

1) What have you done or what do you plan to do that benefits students and moves education forward in our community?

Alex Saitta: One of the most important accomplishments I had a direct hand-in was rising the graduation rate. For years the graduation rate languished around 70%. When I became the chairman in 2010, we set a goal of an 80% graduation rate. The next two years I led the effort to beef up remedial reading, lower class sizes, expand the Career Center, and hire graduation coaches. That plus later steps taken are now filtering through to graduation and 83% of students now graduate on time.

When I look back at my campaign flyer of 2008 I wrote: “Many students fall off the graduation path in middle school. We must give students a clear path from middle school, to high school to the Career Center to Technical school and then the workforce.”

I remember when the principal of the Career Center retired. The board rejected the administration’s first choice and hired Ken Hitchcock. His open-to-new-ideas approach has made the Career Center the envy of the state today. Great choice.

Today students start thinking about their future in elementary school with career awareness where we introduce STEM concepts to real world problems, we have like Jet-Toy competitions, and guest speakers who talk about their careers. In middle school students explore careers: Career Assessment in 6th grade, Job Shadowing in 7th grade, and a Career Fair 8th grade. Then there is career planning. A graduation plan is created for each 8th grader, showing a roadmap of courses of study that will lead to college or a career. Most continue taking hands-on courses in high school as well as the Career Center. Those looking to go to college can take AP or dual credit courses giving them high school AND college credit.

Shannon Haskett: The teachers are the most important people in our district. They are the ones that personally interact with our kids. In order to move education forward, I will listen to their input and value their opinions on areas where we can improve. We must do everything possible to support and strengthen the relationship between teachers and their students because the classroom is the heart of education.

I am impressed with all the work that has been done to help students succeed. There are so many programs and organizations that are guiding students in the right direction. However, there is always work to be done. I personally feel communication is key to the success of any relationship. I believe that lessons in life skills and interpersonal relationships would move education forward in our

community.