



KELLY HORTON
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Caucus Nominee: Yes

Email: kellyhortonforschoolcommittee@gmail.com

Website: <https://hortonforbedford.com/>

Facebook: [Kelly Horton for School Committee](#)

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

I am excited to announce my candidacy for election to the Bedford School Committee; it would be a tremendous honor for me to serve our community in this capacity.

My husband and I moved to Bedford with our oldest son over eight years ago. We were drawn to town by the outstanding reputation of Bedford schools and the town's sense of community. Since then, our family has grown, and our oldest son is now at Lane, our middle son is at Davis, and our youngest will start kindergarten at Davis in 2023. We have had many positive experiences in the Bedford school system, which can largely be attributed to the district's dedicated teachers and staff.

Like everyone, my family and I have grown exhausted of the pandemic but have also found a few silver linings over the past two years. First, I've been able to spend more quality time with my family including having the opportunity to coach three youth sports teams here in Bedford. Secondly, I've gained an understanding of and appreciation for the role, importance, and responsibility of town government, specifically the School Committee.

My desire to run for School Committee is driven by my passion for ensuring that Bedford schools continue to meet the needs of all students regardless of where they are in their learning journeys. In the coming years, nothing is more important than fostering an environment that enables each child to develop socially, emotionally, and academically. I am committed to continued and enhanced dialogue and collaboration between the administration, teachers, parents, and students. By working together, I believe the best is yet to come.

Professionally, I have spent the last 13 years working at a mission-driven biotech company. I have worked in roles of increasing responsibility spanning from commercial operations to leadership development. Recent accomplishments include overseeing the organization's Women's Leadership Program and developing its multiple sclerosis health equity strategy.

At the end of the day, I'm a mom who is deeply committed to the Bedford schools, the children that attend them, and our overall community. If elected, I would consider it a privilege to represent your voices, along with mine, and give back to this wonderful community.

REPLIES TO THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS QUESTIONS

Q1—In other districts and parts of the country, there are controversies about “critical race theory,” the appropriateness of some books, and the extent parents should determine the content of their children’s education. Are these issues in any way relevant in Bedford?

Yes, these topics are on the minds of people in every city and town across America, and Bedford is no exception. As a town, it will be important for us to ensure that citizens and parents have an opportunity to express their perspectives on these topics through respectful dialogue. In our classrooms, we should continue to promote inclusion and celebrate our differences and our similarities, leveraging age-appropriate books and materials.

Q2—What is your plan regarding climate education?

This is undoubtedly a timely topic that should be incorporated into our curriculum. As a school committee member, I would look forward to collaborating with the district to consider their proposed plans for climate education. It is critical that the students of Bedford understand the importance of environmental matters and develop a culture of caring for the climate.

Q3—Do you identify lingering issues in student academic growth as a result of the impact of Covid that need to be addressed?

We all know that extended periods of remote learning and other pandemic-related disruptions and restrictions have greatly impacted children’s education. The question of issues in specific areas of academic growth is something I would look to the district to provide data on so that we can support effective solutions. I am deeply committed to addressing learning gaps and the overwhelming array of mental health challenges that students are currently facing.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

After speaking with many residents and parents over the past several weeks, I am even more excited about my candidacy and confident about the value I can bring to the school committee and our community overall.

First and foremost, I am a mom to three sons ages 10, 7, and 4. Because of this, I’ll have insight into three of the four Bedford schools for many years to come. I have my finger on the pulse of what’s happening inside our schools and can offer a fresh, critical, and informed perspective to the school committee. I am able to represent parents with young children, which is currently lacking on the school committee and differentiates me as a candidate. In my spare time, I can be found volunteering in my children’s classrooms, coaching on the basketball court and soccer field, riding bikes with my family on the Rail Trail, and gathering with friends around town.

Earlier in the pandemic, I gained valuable insight into the role and importance of the school committee when I founded and led a group of ~200 Bedford parents, known as Bring Bedford Back Safely, as we worked collaboratively and respectfully to advocate for our children to return to school full-time (while at the same time requesting that the option for remote learning remain available). Fortunately, Bedford brought students back to the classrooms full-

time many weeks before the State required them to do so. To be clear, credit is due to the School Committee, administration, teachers, and all parents that advocated for their children. Saying that, I am proud of my leadership and advocacy, and I believe it had an impact.

As I look to the future, I see many opportunities and challenges that will require collaboration between the administration, teachers, parents, students, and the school committee. My capabilities and professional experience would greatly benefit the school committee as they navigate crucial conversations, consider solutions, and make difficult decisions. Professionally, I've spent the last 13 years working at Biogen, a biotech company, in a variety of roles from leadership development to global marketing. I currently hold a director-level position leading Operational Effectiveness in the US commercial organization, which is a highly matrixed environment. In summary, my job is to make things work better. I've been able to achieve success due to my proactive and collaborative nature, my ability to bring people together around a common goal, and my drive to create and implement solutions – all of which I would bring with me to the school committee.

If elected, I would like to focus my time and efforts on academic excellence, social emotional wellbeing and mental health, feedback collection, and inclusivity. It is critical that every student is provided with an educational path that builds on their strengths and enables them to overcome challenges. We must offer innovative, varied, and rigorous academic opportunities to prepare every student for what lies ahead. I will prioritize the mental health of our children. Today, more than ever, we need to equip our teachers and staff with the tools and resources necessary to identify children that are struggling and get them the support they need. In addition, I feel strongly about the need to implement a consistent feedback mechanism that solicits input from parents, teachers, and students and is then used to inform discussions and decisions made by the district and school committee. Lastly, I want to ensure Bedford continues to foster environments where all students feel welcomed, represented, celebrated, and included.

In closing, I promise to be available and responsive, listen to all perspectives and concerns, and represent the best interests of the Bedford school community. If given the opportunity, it would be an honor and a privilege to serve in this capacity. I am committed to doing what's right for Bedford students, families, and teachers.

I respectfully ask for your vote on March 12th. Thank you for your consideration.

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