting private or home schools. As a board member, my first priority is "what is best for the student's education" and second "what is best for the employees". It takes great employees to make a great school system and that has been my focus for the last 18 years. I have always tried to be available to any citizen, school employee and student to help with any issue or concern they may have. I will continue this practice if elected to serve again.

Jacob Hancock: For the better part of the last 11 years, I have worked in or been involved in higher education in some way from being a student, a student worker, and now a member of the staff there. I am also currently an assistant teacher at a local technical college. I also have management experience from my time with a local grocery store. Since I was 14 years old, I have worked with my family's business when needed as well. While I do not believe one must have a certain set of qualifications, or have an extensive resume, or even be a parent for this role, I do believe people in it should at least have a heart for children, their families, and teachers. I have also experienced what it is like to be a student in our county, while I did not attend public school, I did attend a private school for elementary school and my family homeschooled my brother and I for the rest my time in school and for his entire k-12 years. We reported to the county each year and followed the rules for homeschooling in the county. I am not a parent, but I care about the future of our country, and I know that children are the future and that they need to be protected. I now have the pleasure of working with high school students in our county and it is a responsibility that I do not take lightly, and one that I really enjoy. Going through everything we have gone through since March of 2020, I have found that I am in a position to really offer encouragement and inspiration to these students, and even their teachers as some have shared with me. This experience has honestly been a blessing for me as well.

I recognize the woke political agenda being pushed in America's education system, even in Pittsylvania County and I do not deny that there is a political bias in the education system. We may have excellent folks working for the schools, in fact we do, but we are all victim to woke politicians and organizations pushing an anti-America, anti-Freedom, and anti-family agenda. My opponent has been clear that he does not believe there should be or are politics in schools. I also believe that I can offer a new viewpoint, my opponent has been on the board for the last 18 or so years. Sometimes a new viewpoint, and a fresh mindset can be a good thing, as the families and even some teachers have shared with me during my campaign.

Cassandra Crump: I am currently a 20-year teacher. My certification is Pre-k through 12th grade. Over the years I have served students at every level. (Pre-k, Elementary, Middle School and High School) The nature of the teaching position I hold, affords me the opportunity to work with students, parents, other teachers, staff and a variety of community professionals on behalf of my students. I work collaboratively with families, and professionals for the common goal of the success of my students. Working with this number of individuals on a regular basis requires a great deal of humility, skill, and attentiveness to what each individual brings to the table. Likewise, I have worked alongside other board members over the past four years to bring the perspective of a teacher to the table but to also listen to what each of them bring as well. We are all from a variety of backgrounds and no one person has all the answers. Each member is unique in their own way. Having the ability to recognize and respect this is important when working collaboratively as a board. While members don't always unanimously agree on every issue, understanding that each person has something to share is important. I am also an individual who is not afraid to share new ideas with my fellow board members and staff. If I know something that is able to benefit us as a division, I pass it on. I engage others by asking questions to get a better understanding and to offer an opportunity for collaboration. When we work together, we are able to accomplish a great deal more. While I don't have children of my own, I have poured into the lives of many children in my 20 year career inside and outside the classroom. I hold a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education of Deaf Children from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and a Master of Science Degree in Special Education from Radford University. I look forward to continuing to use these qualifications to serve the citizens of the Dan River District and Pittsylvania County as a whole.

Kelly Merricks: I am immensely passionate about education and the importance of community involvement. I have knowledge and experience working in the Pittsylvania County School System.

- Attended and graduated from Dan River High School (Class of 1999)
- Taught Science at Dan River High School – 17 years
- Department chair/Lead teacher/Science liaison – 14 years
- Represented Pittsylvania County Schools in Richmond
 - VDOE – Biology SOL Test Review Committee (3 years)
 - VDOE – Biology SOL Item Review Committee (1 year)
 - VDOE – Science Standards of Review Committee (1 year)
- Served on textbook review committee for Dan River High School
- Coached Varsity Volleyball – 3 years
- Sponsored Science club, homecoming and prom at Dan River High School
- Active in PTO at KES
- Coach youth softball (Pittsylvania County Parks and Rec)
- Coach youth volleyball (Pittsylvania County Youth League)

My focus, as the Dan River District School Board member, is to:

- 1) improve teacher/staff morale, retention, and support
- 2) improve communication between the school board and teacher, staff, and parents
- 3) be a vocal advocate for the students, parents, and PCS employees.

If elected, what will be your top priorities?

Raymond Ramsey:

- Provide a safe and efficient operating system for all students and staff.
- Find ways to fill staff positions where there are shortages and areas that are difficult to keep filled.
- Strive to continue to increase salaries of staff.
- Continue efforts to maintain buildings and equipment.

Calvin Doss:

There are two immediate critical priorities facing Pittsylvania County Schools. These include

1. Closing the learning gap for students that has been lost during this pandemic. Our instructional staff, administration and teachers are working extremely hard to identify and make plans on closing this gap. As a board member I feel it is the board's job to provide the necessary resources to achieve this.
2. Staff shortages, especially certain subject area teachers, needs to be addressed. We are experiencing staff shortages across all jobs, not just teachers, and the continuing need for substitutes. This problem is not just local but extends to the state and national levels. It is the board's job to make sure we provide competitive pay and a great work environment.
3. Another top priority is to ensure all students receive the type of education needed for them to succeed in life whether it is preparing to go to college or going into a workforce trade through the Pittsylvania Career & Technical Center.

Jacob Hancock: Offer transparency to the families and teachers of the county. So many have confirmed my thoughts throughout this process that it is difficult to get answers from the school board. Today, social media is an important aspect of our daily lives. I plan to have a page where people in the county can connect with me. I do not come with an agenda, other than to be a voice for the people and listen, to offer encouragement and inspire, to be a strong leader with a backbone.

Cassandra Crump: If elected, my top priorities will be to continue forming relationships with the community, to advocate for internet access and to move our capital improvement needs forward.

Kelly Merricks:

Teacher/staff retention, morale and support

- The teachers and staff must feel valued, supported, and appreciated for students to receive a quality, well-rounded education.
- Leaders, both at central office and administrators in the school buildings, should take their roles seriously and be held accountable for the successes and failures of schools.

Equity in schools

- All students should receive the resources he/she needs to become successful.
- Classes and assignments must be differentiated to accommodate ALL students – Advanced Placement, English as a Second Language, and Special Education
- All schools in the district should offer classes that support “life-long learning and success” in our community.
- All students should be supported on his/her journey; the pathway of each is unique.
- Administrators should emphasize long-term quality education over short-term test results.

Communication and Parent Involvement

- Every individual has the right to easily access information.
- Every parent, grandparent and/or tax-paying citizen should be encouraged to get involved.

Safety - both physical and mental

- Students must feel safe in the school system
- “If you see something, say something” – protects ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities
- Staff must adhere to the equal approach/protocol; take advantage of teachable moments

Learning Gaps –

- Address student learning gaps and mental health from COVID shutdowns
- Core Specialists may have to bridge the gaps to enable the teachers to focus on current content

What do you believe is the single-most important issue facing the school system, and if elected, what will you do to address the issue?

Raymond Ramsey: Safe and environmentally secure school system. Ensure that the laws and mandates set by local, state, and federal authorities are followed.

Calvin Doss: To ensure the continuation of high-quality instruction for students, the single most important issue is going to be hiring qualified teachers. The school division has been fortunate to be able to provide the instruction necessary for students in all areas; however, there has been a shortage of teachers in certain subject areas in recent years. Since the pandemic, it has become difficult to fill some teaching positions. One way to help this would be to reduce the number of pay steps so it doesn't take 20 plus years for teachers to reach top pay.

Jacob Hancock: We are at a critical juncture in our country, one that heavily affects children, parents, teachers, and the entire education system. We must protect parental rights; this is probably the most important issue our school system will face in the coming year(s). When the FBI is asked to investigate “concerned parents as domestic terrorists”, that is a frightening reality that President Biden and his administration is actively pushing for. There are currently governors and counties across America who are mandating that children be forced to take part in an experiment, or they cannot be enrolled in school, not allowing for informed consent, and preventing families from making educated decisions and putting them in a difficult place. In an effort to be more politically correct, we as society are and have allowed woke politicians and organizations to use tools and curriculum that introduce division, confusion, and chaos to children, where there may indeed be little to none at all. These are situations that we are currently facing or will face in the coming year. I am willing to take a stand to protect children, to protect teachers, and most importantly protect God-given parental rights. I am willing to help restore our curriculum so that we can ensure children receive a quality education, not one that is watered with woke ideologies and politics.

Cassandra Crump: I believe Broadband access is the single-most important issue facing the school system. The current pandemic highlighted just how much the lack of broadband access affects not only our school division but our families on so many levels. In 2019, as part of a local team we looked at the healthcare needs of our students. Healthy students are able to come to school ready to learn. Telehealth was an area that some rural school divisions in the state were using to help their students and families access services that are becoming harder to obtain locally, such as mental health. As the 2020 school year came to an end, there was an even greater realization of our broadband needs. The increase in online learning, parents' need for telework options and tele-medical visits are just a few of those needs. Having greater broadband access has the potential to open these services not only to our students but to their families as well. This type of access for our students also provides the ability for carry over many of the technology skills students are learning in the classroom. Teachers and students have access to a variety of books online that students can also read at home. While, I personally prefer having a book in my hand, I am also aware that this is just one of many options for improved literacy. There are also supplementals in some online textbooks that our students can utilize if they have internet access. These activities are fun and engaging and expand on what is learned in the classroom. Not all students learn the same way and having greater broadband access provides additional ways for

students to learn. Parents have also learned to use technology along with their children. This has inspired some to want to lean more. Having broadband access will give those who are interested in pursuing higher education the opportunity to participate in distance learning options. Distance learning for parents may more easily accommodate their schedules. As parents learn and grow, our students will also learn and grow. As a board member, I will continue to partner with our Board of Supervisors and others to provide the resources needed to see our broadband expansion become a reality.

Kelly Merricks:

- Parent Choice/Input – Masks- parent choice in the classroom – hallways or areas where students are not able to socially distance, masks could be encouraged
- Critical Race Theory – not part of VA school curriculum; All educators are encouraged to stick to adopted curriculum; A teacher should be a respected individual in the classroom; therefore, indoctrination of this content, along with any other polarized political views, has NO place in schools
- Transgender – provide a unisex restroom
- 4th circuit/SCOTUS are clear on how this topic should be handled; however, VDOE has drastically changed the opinion of the court to advance social justice agenda

In the present climate of fewer resources from the federal and state government, and an emphasis on scrutinizing spending, what priorities should be funded and what areas should be reduced or eliminated?

Raymond Ramsey: Priorities should be kept on providing as much as we possibly can toward staff salaries, equipment and building maintenance. I would support looking at what areas federal and state funding contribute toward before considering any areas that cuts or elimination could be made.

Calvin Doss: Having been on the school board since the early 2000's during the recession, we have worked really hard to control operating cost throughout the entire school division. We have entered into several performance contract agreements that have replaced outdated equipment with more efficient equipment. Through the hard work of our staff over the last 10 years, we are in a really good position to be able to manage using the limited resources we receive. The pandemic really showed the lack of internet infrastructure in this county. Through the partnership with RiverStreet, the Board of Supervisors and Pittsylvania County Schools we have signed an agreement to expand internet to almost all of the county which will greatly enhance the ability of students to work from home if needed.

Jacob Hancock: This is something that I believe needs to be looked at closely, and honestly, I cannot offer much insight on this without actually seeing up to date reports. I would take a conservative approach to spending.

Cassandra Crump: In the past, the state provided lottery funds to help with capital improvement needs. As state budgets tightened, lottery funds were no longer allocated specifically for capital improvements. For many years, school divisions across our state, including ours, had to cut spending on capital improvement projects. Overtime, this has resulted in building repairs and expansion needs with less funding to meet the needs. One example is several of our preschool classrooms are only accessible from the outside. Addressing these capital needs will help our buildings be more secure. Several of our buildings need upgrades to Mechanical/ Electrical Systems and Central A/C Systems. We are at a point that these needs must become a priority. Also, we need to continue to have a competitive salary schedule. Teacher shortages are a reality. Divisions with salaries that are not competitive are losing teachers. I have been an advocate for requesting the funds for the final implementation of our compensation study which is now complete. We need to continue to be proactive to stay competitive. Many of our funds must be used in specific ways. This makes what is available for reduction and elimination more difficult. With regards to reduction and elimination, we have been a

division that spends wisely. We continue to look at ways to save in energy consumption and have made decisions that both meet our needs but are also fiscally responsible. We have been fortunate to be able to apply and receive different grants to help with some of our needs. This is where the forward thinking of our staff and board members have been critical. I have never hesitated to share our needs with our State and Federal leaders so that they are better able to understand how they can support us at those levels. I look forward to continuing those partnerships as well.

Kelly Merricks:

- Classroom teachers are already made to “squeeze blood out of a turnip.” Teachers are very valuable and have many unrealistic expectations required of them; therefore, it would be unrealistic to cut anything directly affecting the classrooms.
- A specific area could not be recommended to be reduced or eliminated until it is reviewed extensively. Rapid decisions must not be made.

As rural areas across the nation face declines in population that result in lower FTE counts in local school systems, how can we maintain the quality of teachers and programs when faced with declining enrollment numbers?

Raymond Ramsey: Pittsylvania County Schools has proven to be able to do much with little, therefore we need to be supportive of teachers with caring atmospheres and recognition for their service.

Calvin Doss: Declining student numbers is always a big concern for public schools because funding is based on the average daily membership or the average number of students per day. Our superintendent and his staff do a really good job managing staff to student ratios by using state projections and average daily membership to adjust staffing needs.

Jacob Hancock: I believe that listening to peoples concerns and not writing them off is an important step in maintaining the quality of teachers and programs. All too many times lately, I have watched as school board members just write concerned parents and teachers off.

Cassandra Crump: Quality programs are the result of a quality teacher who is valued and given the supports needed. A quality teacher begins with a heart for teaching. As I have met with community leaders, I shared with them that my passion for teaching began when I was in elementary school. My mom bought me a booklet that held yearly report cards. On the back of each page there was a place to indicate what you'd like to be when you grow up. Each year, I checked teacher. I believe this is a calling. I have asked those with children who say they want to be teachers, to encourage and support their desire. I have also encouraged older students to participate in our Teachers for Tomorrow program offered at the Career and Technical Center. These students are exposed to life as a teacher before they enter into a university program. I had the pleasure of accompanying our Teachers for Tomorrow instructor and one of our students to a community organization meeting to share about the program. The student representative shared that this program confirmed for them that teaching is both the passion and career path she wants to take. Teaching has been and continues to be an honorable profession. I support encouraging and supporting our own students who have the heart to teach. Also, having competitive salaries helps with maintaining quality teachers. The division has placed an emphasis on compensation and bringing our compensation study to completion as well as providing steps. This helps our teachers know that the quality they bring to our classrooms and the work they do to ensure the quality of our programs every day is important. These are just a few examples of how we grow and maintain quality teachers and programs.

Kelly Merricks:

- The vision of Pittsylvania County Schools is to be recognized as having an innovative, challenging, and exemplary school system. Cutting teaching positions should be the last resort of any school division. If the teachers, are not feeling that they are supported, or valued the quality of education will diminish.
- Many times, just supplying teachers with appropriate work assignments, efficient discipline systems, and time to collaborate with colleagues may boost his/her morale and entice him/her to remain in the school system.

What kind of community partnerships or activities could support student achievement outside of school?

Raymond Ramsey: Job and training activities through public and private agencies would be good resources.

Calvin Doss: Community support is critical to the success of Pittsylvania County Schools. Our partnerships with churches, civic groups and businesses have allowed us to continue our Graduate of Merit program and to provide tutoring and after-school activities that have been very beneficial and helpful to the success of our students.

Jacob Hancock: I have always felt like churches should hold some responsibility for their communities and most especially the children in those communities. Churches and other community organizations could hold weekly or biweekly “tutoring clinics” for struggling families and students. This would be where people who are well-versed in various subjects come together and can give focused attention to struggling students in those subject areas.

Cassandra Crump: Community partnerships begin with communication. I have spent time over the past four years sitting down with community leaders to both share what we are doing as a division and to giving them an opportunity to share with me their thoughts on our school division. These conversations are the beginnings of what I believe will help build a connection between the community and our schools and ultimately build more community partnerships. While those I talk with are already involved in some partnerships with our schools, our conversations often identify additional ideas. We must remember that while academic achievement is the primary role of our schools, student achievement is not limited to academics. For example, our division partners with the county Parks and Recreation department to provide extracurricular sports opportunities for our students. These opportunities motivate our students and provide them with foundations in character and skills needed to excel academically. Another partnership that we have is our Youth Commission. Students involved in this partnership are able to participate in both a legislative day where they meet State legislators as well as a job shadowing experience. This experience gives them a firsthand look at a potential profession. As a liaison between the youth commission and the school board, I worked with the parks and recreation leader to set up a time for our Student School Board Representatives to meet and share what they do in their role with members of the Youth Commission. Similarly, our local Fire and Rescue leaders are another group I’ve had the opportunity to share with. In our conversations, they shared their need for volunteers. I have shared this need with other school board members and asked them to join me in encouraging our students to participate in the classes that lead to an EMT certification. While this type of certification can be used in a volunteer capacity, it is also one that gives our students skills needed for future job opportunities. In the past, we had a strong participation in a Middle School CERT program which was held afterschool. I’ve reached out to our Director of Emergency Services to share this and find out ways we may be able to offer this again as an afterschool experience for our middle school students. This type of partnership would give those students hands on experiences that may spark their interest to volunteer with our Fire and Rescue agencies in the future. This not only helps our students but it also helps to meet the needs of the citizens in the community. These are just a few

examples of community partnerships that are already supporting achievement outside of school as well as potential partnerships and activities. While academics may not be the direct focus, these partnerships support academic achievement, as well as a better community at large by helping our students become well rounded citizens.

Kelly Merricks:

- Working with the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator, the building of a local library would lead to great partnerships in the community. There are other branches in Pittsylvania County that provide after school tutoring and programs, direct internet access, etc.
- Utilizing the local churches, more specifically, Kentuck Baptist Church (location to schools) in after school tutoring programs such as Dan River Church Based Tutorial or possibly incorporating a peer-tutoring program.
- With new industries opening in our area, internships and company specific curriculum could be formed so students have real world experiences especially through PCTC.
- Forming school-community partnerships plays an essential role in successful schools. The partnership that Pittsylvania County Schools has with The Arc demonstrates how providing support and resources can help students prepare for his/her future.

What specific actions will you take to promote parental involvement in schools, and subsequently increase the role of parents in decision making?

Raymond Ramsey: The School System provides many activities and opportunities for parents to become actively involved. I will make some personal contacts with parents as well as provide information to churches, community and civic organizations to make them aware of ways in which parents can become involved.

Calvin Doss: Parental involvement has always been a challenge. We have always encouraged parents to be involved with their child’s education. We have a Parent Advisory Committee, Parent Teacher Organizations, Volunteer Groups and Extra-Curricular Activity Groups like Sports Boosters that encourage parent involvement. The pandemic has made parental involvement difficult by not allowing in-person participation in some of these areas. The one thing that has come from the pandemic is virtual communication. The benefit from virtual communication is it allows parents to be able to contact the teacher or school at their convenience. We are now using virtual or social media apps which allow easier access for those who cannot fit time into their working schedules for in-person meetings. I would be in favor of expanding this type of communication for the parents to have an easier and greater access to their child’s education.

Jacob Hancock: I would encourage parents to be more involved and empower them to do so for starters. It is important that parents be involved in the education process of their children. I think that it would be helpful to have at least one town hall style school board meeting each school year where parents and citizens can speak without a time limit or at least have more than 3 minutes to speak with the school board. When it all comes down to it, I believe that we need to see more involvement from not only parents, but from people without children as well. I will continue to encourage and empower people to do so, even if they are simply learning more about the system. I think it would also be helpful to encourage communication between the school itself and the parents.

Cassandra Crump: I continue to advocate for utilizing a variety of means for parental involvement. Over the past four years, opportunities for parental involvement has increased in our division. We have begun to incorporate technology into how we involve both the parents and the community. One example of this is parent surveys. As a division, we moved away from solely relying on parents and community members coming into the school building to provide input on what they would like to see in

an administrator when there are vacancies. Parents are now able to give their input through an online form. This provided flexibility for a variety of schedules and the ease of being able to use personal devices to participate. Once we moved to this format, participation increased and we received more parent input. We have also used this option to give parents as well as staff an opportunity to be involved in sharing in the decision making of the division for many other areas. This is just one way we have improved and encouraged parental involvement and I will continue to advocate for opening opportunities for greater input.

Kelly Merricks:

- Utilizing social media to inform parents of current topics, and to inform them of meetings. In addition, administrators of schools or central office personnel should use School Messenger to keep parents informed through voice and text.
- When parents or community members speak at meetings or send emails, board members should turn a listening ear. The speaker should feel welcomed and like he/she has a purpose. Board members should consider what he/she is asking or saying.
- There is a high school representative that has been carefully chosen by his/her respective high school. This individual should be given an opportunity to speak/to have a voice. He/she is acting as a "liaison" to his/her high school.
- I would also encourage parents to be more active in his/her child's PTO's, athletic booster clubs, etc. and would encourage the administrators to allow parents to volunteer and donate his/her supplies/time.

Realizing that cooperation between the School Board and Board of Supervisors is essential to the success of both Pittsylvania County Schools and Pittsylvania, how will you facilitate such cooperation?

Raymond Ramsey: I will meet with and consult with supervisors to discuss various issues to get an understanding and voice concerns as well as provide input.

Calvin Doss: When I was first elected to the school board, the relationship between the two boards was not very good. I am proud to say that the relationship has changed dramatically. Both boards understand the importance of a quality school system for economic development and the success of Pittsylvania County. I am also happy to report the Board of Supervisors has really stepped up on local funding which has certainly helped us in becoming competitive with other surrounding school divisions relative to salary compensation. The key to this success is transparency and communication. We have had work sessions together which has been a great way to collaborate. It has been a pleasure to work the last 4 years with my board of supervisor representative Ben Farmer, and I look forward if elected to working with the next board of supervisor representative from the Callands/Gretna District and the rest of the Board of Supervisors.

Jacob Hancock: Teamwork. We must realize that we are all on the same team at the end of the day, that team is for humanity. We may have differing views on politics, healthcare, education, public policy, and the like, but every one of us are all human. Clear communication and transparency are essential to work together on any team, and the Board of Supervisors and School Board is no exception. We must work together and cooperate as a team.

Cassandra Crump: The current Board of Supervisors and our School Board have worked cooperatively over the last four years in many ways. One way I have tried to facilitate this cooperation is to invite our Dan River District Supervisor on a School visit with me. This interaction gave our Supervisor an opportunity to see first-hand the great things happening in our buildings and it also

provided an opportunity to see and discuss our needs. During this visit, our Student School Board Representative also had an opportunity to share thoughts with our Supervisor. It was our hope that we would be able to continue this type of cooperation each year. However, we were unable to do so during the 2020-2021 school year due to the pandemic. I do look forward to resuming this year. I and many other school board members participate in the County Budget input sessions held at our high schools each year. These sessions have also provided opportunities for us as board members to share with the Board of Supervisors. Our two boards recently worked together to move forward with expanding broadband which is an important piece of moving our county forward as a whole. I will continue to partner with our Board of Supervisors in the future to see great things happen for Pittsylvania County.

Kelly Merricks:

- Collaboration and open communication are key. People will always disagree but must learn to be problem solvers who consider the long-term impacts before making decisions.
- All in all, we are here for the students. We are here to be an advocate for each one of the students and his/her success.