



5 vie for 3 spots on GRPS board Tuesday

Where do the candidates stand?

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GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (WOOD) - The ongoing debate over a contract for teachers in Grand Rapids Public Schools has yielded another round of negative campaigning in the race to fill three seats on the school board.

The top-three vote getters out of a field of five on Tuesday's ballot will win seats on the board.

Two candidates -- incumbent Arneada "Arnie" Smithalexander and one-time board member Senita Lenear -- sent statements Friday complaining about mailings from the teachers union.

"The postcard tells the lie that I and Senita Lenear supported a policy that allows students to skip class and still graduate with a diploma. The postcard poses the question, 'sound ridiculous?' and the answer to that question is, yes, it is ridiculous! Not only does it sound ridiculous, but it's uncategorically false," Smithalexander's statement read.

The union mailing criticizes Lenear and Smithalexander's stand on the district's "success only" push, giving students more options -- too many options, the union leadership says -- to pass a class.

On the other side of the contract battle, a postcard from the anti-teachers union Education Action Group features a cartoon depicting teachers union President Paul Helder as a puppet master. The cartoon shows Helder controlling the three union-endorsed candidates in the race: incumbent Tony Baker, former college educator Wendy Falb and Catholic school teacher Kevin Weiss.

Some of those candidates have expressed frustration with the postcards, asserting their independence, but did not want to complain too loudly for fear they would lend credibility to the EAG effort.

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