

JOHN O'BRIEN JR. CANDIDATE STATEMENT

A.

I have worked very hard to keep the citizens of Westwood informed and involved in the school community. The School website contains a wealth of information for everyone to access in order to learn about what is currently happening in our schools.

Superintendent John Antonucci is an active leader who is admired and respected by the Westwood Community as well as the Administrators and Teachers. He has gained visibility and recognition for Westwood Schools throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. His participation in professional associations provides reliable and current information so that the School Committee can make informed decisions with regards to implications the state budget may have on our schools.

The School Administration continuously recruits new teachers and offers development to all of our teachers which is a major factor in retaining the high quality teachers we have in the Westwood School district.

Westwood Teachers are dedicated to making Westwood Schools the best place to learn every day. Training and support for our teachers is important for their professional development. The Teachers showed their willingness to support Westwood Schools in difficult economic times by collectively agreeing in June 2009 to extend their three-year contract for one year under the same terms.

The Westwood Community as a whole and the parents of Westwood students who support our schools are major contributors to the Westwood School System and its reputation for quality and excellence.

B.

The greatest challenge will be, and has been, maintaining the high level of educational achievement with fewer dollars. Every dollar lost in the school budget has a direct impact on the quality and level of services that can be provided. A major budget item is Special Education services which the State mandates but not necessarily funded. These costs can be significant and make up 23% of the proposed FY 2010 - 2011 budget. On March 30, 2010, I spent the day on Beacon Hill with the Massachusetts Association of School Committees. I met with our State Representative Paul McMurtry and Senator Marian Walsh's staff to lobby for our school district with regards to the FY 2011 budget negotiations. I highlighted to these elected officials the financial stress caused to our Town by the State's mandating, but not funding, certain programs.

Another major challenge will be maintaining class sizes throughout the district which is impacted by budgetary constraints as well as by available space in some instances.

Every dollar provided to the school district must be spent wisely and prudently on programs and staffing that will offer a quality education to Westwood students. While Westwood Station may be viewed by many as a financial benefit to the town, I am concerned about the impact this project may have on our schools. I can, and will, be a strong voice to be sure that our concerns

as parents of Downey students and residents of Westwood are heard and addressed.

Westwood has not been immune to the economic environment. As your elected member of the Westwood School Committee, I voted a 0% increased budget for FY 2009 - 2010 and the district was able to maintain reasonable class sizes and programs without having to cut jobs. This year's budget is proving to be even more challenging but it is my goal to maintain the high quality education throughout the district in a responsible and reasonable manner that the citizens of Westwood have come to expect and deserve.

C.

There have been many accomplishments during my first term including the Middle School Expansion Project which was completed on schedule and **\$1 million under budget**. Also, a full-day Kindergarten that began last Fall and was implemented without an increase to the budget and has enhanced the students' learning during their first year in school. Technology has been integrated into the classroom setting which improves the teaching and learning experience and has made Westwood Schools a technology leader in the Commonwealth. I have participated in the PTO hosted Budget Forum in which the community is informed about how the school budget is formulated each year. Our teachers' professional development and the district's mentor program provide our students with up to date teaching methods and instruction. Our Westwood students performed at the top, or near the top, of the regional and statewide rankings for the 2009 MCAS results and graduating seniors have consistently been placed into exceptional universities and colleges throughout the country.

I am the only candidate AND the only member of the School Committee whose five children currently attend all levels of schools. This affords me a unique overall perspective on the impact the budget has on class size and course offerings in the elementary, middle and high schools.

During my first term, I negotiated and voted on the Superintendent's contract. That contract is up for renewal in June 2011. The Teachers' Contract expired last year and they collectively agreed to a one year extension. That contract will be renegotiated next year. It is imperative that the School Committee maintains its experienced members so that these contracts can be reasonably and prudently negotiated in order to retain our Superintendent and the high caliber teachers who work every day to teach our children. My experience serving as your elected School Committee member and my background as a civil litigation attorney provides an expertise and knowledge in identifying and achieving resolutions to the complex budgetary and academic matters that come before the School Committee. This election provides voters with a unique opportunity to vote for an experienced candidate as well as a new candidate. I ask for one of your two votes on April 27, 2010.

D.

Residents can speak with me in person or call me directly.