

Vote411 Voters' Mini-Guide

Fall 2021

Mt. Lebanon School Director

This Voters' Mini-Guide is an excerpt of the online Vote411 Voters' Guide -- a project of the League of Women Voters. To see your entire ballot, visit Vote411.org.

The Mt. Lebanon School District elects school board members "at large." Voters in the school district will have 10 candidates on their ballots running in two separate categories:

- There are 8 candidates running for four-year terms, and voters may vote for up to four (4) of these candidates. Choose 4 of 8.
- There are 2 candidates running for a two-year term, and voters may vote for one (1) of these candidates. Choose 1 of 2.

Mt. Lebanon School Directors are elected on behalf of the community to oversee the education of students in their jurisdiction. They serve as agents of the state legislature. They are responsible for curriculum and instruction management, all finances including development of annual budgets and levying of taxes and issuance of debt obligations when necessary; personnel; legal matters; management of facilities; and transportation of students as appropriate. Schools may include pre-K and career and technical schools. The school board consists of nine members who serve four-year terms of office without pay.

Term of office: 2 or 4 years

*All information in Vote411 Voters' Guides is submitted by the candidates and has not been edited or altered in any way. **The League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh** has made every effort to enlist the participation of each candidate running for these positions. Candidates who would like to submit or update their written answers should contact vote411@lwvpgh.org.*



Candidates for Four-Year Terms (choose 4):



Andrew Freeman

Party: Dem

Biographical Info:

Campaign Email: onelebosd@gmail.com

Campaign Web Site: <http://www.onelebo.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ONELebo>

Twitter: ONELeboSD

District: Mt. Lebanon

Education: B.S. Industrial Engineering, University of Pittsburgh, Swanson School of Engineering

Qualifications for office: My professional engineering career requires me to be objective, problem solve, and make data-based decisions everyday. These are all skills I have demonstrated as a current School Board Director and will continue to do so if elected.

Questions:

Q: *The pandemic has highlighted the significant disparity in educational delivery in districts from no in-person learning, to hybrid models to full time in-person sessions resulting in uneven student performance. As schools reopen, how would you propose to assess student achievement and to remedy the loss of learning for so many students?*

A: Throughout the pandemic, our district has looked forward to academic recovery. Our initial student performance data shows promising results and is in line with previous years' data. However, that does not mean our students did not face individual challenges. I believe it is essential to use the CARES Act funds to provide summer enrichment opportunities for students that need it. I am committed in my current capacity as School Director to supplying these and will continue to advocate for additional programs as our kids attend school full-time in the upcoming school year.

Q: *Social and racial justice issues have become a concern for all school districts, many of which have instituted anti-bullying programs to help address these issues. What kinds of criteria would you propose to measure the effectiveness of these campaigns and progress toward improvement?*

A: Our district's current involvement in the "No Place for Hate" initiative is an example of its continued support on confronting bias and promoting inclusion. However, I believe our curriculum should be more inclusive and provide our students with the opportunity to learn more about different cultures and to develop an appreciation for our differences. This enhancement to the curriculum will promote social and racial tolerance, thus forging well rounded students. Lastly, it is vital that we equip our students, faculty, and staff with the appropriate training and tools to respond swiftly and effectively should any bullying occur.

Q: *Pennsylvania currently allows parents to choose whether their children attend public schools, charter, or cyber-charter schools with funding provided by state and local opponents of all of these options. Where do you stand and explain your position.*

A: As a School Director, my responsibility is to serve in the best interest of the Mt. Lebanon community. I support each parent's right to make the best decision for their child's education. However, I do not support the use of public funds for charter or cyber-charter schools. These options significantly strain our ability to deliver on the district's mission. I welcome the current push for reform.



Erin Gentzel

Party: Dem

Biographical Info:

Campaign Email: hello@ONELebo.com

Campaign Web Site: <http://ONELebo.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ONELebo>

Twitter: @ONELeboSD

District: Mt. Lebanon School District

Education: B.A. Mathematics, Susquehanna University; M.A. Second Education, Villanova University; PA Teacher Certification

Qualifications for office: I have been involved in education for my entire adult life, from teaching high school mathematics and working in higher ed admissions to serving on the board of my children's nursery school and as Vice President of the PTA. I will work to ensure equity and maximize achievement for all students.

Questions:

Q: *The pandemic has highlighted the significant disparity in educational delivery in districts from no in-person learning, to hybrid models to full time in-person sessions resulting in uneven student performance. As schools reopen, how would you propose to assess student achievement and to remedy the loss of learning for so many students?*

A: Preliminary data on learning loss in our school district is more positive than initially anticipated and, as an aggregate, student performance is on par with past years; however, it will still be very important to continue to diagnose learning gaps as we have in the past using the typical standardized assessments. I also believe it will be more important for teachers to play a larger role in identifying the students who they feel need the most remediation. Personalization is essential in order to reach as many students as possible. In order to mitigate unfinished learning, I support our district offering a free and flexible summer learning programs for all grade levels.

Q: *Social and racial justice issues have become a concern for all school districts, many of which have instituted anti-bullying programs to help address these issues. What kinds of criteria would you propose to measure the effectiveness of these campaigns and progress toward improvement?*

A: Research shows that anti-bullying programs do encourage kids to report bullying, but these campaigns don't necessarily help teachers and administrators know how to respond when incidents occur. I do support our school district's current policies and would like to see continued training for faculty, staff and students on social and racial justice issues. We must increase empathy through exposure and education. I am also open to revisiting current institutional policies on equity. As a Team of 10, we should continue to have open and candid conversations to ensure progress.

Q: *Pennsylvania currently allows parents to choose whether their children attend public schools, charter, or cyber-charter schools with funding provided by state and local opponents of all of these options. Where do you stand and explain your position.*

A: I support the choices that our current stakeholders have, but would like to see increased accountability for educational outcomes. Charter schools should provide opportunities to identify evidence-based best practices to improve low-performing traditional public schools, but some have drifted away from their goals. I do think there are ways to motivate charter schools to more closely model the original intent. Governor Wolf is currently seeking Charter School Law reform and I support his legislation.



Claire Guth

Party: Dem

Biographical Info:

Campaign Email: claireguth@pitt.edu

Campaign Web Site: <http://onelebo.com>

Facebook: @onelebo

Twitter: @onelebosd

District: Mt. Lebanon

Education: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, B.A. University of Pittsburgh, Master of Public Policy Management University of Pittsburgh, PhD (currently enrolled)

Qualifications for office: I am running for school director because I have extensive experience in governing organizations and institutions, a career in education and policy, the knowledge to build an inclusive school district and an unwavering commitment to Mt. Lebanon and my three small children.

Questions:

Q: *The pandemic has highlighted the significant disparity in educational delivery in districts from no in-person learning, to hybrid models to full time in-person sessions resulting in uneven student performance. As schools reopen, how would you propose to assess student achievement and to remedy the loss of learning for so many students?*

A: Public education is a critical driver of economic mobility and is the ultimate equalizer. I am a data-driven individual and as school director, I will help the district navigate through the aftereffects of the pandemic both educationally, by assessing academic progress to identify deficiencies and provide the appropriate support, and financially through the budgetary process. I will move the district forward by addressing the needs of the most vulnerable among us, both those who have been adversely affected by the recent pandemic and those whose vulnerability is chronic. I will transition from reacting to the pandemic to proactively supporting students and families using social-emotional learning strategies.

Q: *Social and racial justice issues have become a concern for all school districts, many of which have instituted anti-bullying programs to help address these issues. What kinds of criteria would you propose to measure the effectiveness of these campaigns and progress toward improvement?*

A: As a community, we have a responsibility to make sure we are doing our part to foster empathy, kindness and respect. Our youth learn acceptance and belonging in the schools and how to recognize, understand and appreciate our differences in the classroom. There is significant work to do in our region as we prepare today's youth to lead an equitable and just tomorrow. As a school director, I will support policies that improve outcomes for all students. I have spent my career advancing diversity and inclusion in STEAM education and will govern through the lens of equity to ensure all students, families and community members are treated with the respect they deserve.

Q: *Pennsylvania currently allows parents to choose whether their children attend public schools, charter, or cyber-charter schools with funding provided by state and local opponents of all of these options. Where do you stand and explain your position.*

A: Public education has played an instrumental role in my life and has guided me towards a career in education policy. I attended a public school growing up, a public university for college and received my master's degree at a public institution, where I am currently getting my Doctorate. My children attend public school, my sisters work for public schools and my mother is an educator at a community college. The Mt. Lebanon School District provides students a personalized, inclusive educational experience and has offered a cyber option for years. There is no need for additional cyber or charter schools in our district.



Annamaria Johnson

Party: Dem

Biographical Info:

Campaign Email: annaalexis38@yahoo.com

Campaign Web Site: <http://ONELebo.com>

Facebook: ONELebo

Twitter: ONELeboSD

District: Mt. Lebanon

Education: A.S. Liberal Arts and Sciences, Community College of Allegheny County

Qualifications for office: I will bring a new perspective to the Board with my nontraditional background. I am an active volunteer in my children's schools and I believe it is my responsibility to give back with my time, hard work, and experience. My skills and leadership experiences will enhance my service to our district.

Questions:

Q: *The pandemic has highlighted the significant disparity in educational delivery in districts from no in-person learning, to hybrid models to full time in-person sessions resulting in uneven student performance. As schools reopen, how would you propose to assess student achievement and to remedy the loss of learning for so many students?*

A: Throughout the pandemic, our district has looked forward to recovery, as it relates to unfinished learning, and how to mitigate learning loss. While current evidence and early data from assessments show that our student's performance is on track with previous years, we do have populations in our district that have been affected, including those students who were vulnerable pre-pandemic. I believe that using CARES Act funds to enhance our standard summer enrichment programs for student(s) needing remediation, whether recommended by a teacher or by self assignment. I feel that it is important to use our 2020-2021 assessments, as well as teacher recommendations, to determine those students who would benefit.

Q: *Social and racial justice issues have become a concern for all school districts, many of which have instituted anti-bullying programs to help address these issues. What kinds of criteria would you propose to measure the effectiveness of these campaigns and progress toward improvement?*

A: In an effort to ensure equality, our district would benefit from a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) coordinator, who would be able to provide social and racial justice training and education to our administration, staff and students; while providing key criteria to measure effectiveness. We also have a responsibility be engaged with our students and to nurture their empathy while acting with dignity and respect toward others. I believe that our strong anti-bullying policies help our children to feel comfortable reporting issues to their teachers and other adults, creating a more safe environment. We need more education on how to address incidents and how to deescalate situations, so they do not lead to more significant issues.

Q: *Pennsylvania currently allows parents to choose whether their children attend public schools, charter, or cyber-charter schools with funding provided by state and local opponents of all of these options. Where do you stand and explain your position.*

A: Our families need educational options for the form of instruction they feel will best suit their child's social and emotional needs. The pandemic revealed a need and use for cyber schools, with some children thriving in a non traditional classroom environment. If we are searching for equity in education, then I believe it is worth researching a more fiscal cyber only model, so that we are able to offer an alternative to in-person learning for children requiring this option. I am not in support of taxpayer funded Charter schools.



Christopher Lust

Party: Rep

Biographical Info:

Campaign Email: chrislustlebo2021@gmail.com

Campaign Web Site: <http://electfriendsoflebo2021.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/electfriendsoflebo2021>

District: Mt. Lebanon

Education: BS Finance, Boston College Carroll School of Management

Qualifications for office: I have 25 years of professional experience as a business founder, owner, financial officer, and board member. I understand the importance of planning, execution, governance, focus, and evaluation of results. I bring deep financial experience along with leadership and problem solving skills.

Questions:

Q: *The pandemic has highlighted the significant disparity in educational delivery in districts from no in-person learning, to hybrid models to full time in-person sessions resulting in uneven student performance. As schools reopen, how would you propose to assess student achievement and to remedy the loss of learning for so many students?*

A: Studies have begun to emerge that are quantifying the educational impact on all students from our youngest learners to our high schoolers who are preparing to compete against their peers around the country for college acceptances (disparities, especially in AP testing scores, will undoubtedly be significant among students who were in school learning vs other modalities). A much greater portion (not the bare minimum of 20%) of the funds the district is receiving from the American Rescue Act should be put toward expanded summer programs as well as remediation programs during the next 2 school years. Mt. Lebanon is receiving \$1.68 million and is only using \$337,163 to address learning loss - the rest is being used toward the budget deficit.

Q: *Social and racial justice issues have become a concern for all school districts, many of which have instituted anti-bullying programs to help address these issues. What kinds of criteria would you propose to measure the effectiveness of these campaigns and progress toward improvement?*

A: The MtL S.D. participates in the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. It is designed to improve peer relations and make schools safer, more positive places for students to learn and develop by reducing existing bullying problems among students, preventing the development of new bullying problems & achieving better peer relations at school. The district also utilizes the Safe2Say program. Safe2Say is a youth violence prevention program run by the PA Office of Attorney General. The program teaches youth and adults how to recognize warning signs, especially within social media from individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others. Finally, the district has many clubs/groups to increase awareness regarding social & racial justice issues

Q: *Pennsylvania currently allows parents to choose whether their children attend public schools, charter, or cyber-charter schools with funding provided by state and local opponents of all of these options. Where do you stand and explain your position.*

A: Our number one priority is to get the students back in the building for in-person learning five days a week. Kids are best served learning inside the school building. We also believe in choice and know that certain students thrive in different learning environments. A cyber choice should remain in-house utilizing the Mt. Lebanon Cyber Academy with our excellent Mt. Lebanon teachers. This direction is also fiscally responsible and limits the amount of outside charter costs. Pete, Leslie, Kim and Chris (Friends of Lebo 2021) spend a great deal of time discussing the issues in these questions and more – for that reason, we chose to answer as a slate. If you are interested in further information, reach out on our website.



Kimberly Lackner Mauro

Party: Rep

Biographical Info:

Campaign Email: kimberly.lackner@gmail.com

Campaign Web Site: <http://www.electfriendsoflebo2021.com>

Facebook: Elect Friends of Lebo 2021

District: Mt. Lebanon

Education: B.A. History; Carnegie Mellon University M.Ed. History Education; University of Pittsburgh M.Ed Special Education; Slippery Rock University

Qualifications for office: I am a 16 year high school teacher that can bring current teacher perspective, that is lacking on this current board. My hope is that all stakeholders in this community can feel heard and represented

Questions:

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No Photo
Submitted

Leslie Long

Party: Rep

Biographical Info:

Campaign Email: Leslie4mtl2021@gmail.com

Campaign Web Site: <http://electfriendsoflebo2021.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/electfriendsoflebo2021>

District: Mt. Lebanon

Education: BS Marketing, Boston College Carroll School of Management
MAT Simmons College

Qualifications for office: I have over 9 years of public school teaching experience as well as experience serving on multiple boards.

Questions:

Q: *The pandemic has highlighted the significant disparity in educational delivery in districts from no in-person learning, to hybrid models to full time in-person sessions resulting in uneven student performance. As schools reopen, how would you propose to assess student achievement and to remedy the loss of learning for so many students?*

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Peter Christian Darcy

Party: Rep

Biographical Info:

This candidate has not responded.

Questions:

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A: - no response -

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A: - no response -

Q: Pennsylvania currently allows parents to choose whether their children attend public schools, charter, or cyber-charter schools with funding provided by state and local opponents of all of these options. Where do you stand and explain your position.

A: - no response -

Mt Lebanon School District Director 2 yr term

Candidates for Two-Year term (choose 1):



Todd Ellwein

Party: Dem

Biographical Info:

Campaign Web Site: <http://ONELebo.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ONELebo>

Twitter: @ONELeboSD

District: Mt. Lebanon School District

Education: B.A. Political Science, Carleton College; M.I.A. Columbia University

Qualifications for office: I have almost 30 years of experience working in the education sector--from high school teacher to university administrator to leadership roles in education technology companies. I have extensive experience developing and approving school budgets and improving student outcomes.

Questions:

Q: *The pandemic has highlighted the significant disparity in educational delivery in districts from no in-person learning, to hybrid models to full time in-person sessions resulting in uneven student performance. As schools reopen, how would you propose to assess student achievement and to remedy the loss of learning for so many students?*

A: A key priority for our district during the 2021-22 academic year is to ensure all of our students can safely attend classes in-person and participate in extracurricular activities. As part of our academic recovery from the pandemic, we must continue to identify individual student learning gaps through our standardized assessments as well as by our teachers. Additionally, we need to devote additional CARES Act funds to support the mental health of our students. Mental health problems can affect many areas of our students' lives, including academic achievement.

Q: *Social and racial justice issues have become a concern for all school districts, many of which have instituted anti-bullying programs to help address these issues. What kinds of criteria would you propose to measure the effectiveness of these campaigns and progress toward improvement?*

A: A prerequisite for effective school anti-bullying programs is the prioritization of these programs by district and school leadership. School leadership must communicate the importance of anti-bullying initiatives and dedicate resources to support evidence-based professional development for administrators, faculty, and staff. An inclusive school curriculum is a key component of proactive anti-bullying campaigns, as incidents of bullying decrease with a curriculum that cultivates empathy and racial tolerance in our children.

Q: *Pennsylvania currently allows parents to choose whether their children attend public schools, charter, or cyber-charter schools with funding provided by state and local opponents of all of these options. Where do you stand and explain your position.*

A: I support Governor Wolf's current efforts to hold charter schools accountable for student outcomes and create a more fair and equitable funding formula. All parents in our state should be encouraged to choose the best educational option for their children. Yet many charter schools do not provide the robust student achievement data that parents need to make an informed school choice. As a result, escalating costs at underperforming charter schools in our state have become an increasing burden on taxpayers and our school district.

Patrick M King

Party: Rep

Biographical Info:

Questions:

This candidate has not responded.

Q: The pandemic has highlighted the significant disparity in educational delivery in districts from no in-person learning, to hybrid models to full time in-person sessions resulting in uneven student performance. As schools reopen, how would you propose to assess student achievement and to remedy the loss of learning for so many students?

A: - no response -

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A: - no response -

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A: - no response -