

Community Forum Questions

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1. Vision and Future Readiness

Salem is entering an important period of transition. What is your vision for the district over the next five to 10 years, and what would be your top priorities for moving us toward that vision? Why are you the right leader for Salem at this moment?

2. Academic Excellence and Student Success

How would you strengthen student achievement across the district and ensure all students have access to rigorous, engaging, and relevant learning experiences that prepare them for success in college, careers, and life?

3. Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

How would you ensure that every student—including multilingual learners, students with disabilities, immigrant students, LGBTQ+ students, and students from historically marginalized communities—feels valued, supported, and able to thrive? Please share examples from your leadership experience.

4. Special Education and Inclusion

What is your philosophy regarding special education and inclusion? How would you support students with diverse learning needs, their families, and the educators who serve them?

5. STEM

The Norman H Read 1985 Trust is dedicated to advancing excellence in all areas of STEM by funding programs and services across Salem Public Schools, Salem Academy Charter School, and LEAP. Last year, the Trust

provided nearly \$1.3 million dollars of support to the Salem Public Schools. What are your short- and long-term goals and vision for continuing to foster excellence in STEM education in Salem while also creating opportunities for Salem School graduates to lead the way in shaping new horizons in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics?

6. Technology, Innovation, and Student Learning

Let's dig into technology a little bit more. How would you ensure that digital tools, including but not limited to AI, enhance student learning without replacing meaningful teacher-student interaction? How would you balance innovation, screen time, and instructional quality?

7. Educator Recruitment, Support, and Retention

Recruiting and retaining high-quality educators remains a challenge locally and nationally. What strategies would you use to attract, support, and retain excellent teachers and staff while addressing workload, burnout, and professional growth? How would you work to build a workforce that better reflects the diversity of Salem's students?

8. Labor Relations and Collaboration

Strong relationships between district leadership and employee unions are essential to a healthy school system. What principles would guide your approach in district/union relationships overall, and how would your approach change when district and union leadership disagree?

9. Community Engagement and Trust

How would you build and sustain trust with students, families, educators, community organizations, and city leaders, particularly when navigating difficult decisions or differing perspectives?

Jorge Allen

Jorge Allen

Jorge Allen grew up in Panama City, where he completed his elementary education in the public school system. After high school, he was forced to migrate to Mexico due to the military dictatorship and the impending United States military invasion of his country. He completed his undergraduate studies in Monterrey, Mexico, studying veterinary medicine during the week and taking education classes on weekends, because teaching was the one path that offered both purpose and security. He came to the United States through a teacher exchange program at Christopher Newport University in Virginia.

Later, he worked with migrant farm worker families as an Indiana Department of Education registration officer while pursuing his graduate degrees at Purdue University. His doctoral dissertation focused on Afro-Brazilian literature and research that took him to Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, for extended periods of study and deepened his lifelong commitment to Black Brazilian cultural identity and expression.

He is a first-generation college graduate. He is an immigrant. He is a father of three sons. And he has spent more than two decades in Massachusetts schools fighting for the children and families that systems were not built to serve.

As an advisor to Black and Latino students early in his Massachusetts career, Jorge helped young people break stereotypes about which languages they were supposed to take in high school. At Lincoln-Sudbury, he increased enrollment in German. At Andover, he increased enrollment in Chinese and French among students whose families had been told those languages were not for them. He educated families about the Seal of Biliteracy, helping them understand that their home languages were not obstacles but assets. His plus one motto was simple: if you only speak English, graduate from high school bilingual. If you are already bilingual, pursue another language.

Today, Jorge serves as Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at Wellesley Public Schools, where he works at the intersection of language, identity, and belonging. Jorge previously led world and multilingual learner education at Andover Public Schools, where he helped create their Global Pathways Scholar Program. He consults for the Democratic Knowledge Project, helping to write curricular resources for teachers to

support multilingual learners' access to civics education across 75 schools, and he is a summer staff member at the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Zero Classroom.

Jorge is a proud member of the Black, Latino, and immigrant community. He comes to Salem tonight as someone who knows what it means to be far from home, to navigate the school system as a parent in a language and a culture that is not your own, and who believes that every child deserves a superintendent who sees the family behind the student.

Andrew Bott

Andrew Bott

Andrew Bott is an educational leader with nearly 30 years of experience serving students, families, and school communities across Massachusetts. He currently serves as Head of School at Brighton High School in Boston, where he has led significant growth in enrollment, expanded advanced academic and career pathway opportunities, and launched the Brighton Accelerated Diploma Program (ADP), a city-wide alternative high school program designed to re-engage students who have faced barriers in traditional educational settings, including students who previously dropped out of school.

Previously, Andrew served as Superintendent of the Public Schools of Brookline, where he oversaw a district of more than 7,000 students and managed a \$125 million operating budget. During his tenure, he successfully led major strategic initiatives, including the passage of significant capital and operational funding measures, the planning and construction of new school facilities, and long-range district planning. He worked closely with school committee members, educators, unions, parents, and community stakeholders to build consensus around district priorities and secure substantial investments in educational programming and equity initiatives.

Andrew is also recognized for leading the successful turnaround of Orchard Gardens K-8 School in Boston, one of the Commonwealth's more notable school improvement efforts. Throughout his career, he has been committed to improving student outcomes, building strong partnerships with families and communities, and creating equitable opportunities for all students. He is excited to be here today to participate in today's community forum.

Tommy Welch

Thomas Welch

Dr. Welch brings 27 years of experience in public education, serving students, families, and educators in both Boston and Los Angeles.

For the past 11 years, Dr. Welch has served as a regional superintendent and member of the executive leadership team in Boston Public Schools. In his current role, he supports 15 schools serving approximately 6,600 students across Charlestown, East Boston, and the North End.

Over the course of his career, he has worked across a wide range of school settings, including early childhood, elementary, middle, high school, alternative, dual-language, and Montessori programs. Schools in his region have received significant recognition for student achievement and growth, including multiple EdVestors School on the Move Awards, Massachusetts Schools of Recognition honors, and a National Distinguished School designation.

He began his career as a classroom teacher and instructional coach, spending 12 years working directly with students and earning National Board Certification. He later became a founding middle and high school principal in Los Angeles before moving into district leadership.

Dr. Welch earned his doctorate in Educational Leadership from Boston College and has been selected for both the 2026 Broad Fellowship for Public Education Leadership at Yale and the Google Education Leadership Fellowship.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Tommy Welch.