



CANDIDATE SPOTLIGHT

CHRIS HODGES

SCHOOL BOARD - BROAD RUN DISTRICT

CANDIDATE: CHRIS HODGES

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What would you like voters to know about you?

I was born and raised in Baldwin, Long Island and my wife and I graduated from Baldwin High School. I was captain of the football team, and my wife was captain of the cheerleading team. After high school I attended the U.S. Naval Academy and graduated in 1985. That same year my wife, Liz, and I got married and we served in the navy for six years. We have three children, two of whom attended Briar Woods High School. We also have four grandchildren. One of the main reasons I am running for the School Board is to help preserve a positive future for my grandchildren.

How long have you lived in Loudoun County?

We have lived in Broadlands for 17 years. Before that we were living in New Jersey while I was working in Manhattan. We love living in Virginia where there is much less congestion and we have access to a large city, the beaches, and the mountains. Plus the people are not as loud.

Have you ever held public office before?

No, but my father was President of the Republican Club in Long Island and ran for and won a judgeship. I don't have political aspirations beyond being on the school board. I believe that our country is in decline both culturally and financially and our schools are as well. I want to contribute more to the community by trying to get our schools back to where they were prior to Covid and the current set of School Board members. I have spoken at school board meetings and sent Letters to the Editor in our local newspapers. Those things can be effective but being on the School Board, obviously, is what would make the biggest difference.

What are your top issues and what do you hope to accomplish?

First is academic excellence. We have a good school system, but because of Covid there has been learning loss and we are still playing catch-up. Plus, there are things happening in schools that take away from core academics such as spending the first 30 minutes of the day on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Teaching children how they should feel about things is the job of parents, not the government. Also, standards are being lowered in academics such as eliminating midterms and final exams and allowing kids to re-take tests if they didn't do well. And because of this, some kids aren't taking academics as seriously as they should.

Second is the safety of the students. We need to know what happened regarding the sexual assaults in the schools in 2021 and the results of the independent review must be released; it could help us improve policies and procedures, which will help ensure it never happens again.

Fentanyl is another safety issue. I have attended a few meetings about this subject. It's not just a local problem but obviously a national problem and we need all hands-on deck. We need transparency on all safety statistics including assaults and other discipline problems.

Third is parental rights, especially when it comes to special education and IEPs. I believe parents should be involved to the greatest extent possible. All IEPs for students who need them should be approved. If they are not approved there needs to be a very good reason why not. Also, parents should be able to speak at school board meetings without being intimidated and there should be some mechanism for feedback from the board rather than just blank stares. Applause and other forms of feedback should be allowed. This "jazz hands" rule is ridiculous.

Parents should be able to opt out of SEL not just Family Life Education. I believe SEL is a subtle form of indoctrination. Second Step, the company the school board hired to supply the curriculum has an obvious liberal and progressive political bias.

Fourth, we need to support our teachers. Programs like SEL take time away from teaching core subjects and don't allow them much time to prepare for core academics. Teachers are not therapists and should not be recruited to teach SEL. It's just another added stress being placed on them. Teachers also need more help in terms of additional ELL and special education teachers.

Fifth is the budget. I am a financial planner by trade, so I am a numbers guy. I will be asking questions about what our money is being spent on, and why there has been an 8.5% increase in the school budget over the past 10 years when inflation was at 2% and administrative positions have increased by 160%. We need to consolidate and make LCPS administration more efficient.

Sixth is regarding the dress code. I have reviewed the policy and talked to teachers and parents and there doesn't seem to be any real dress code. Students need to dress for success and not

wear pajama tops and bottom, ripped jeans, and flip-flops. It is disrespectful to everyone in that school and shows a lack of seriousness.

Who is your favorite historical/political figure?

That's an easy one. Ronald Reagan. At my commissioning I got to shake his hand. I admire the way he knew his set of values and stuck with them. To me that is what made him be a great president and helped win the Cold War. I wish he was still around. We don't have that kind of leadership anymore.

What's the one-word people who know you best would use to describe you?

Honest. I was lucky enough to grow up with all four grandparents until I was a teenager, and they had a big influence on me as well as my parents. Those values were reinforced once I got to the U.S. Naval Academy.