

## BUTLER SCHOOL BOARD 2024 CANDIDATE RESPONSES

**Running Member Name: James Woolace**

### **Background Information:**

Age: 54 years old

Family: Married to Lesa Woolace for 17 years

Children: Brady (30), Easton (15), DK (15), Sophia (14), David (13), Audrey (11)

Grandchildren: Jensen (3)

Education:

Graduated with 4 year degree (BS Journalism - Graphic Design) from Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

Employment:

Primary: LPL Financial (The largest broker dealer in the U.S) - UX/UI Designer

Secondary: Evidence Photography and Design - Owner/Operator. I have owned my own business since 2010 with services in photography, graphic design, and non-profit event promotion.

### **Civic Activities: (memberships and offices held, dates of participation)**

I served as an elder at Essential Church in Bellevue, WA (2015-2017) and then, after my family and I moved, I served as the Missions Director for Calvary Mt. Si Church in North Bend, Washington (2020-2021). I am currently serving as the Missions Director for Immanuel Baptist Church in Butler.

My wife and I were foster parents (2011-2015) in the state of Missouri having nearly a dozen children in our home, through which we adopted two of the foster children. We relocated to Washington State for work and became involved with a program called Carenet which helps families in crisis. We served as an approved host family for Carenet until 2022, when we moved back to Missouri.

We traveled with The Global Orphan Project to Haiti in 2013 to help with several orphanages

We both currently work with The Bridge of Hope (2016-current), a ministry that serves the village of Makambo, Sierra Leone, West Africa. I volunteer time to lead trips and provide photography and graphic designs needs for the ministry, while my wife is the child sponsorship coordinator.

1. What are your reasons for running for the Board position, and what do you feel is essential that we understand about you?

As a father of six children, I take very seriously the responsibility to protect and to provide access to quality education for my family. Working with a non-profit to establish a quality education system in a third world country for the past eight years, I have seen firsthand the damaging effects that a lack of education can cause in the life of a child, a community, and a nation. I am so grateful to live in a country in which quality education is readily available to my children; and I highly value the investment that is made by educators. I believe that every child has a right to quality education and a safe environment to learn. I believe that teachers and staff within the school system should be provided a safe place to teach and should be honored for the investment that they make every day. When I learned of this opportunity to serve through the school board, I decided to step in to offer to serve in this way.

Having served through foster care, adoption, crisis intervention, missions and community outreach, I have seen the incredible toll that is taken when safety and education are not valued. I would welcome the opportunity to serve in a capacity in which I can contribute toward sustaining and improving the education experience of my own children as well as all of the children in the Butler School District.

2. Have you served on a school board before? If so, where and for how long?

I have not served or attempted to serve on a school board.

3. What strengths would you as a board member bring to the Butler R-V School District?

Because of the moves that my family has made due to my employment, I have had experience with several different school systems from rural communities to larger metropolitan areas. This has given me a lot of insight into what is working and what is not in each of these school systems. I have always stayed incredibly close to the teachers and leaders within each school to be sure that my children and others' are protected and that the best interest of each child and teacher is prioritized.

My involvement in establishing schools in another country has given me some unique insight into how children learn and what investments need to be made into our educators and school systems in general to insure success within the school system.

Coming from a military family that moved a lot while I was growing up, I developed skills in adaptability, conflict diffusion, empathy, listening, and living by a strong moral code. These skills have served me well in my business and community relationships; and I truly believe that they make me a person who can be trusted with input into making good choices and decisions.

Perhaps my greatest strength would simply be my willingness to serve. My hope is to be an asset to providing the best education experience for the teachers and students in this district.

4. What do you perceive as the primary strengths of the Butler R-V School District?

My wife and I chose to live in Butler because, after spending time here, we found a feeling of community that is created in a small town when people are looking out for each other. We wanted an education experience for our children that would come with the tightly knitted relationships that a small town offers.

After meeting many of the teachers in Butler, we found the heart of these teachers to be a great strength for this district. Our experiences with Butler's teachers have all been positive; and we were grateful for the reception that our children received as new students.

We see strength in leadership and communication from not only the teachers but also the leadership staff in Butler. All five of our children are very different from each other; and we have seen teachers recognize strengths and needs in each of them and communicate those things to us. This is reassuring for parents.

5. What do you perceive to be the major issue(s) facing our school district?

Funding seems to always be a concern within school districts. Making decisions that are not only financially sound but are also effective in maintaining and improving success for both teachers and students. I expect to see this challenge coming into this role of service; and I am hopeful that I can contribute to what is best for all involved. Due to the inevitable need for funding within schools, I have seen situations within one school district where my children attended that truly concerned me. It would be my hope that funding needs would not drive compromise on anything less than what is best for our students and teachers.

In every school, I think there is a challenge when it comes to meeting the needs of every unique student. I see this even within my own family. I have one son who is so hard to challenge due to his hunger for learning while I have other sons to whom English is not the first language. This can be challenging when all deserve the same quality education; but the means to the end here is so radically different.

Through our time at Butler, we have learned of many challenges with regards to behavior of students as well as what appears to be lack of engagement from parents. This can lead to situations which require a lot of conflict resolution. I hope that I can make a positive impact in these situations as I have worked hard to develop skills that diffuse and resolve rather than ignite further turmoil.

6. What are your goals for the Butler R-V School District in regards to students, staff, administration, and facilities?

As a Christian and a father, I think my number one goal would be that each student and teacher be provided a learning environment that is safe, not just physically, but socially and emotionally as well both now and into the future.

Within my goals would be that teachers be honored and appreciated, students be challenged, cared for and safe, and that the Butler school district would deliver a high quality education that prepares each of it's students to achieve the goals they are encouraged to set.

7. What would be your plan of action if a few parents, teachers, or community members voiced a complaint to you?

If people are concerned enough to bring a complaint to light or are impassioned enough about an issue to raise it for discussion, I believe that it is correct to allow the sharing of that complaint. I also believe that there should be a protocol to the sharing of a complaint or idea. With no order in which to address a complaint transparently, there is a lot of room for miscommunication as well as misunderstanding. I have always believed in bringing complaints and ideas to a transparent table where both sides of an argument/complaint can be fully heard and respected with an agreement that an objective decision will be honored by both sides.

8. What is your philosophy or approach to school financial management? What financial experience do you have?

First and foremost, the priority is a combination of fiscal responsibility with transparency and the best interest of the student body, teachers and staff as priority. The end goal in my view is that a safe, successful learning environment is created with as much sustainability for the future as possible. This will

require difficult decisions at times to ensure the best interest of the whole; but, I believe, that if transparency, integrity and the best interest of the students and faculty are a priority, then this can be achieved.

9. Please share your opinion on how you will support teachers and staff. What changes or recommendations would you make as part of the board in regards to things such as student and staff safety, behavior issues, added responsibilities beyond contract, etc.?

Being completely honest here, we are relatively new to this community; and I am looking forward to learning more about how we can specifically support teachers and staff. We have been meeting teachers one by one through our children as well as in church or in other community situations.

I am a believer that learning begins at home; so, in our home, we make it very clear to our children that we honor the investment that our teachers make every day, that it's okay to ask a question or voice a concern but never to disrespect. From a few situations that we have learned through our students, I want to make sure that teachers are being supported when disrespectful behavior has led to disruptions. I believe that, for an environment to be safe, the teachers need to have the support needed to make necessary decisions to insure the safety of the students.

10. Are there any additional things you would like the voters to know?

I am not a person who has ever "run" for any sort of office before. I have no political aspirations or agendas. I simply want a safe, healthy, successful space for our students and teachers. Our community succeeds when the children of this community become the best of who they were created to be.