

JOHN CUMMINGS CANDIDATE STATEMENT

Thank you to Education411 for the invitation to reach out to our community with a statement. Education411 has an important role in our town educating and informing our residents on issues relevant to the Westwood Public Schools. I appreciate the opportunity to work with Education411 on the issues surrounding the upcoming election.

My name is John Cummings I am running for School Committee because I would like to help steer the Westwood Schools into the next decade with even more success than the last. For the past eight years, I have been a vocal advocate for Westwood schools. I know I can bring a fresh perspective and a creative approach to the important work of the Westwood School Committee. It would be my privilege to represent you.

Currently, I am working at the most challenging job I have ever had, as a stay-at-home Dad. As the father of three children in the Westwood Public Schools, I have been in the schools on an almost daily basis, and involved in the day-to-day issues facing students, teachers and the Administration. My ability to be at home with my children has given me the opportunity to be involved in the schools and town in a very unique way.

It has been a privilege to serve you district wide as:

- A leader of the successful 2007 override campaign;
- Co-President of the Westwood Elementary School Coalition (WESC) (2 years);
- Westwood Kindergarten Committee Member (3 years); and
- Westwood High School Legislative Council Member (2 years).

As a member of the Hanlon Elementary School community, I have served as:

- PTO President (4 years);
- Hanlon Site Committee Representative (5 years); and
- Principal Search Committee Member.

Town wide, I have represented many of your interests, and continue to do so, as a member of the:

- Permanent Building Committee;
- The Westwood Housing Authority; and

· The Westwood Affordable Housing Authority.

By way of background, I am a graduate of Catholic Memorial High School and Massachusetts Maritime Academy (B.S., 1988). I served in the United States Merchant Marine for 6 years, followed by my work as plant engineer for Westinghouse before working full-time at home. My wife, Marianne LeBlanc Cummings, and I have been married for 17 years and are the proud parents of Camille, Jack and Conor.

The Westwood Public Schools has established itself as a leader in curriculum, academic and educational excellence due to its many strengths as a public school system. In Westwood we have excellent teachers and staff. As a school system we support our staff professionally and personally. Our curriculum content at the elementary and secondary levels surpasses the Massachusetts Department of Early and Secondary Education standards in most areas. On the state level, we are seen as a leader in curriculum as well as MCAS standards. Our current School Committee is committed to maintaining high standards of academic excellence. Having attended School Committee meetings consistently for the eight years I have lived in Westwood, I plan to continue to support our teachers and administrators in these efforts.

Another strength of the Westwood Public Schools is its community. We live in a town that consistently supports our school system and, in return, that system supports the property value of each and every home in town. The climate of transparency and trust set forth by our current School Committee and Administration is evident by that continued support. As a leader in the Yes for Westwood Override in 2007, I understand the challenges facing schools and homeowners when deciding to support tax increases. In addition, in 2006, I filed a Town Warrant Article that would have created an alternative approach for funding the schools in lieu of increasing property taxes. As a School Committee member, I will continue to think creatively to support the schools and town.

The greatest challenges of the Westwood Schools today are primarily driven by the budget. The budget continues to be a challenge to construct each year as the school department sees a 0% budget increase. Our current School Committee and Administration has and continues to do an incredible job doing more with less each year. I am a regular attendee at both Finance Commission and Board of Selectmen meetings. I work hard to educate myself and others on the financial issues and impacts facing our town and schools. As a School Committee member, I will continue to work with other boards in town to advocate for the Westwood Public Schools.

Another challenge facing the schools is the increasing need to maintain our facilities. Our town has repeatedly supported the improvement and construction of state-of-the-art facilities for our students. Maintaining these buildings throughout difficult economic times is vital. As a School Committee member, I will advocate strongly and visibly for the tools necessary to staff our custodians and maintain our buildings.

The skills and perspectives I would bring to the School Committee are based on my training and experience as an engineer, as a stay-at-home parent, and as a leader within our schools and town.

I honestly believe that actions speak louder than words, and I hope you will look to my accomplishments in Westwood for evidence of the kind of service I will provide as a School Committee member:

- I will bring an important perspective as a parent who is at home full-time and in the schools on a daily basis;
- I will bring a proactive and creative approach to problem solving based on my engineering background; and
- I will bring an in-depth understanding of the working of the school committee and various branches of town government based on my prior and current leadership roles within the town.

Perhaps most importantly, my track record shows that I get things done, and that I will be a vocal and committed advocate for the schools during these very challenging economic times.

Please feel free to reach me at vote4Cummings@gmail.com

I ask for your vote on April 27. Thank you.

John Cummings