

Pamela Partridge West  
Nominee to the State Board of Education

Good afternoon, Senator Looney, Representative Janowski, members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee.

It is a privilege to appear before you today. I am honored to have been nominated by the Governor to serve on the State Board of Education, and I appreciate your setting aside the time to meet with me.

I believe that quality public education, starting in the early years of a child's life, is the most valuable contribution that we, as a society, can make to the lives of our citizens. I can't think of a public board on which it would be a greater honor for me to serve.

Many years ago, I became involved in my sons' elementary school. I chaired the PTO for several years and changed the dynamic of the organization in meaningful ways. Attendance at meetings improved, a more diverse mix of parents became involved, and more teachers attended our meetings and volunteered for new projects that we developed together. The PTO became a collaborative partner with the school—not simply a volunteer and fund-raising adjunct. We improved parental involvement in the classrooms. We established a senior outreach program that brought together students and residents of area senior housing in pen pal programs as well as other activities. We launched a community service initiative that coordinated and expanded many of the individual efforts that had been underway in classrooms. We made a deeper commitment to what was, at the time, called Project Concern, by engaging Hartford families in social activities at East Farms School and coordinating transportation to facilitate their involvement. It was my belief that the students in the program were experiencing too little of what the school community offered, and I wanted to find ways to make them feel part of the school, not simply "guests" who were dropped off and picked up at the beginning and end of each school day. We initiated town-wide collaborations, involving PTO/PTA presidents, school principals, and other volunteers from the four elementary schools in town, finding ways to learn from each other, to work together, and to share ideas that enhanced the learning and collaborative environments at all schools and fostered a greater sense of community.

In the years that followed, I maintained strong relationships with the superintendent of schools, the board of education, teachers and principals, and have contributed my time and my ideas whenever asked to do so. In addition to my involvement in education, I spent many years coaching youth sports. I love children, and time spent with them brings me great joy.

My education and family life prepared me well for the business and community leadership positions I have held. I graduated from Williams College, a small liberal arts institution where rigorous curricula and high standards develop strong minds, a life-long love for learning, and commitments to individual responsibility and mutual respect. The academic environment matched well my personal values and my upbringing.

Now...after several years of retirement, I look forward to being of service to the state where my family has lived for many generations and where my husband and I have been privileged to raise our children.

Thank you for considering my candidacy. I welcome your questions.