

**CLARENCE STUDENTS FIRST**  
**BOARD OF EDUCATION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE 2021**

**Thank you for the opportunity to provide information about myself and my candidacy for the Clarence Central School District Board of Education.**

**Cheryl Klemenz**

1) Please introduce yourself and provide background information, involvement with schools, volunteer experience, and qualifications.

**My family has lived in Clarence for almost 23 years. My husband, Dave and I moved here for the school district when our oldest was only a few months old. We have four children, Maddie (23) who graduated in 2016 and currently works in NYC for a naturopathic medical practice, Rick (21) graduated in 2018 and is currently attending college to be a math teacher, Dan (14) is an 8th grader and Evelyn (11) is a 6th grader, both at the middle school.**

**In May of 2020 I graduated from UBs Accelerated Bachelors of Science Nursing Program. I am a Registered Nurse and work in long term care and as a District substitute nurse.**

**I also have an Associates in Occupational Therapy (Assistant), a Bachelors in Health Science, and a Masters in Epidemiology. I have worked in management positions as a Senior Therapist and as a clinical study coordinator for the Womens Health Initiative research program at UB. I worked in the Clarence School District as an aide to special needs students as well.**

**It has been my honor to serve our students for over 15 years as a District volunteer. I have held various PTO leadership/executive positions; currently serving as MS PTO President (this is my second time as president over a 10-year span) and a Clarence Schools Enrichment Foundation (CSEF) board member. I have been a CSEF Board member since 2014 and previously served as Vice President and was the Community Carnival Chair. I have actively participated in all fundraising events to fulfill the CSEF mission – to enhance the educational experiences of students in the Clarence Central School District by offering ancillary enrichment in the arts, sciences, math, technology, applied career skills and athletics.**

**Over the extensive time I have volunteered, through PTO and CSEF, District students benefited at every grade level.**

**My children and I in the past, have volunteered extensively with Meals on Wheels of WNY delivering meals to home bound individuals.**

2) What do you believe to be the most important issue facing Clarence Schools today? What should the Board do to address this?

**I am unable to narrow my answer to a single issue. I believe all our children need to be in-school, full time, for in-person learning. In addition we need to address learning loss/gaps and the mental and social-emotional issues our children are facing. Returning to school is going to be an all hands on deck approach. The Board needs to work closely with students, parents, teachers and administrators to develop and implement plans that will keep our schools safe for instruction with a healthy environment that fosters a sense of well-being.**

3) What considerations will you incorporate when thinking through the budget? What are your priorities? What constraints do you envision?

**It is important that we address learning loss, fill the gaps as well as help the social and emotional needs of our students. We will need to be fiscally responsible, eliminate wasteful spending, stay within the budget cap and develop unconventional solutions to problems and challenges. We must keep student needs a priority and ensure that our students are able to receive the high-quality education that defines the Clarence School District. Constraints may include, financial and other, decisions made at the federal and state level that impact how the District operates its schools.**

4) What role should the school district play in addressing student learning loss and the mental health issues associated with remote learning and the pandemic?

**The district should play a major role in learning loss and the mental health issues associated with the pandemic and remote learning. I'll be committed to working with the Board for all K-12 students to identify what deficits exist from hybrid/remote instruction, academic as well as social and emotional. It is essential that the District consider all those affected, students, parents, families, teachers, staff and administrators. We need to listen and learn from the past year in order to move ahead into the next school year and beyond.**

5) What do you think can be done to improve transparency from the Board if you gain a seat?

**I fully support open, respectful forthright communication. Transparency between all stakeholders can only work when conversations occur, when people listen to each other, and when people feel they can express themselves knowing that what they say will be considered and valued. I would advocate and encourage we continue to hold Board forums. I would be available to students and staff, parents and community members. I welcome open dialogue and collaboration.**

6) How do you define diversity? What does it mean for you to have a commitment to diversity?

**Diversity is recognizing the uniqueness of an individual. A commitment to diversity to me means understanding the diverse nature of a community and recognizing the inequities that**

people and families face. It means creating and cultivating an inclusive, non-judgmental environment where families and community members can find guidance, help and support. It means seeking to understand people that come from different backgrounds who may have different belief systems so that all community members can thrive and prosper. People's beliefs and opinions are often shaped and informed by their respective experiences. To have real diversity we must encourage a community where diversity of thought – and intellectual curiosity – are applauded and encouraged.

7) What was your view on when and how to reopen schools this past year?

The Clarence School District has worked hard to stay ahead, plan and maintain safe in-person learning for our children. The District aired on the side of caution and waited for guidance from the New York State Education Department and the Department of Health before they moved ahead with changes to instruction and bringing students back into the classrooms. We must continue to advocate for our kids and push for full-time, in-person instruction to help students succeed, their families plan, and so teachers, staff, and administration can continue their hard work. Schools are one place that families look to for guidance, support, security and stability. All students must feel safe when they are learning in classrooms, playing sports, and/or engaging in the many extracurricular activities Clarence has to offer. We must be respectful of others perception and cautious about the learning environment. At the same time, we must consider the many needs of our students and what is best for them in these unpredictable times.

8) What role, if any, should the Board play in helping set curriculum?

It is the Boards responsibility to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and services for ALL students. I believe it is important for the Board to review and keep up with curriculum changes. I would advocate for the Board to be kept informed on any curriculum updates. I believe the Boards' responsibility is to research and evaluate the educational needs of the immediate community in order to keep Clarence strong and thriving by retaining the skills and knowledge fostered in our school district. We must also produce learners that can succeed in their chosen career path, wherever they decide they want to do so past graduation.

9) What are you views regarding differentiated learning opportunities and the cost associated with providing them?

I believe that differentiated learning opportunities must have a place in our educational model. I have seen this happening within our District and it is exciting to see our students succeed. Whether it is individual reading or math groups, science or social studies classes that tailor instruction to the uniqueness of a students' ability and learning style, co-teachers and teacher aides are extremely helpful to make these opportunities available. With the extra COVID funds coming to the Clarence District, it is extremely important that we identify the

**deficits that exist from hybrid/remote instruction and work toward filling the gaps, including using differentiated learning methods.**

10) What would you view as your role on the Board of Education?

**My role would be to help support the very best education for our students. I would be an advocate and would maintain the utmost respect and integrity of the position if given this opportunity. I would work tirelessly, with my fellow board members, for all students to overcome educational challenges, promote student social and emotional well-being and develop methods to assist the district in maintaining its exceptional standing for years to come whatever the future may hold.**

**I look forward to continuing to serve the students and families of Clarence.**

**Please vote 1A on May 18.**

**Thank you Clarence Students First for your work in helping our kids.**