

Statement from Ben Schlesinger, Candidate for School Committee from Ward 5

I'm excited to share that I'm running for Newton School Committee from Ward 5. The seat is open after having been held for the last 3 terms by Emily Prenner, who is not running for reelection. I'm honored to have already earned the endorsements of four sitting School Committee members, five City Councilors, and dozens of community leaders and friends.

I was born and raised in Newton—attending Cabot, Day, Bigelow (the year it reopened!), and Newton North—and today, my wife, Iris, and I are raising our two kids, Noah (11) and Julia (8), at Zervas. I'm running with one clear priority: putting kids first.

To me, that means keeping students at the center of every decision—and making sure our classrooms are strong, well-supported spaces for learning. That includes providing every student with the opportunity to grow to their fullest potential in an environment where great teaching is supported and all children feel seen, challenged, and encouraged.

We also need a School Committee that maintains a mutually respectful relationship with our educators – one that hears their voices and empowers our superintendent to support them effectively. I believe we can foster a culture of collaboration that uplifts both our teachers and our students.

We're at a critical moment. We have an extraordinary leader in Superintendent Anna Nolin, and we face real challenges – from budget constraints to community division. I'm running because I believe we can meet this moment with independent thinking, integrity, and a renewed focus on what really matters: supporting every student, in every school, every day. I'm especially excited to partner with Dr. Nolin to support her vision for a system that is student-centered and future-focused.

Over the past few years, I helped organize the Zervas community to preserve teacher jobs and class sizes during a difficult budget cycle, and I served on the Superintendent's Advisory Committee for the Zervas principal search. I've also coached countless teams across Newton and serve on the board of Newton Southeast Little League. Community service is a core part of who I am—and of my family's legacy here.

Professionally, I am a startup executive, with 15 years of experience helping organizations solve complex problems and grow sustainably. I have an MBA from MIT and started my career as a management consultant. I believe those skills—combined with a deep love for this city and a genuine understanding of Newton's culture and politics—make me uniquely positioned to serve as a thoughtful, effective, and collaborative School Committee member.

Our schools should be a source of pride and unity - not frustration or division. I'm running to help restore that sense of shared purpose and to ensure that Newton's schools continue to be the heart of this community. I'm ready to listen, to lead, and to keep kids at the center of every decision we make.