



## **The NHC GOP Podcast**

*Episode 21: Better Policies: Pete Wildeboer for New Hanover County Board of Education*

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**Reuel Sample:** Good evening and welcome to the NHC GOP podcast. I'm Reuel Sample happy and honored to be joined by Pete Wildeboer, candidate for school board and incumbent for School Board. Pete. Good evening. How are you doing?

**Pete Wildeboer:** Reuel, it's good to see you as always. Thank you so much for having me on tonight.

**Reuel Sample:** You have been out working the polls and talking to parents not just now during the campaign, but you've been talking to parents for these last few years that you've been on the board. What's the number one thing that you're hearing from parents right now?

**Pete Wildeboer:** Parents want a good education for their students. That's the bottom line. I've talked to just a variety of folks at the polls. Before that, I was the one that got the town halls going where we could actually have dialogue with our parents and our stakeholders. And everybody wants their children, number one, to be safe. Without a doubt, want them to be safe, but also want them to get a high quality education. So that's what I'm pushing for. We need to have that high quality education, but we need to keep our students safe for sure.

**Reuel Sample:** We talk about school safety a lot and we see the folks on the left who want to pull out SROs and they want to minimize police at schools. What is your plan for school safety?

**Pete Wildeboer:** Well, I think I think we need to have everyone involved. I mean, SROs are super important. My daughter is a sheriff's deputy. My future son in law is a sheriff's deputy. I've worked with some excellent, excellent SROs in my days as principal assistant principal. Folks that are that are forward thinking are ahead of problems. And that's what we need. We need those that want to be there, want to work with the students, want to try to stop problems before they start. And a good SRO can do that, can work well with the administration and help everyone. So I think it's vital. I think SROs are vital to keep, number one, the outside attacks from happening, but also to stop and minimize a lot of the problems that happen inside the schools.

**Reuel Sample:** And what people think about SROs is these big, hulking military style walking around in uniforms and and they're really there to provide safety, but they're also there to provide a role model and another positive experience for the students.

**Pete Wildeboer:** Absolutely. Like I say, the one that comes to mind is one that I worked with in Brunswick County. She was just phenomenal. It was a female, just a phenomenal SRO. She would actually come to me as an assistant principal and say, Hey, I think we have a problem starting here. Would you come with me? We'll go sit down with these students and we'll stop a problem before it starts. And I mean, that's that's just so, so strong and so, so important to be able to do that. So obviously, we have to protect our schools from outside attacks. But a lot of times these SROs are just spot on, on these important topics and stop problems before they start. So minimizing bullying, minimizing some of the other negative things that happen. So it's hugely

important. And again, I personally black back the blue 100%. I think that we need to have strong, smart, hardworking SROs and deputies like that will support our schools. And I think for the most part, it's like teachers. I think for the most part, their heart's in the right place. They want to do the right thing and we just need to support them and continue to to have those those quality people in schools.

**Reuel Sample:** School safety gets in the way of a quality education. What are the other things that get in the way of our kids learning the things that they need to go forward?

**Pete Wildeboer:** Well, I've told the story too many times, probably, but one of the things is we have so many other things that are coming in. You know, I'm a person that really pushes the basics math, language, arts, reading, social studies, science. That's what we need to be teaching. Support the other students. Support our students in other ways as they need. But as I've mentioned more than once, I was at a school that has an F rating this year, did not make growth, so it was going actually in the wrong direction. And the superintendent was with me as well as the instructional staff we were walking through. And they had you know, they had a ball and they were tossing around and just saying, how do you feel today, fifth grade class in a failing school? How do you feel today? How do you feel today? How do you feel today? The vast majority of the students have their hands like this and just were bored out of their gourd, you know, And we need we need to be teaching math there. Or in this class, it was a reading class. We need to be teaching, reading, catching those students up for the educational loss they had during the pandemic. And I'm not saying there wasn't a student or two that profited from that, but that's that's where a good counselor can pull a group together and work with those students and support them as they need.

**Pete Wildeboer:** It goes back to one thing that I did as a principal. You have to know your students. You have to know where your students are academically and in other ways. As a principal, I was the guy that was outside in the snow, in the rain. We don't have much snow down here, but in the rain, in the cold, opening doors saying, you know, welcoming students into the school. And even there, if you see a child coming in with tears in his or her eyes, you know there's a problem and you can go ahead and intervene at that point. Or if somebody comes in all mad, you know that we're going to have a tough day with that child. And again, you can intervene. And good teachers do that. They know their students. That's the one you know, the good teachers, the ones

that typically are at the door welcoming students in. How are you doing? How is your day so far? How are things going and able to intervene or call the counselor and or call the assistant principal? And as needed, we don't need to waste or spend I'll say waste, waste 45 minutes tossing a ball around and just asking everybody how you feel.

**Reuel Sample:** I've said this before, I don't remember at all. I went to public schools. I don't remember any teacher as a as a matter of course, asking me how I felt that particular day. Right.

**Pete Wildeboer:** And in certain classes in kindergarten, first grade, having a morning meeting. Absolutely. Sure. Very good. But, you know, fifth grade, seventh grade, it's still nice to you tend to take 10 minutes. 10 minutes at the beginning of the day. Hey, how's things going? Maybe a little talk, get things going, and then get into your lesson. 10 minutes. 15 minutes max, 45 minutes every day. I mean, no.

**Reuel Sample:** That's a lot of time. That's a lot of time. Now, you brought up teachers. And let's face it, teachers are important. They're they're the linchpin to all this. How can you at the school board level ensure that our kids are getting good teachers with good backgrounds for a good education.

**Pete Wildeboer:** That's a great question. And I'll be honest, as a former principal, it goes to the principal. We need to support our principals. We need to ask our principals to go in and do walkthroughs. We need to have that data back and forth. The superintendent needs to hold them accountable. We need to hold the superintendent accountable. I mean, that's the thing. I still to this day, love going schools. I was at a school today because it was a conservative school. I went in there to see what was going on and just to support the school. So I think it's very, very important that our instructional leaders, our principals are on top of this and able to go into school, into the classrooms. As a principal, I used to be able to, if a parent came in, had a concern about something, it's a lot easier for me to say I was in that classroom today or I was in that classroom this week and saw some great education going on in that class. What's your concern? Let's talk about it. Instead of saying, Well, yeah, I guess I'll have to go talk to that teacher because I've been in there for two or three weeks.

**Pete Wildeboer:** Yeah. So, you know, to me that's a big part of being a principal, is knowing your staff, knowing what's going on in the classroom. We have some excellent, excellent and I know for a fact that we have some great, great principals. We have some that, you know, that need to work. And I mean, I was definitely a perfect principal by any stretch of imagination. So I continue to make myself better, go to go to trainings and stuff. But likewise, we have some great, great folks that we have here. We actually have one principal that I know of that was my assistant superintendent. So she was she was up to that level and she brings all that wealth of knowledge down into that principal ship where she can share that with everybody. So it's you know, we have some we have excellent, excellent staff. We just need to support them and give them a chance to do and and I will say and hold them accountable.

**Reuel Sample:** Yeah, that's a great perspective because we've talked about teachers a lot and we've talked about other things. But principals are really they're the captains of each ship, aren't they? If we if we look at each school as an independent unit, it's the principals that have to guide everything.

**Pete Wildeboer:** Absolutely. And as a principal, I remember superintendents saying to me, you know, bottom line is, it doesn't matter what the teacher did, what does, of course, matter? But they would say it doesn't matter what the teacher did or the assistant principal did. The buck stops with you, Pete. The buck stops with you. And I still feel that way on the board. The buck stops with me. You know everyone there, seven of us, we all have equal power. But it does. It stops with us. And our job is to make New Hanover County schools the very best. That's why that goes back to my. Why? Why, why do I do this? Why know I've had more than one person say, Pete, you got horses. Why don't you go play with your horses and your and your cows and and just enjoy life? And it's that's my why? It's because I want to make New Hanover County schools the best school system in the county excuse me, in the state. And not to say we're the best, but it's all about educating our students. And each and every one of those students. I saw a great young man today at one of the elementary schools, and he just came up and gave me this big smile and hugged on my leg and said, Oh, you're the best, you know? And that's that's what it's all about, is those kindergartens and those those 12th graders and those early college students, every single one of them is hugely, hugely important.

**Pete Wildeboer:** You mentioned the polls before. I have spent a lot of time so far, and I'm going to continue to spend a lot of time at the polls. And I've actually had folks from the left, I've had Democrats come up and say, you know, Mr. Wildeboer, we respect what you've done because you obviously care about students as number one students and the faculty of the schools. And that's what it all goes back to is doing the very best job I can do that superintendent can do, the principals can do, the teachers can do for those students each and every day.

**Reuel Sample:** What else is on your mind? We've talked about we've talked about quality in education and empowering principals. We've talked about parents before. But what are the what are the other things that you are working on as you get back on that board? What are you focusing on?

**Pete Wildeboer:** Well, one big thing is, as a board, we need to be a cohesive team. We need to not that we're going to agree on everything by any imagination, but we still need to be able to work and we need to be a role model for other boards, the school level boards, and work in a cohesive way. Like I say, even if I lose 4 to 3 in a vote, but still not rolling eyes at each other or talking over each other or being disrespectful to each other or pulling out. So, you know, I got the Robert's Rules of Order and I know some people are like, Well, why don't we just wait until the new board starts? Well, very simply, because we need to lay a foundation now to get ready for that new board so that they can see and build on what we do. I think. I think it's paramount. We've wasted way too much time. We have meetings that go into 1130 at 12:00 at night. When I was when I originally got on the board, we had one meeting a month. Some of those were long, but one meeting. Then we divided into two to try to bring the meetings down. But when we have some people to just talk and talk and talk, we have others that talk over each other or a rude to each other. We need we need Robert's Rules of Order. Followed very closely so that we can get order back to our meetings and we can get the business of what I said before getting the best education for our students each and every day done. And that's what.

**Reuel Sample:** And it's not just - because you're in education. Everything that you do is an education opportunity. And so it's not just a way to get things done, but it's a way of demonstrating how you can get things done and talk with each other. You've been on the campaign for a while now, and you and I have talked before on this on this

broadcast. If people hear nothing else from you, what do you want them to know about you that will convince them to put that little check in the box when they go into the polls?

**Pete Wildeboer:** Well two things. Number one, he serves God. And number two, I serve the students of New Hanover County schools. And it's all about educating our students. So that's where I start my day. That's where I end my day. I'm a family man. I have three wonderful children that went through and benefited from New Hanover County schools. I myself was an educator in New Hanover County schools as well as my wife was. We both have retired at this point. But I'm going to do everything, everything I can to help our students. And that's what it's all about. Pay raises we need, especially as as you know, I voted for teacher assistants and bus drivers and our maintenance folks, our cafeteria workers, all to I mean, \$15 an hour is just not enough for them to do the job we need them to do. And I've seen you know, I've seen some unbelievable teacher assistants go through some situations, especially with some children that, you know, exceptional children at times. And, you know, they give their sometimes, unfortunately, their blood, sweat and tears. And we just need to give them a decent working wage. So that's one thing we need to do that. But again, at the end of the day, it's all about getting the best people around our students so they can have the best education possible. We should we should be second to none.

**Reuel Sample:** There's there's that whole ecosystem that surrounds kids as they go to school that often gets overlooked. But they need to be supported. Pete Wildeboer, How can they get in touch with you? You're going to be at the polls. You're you're you're out there all the time and talking to people. How can they also get in touch with you?

**Pete Wildeboer:** Well, I actually had two calls. I was a little late going to the polls this morning because I had two phone calls from folks that have gotten some negative campaign ads from other people. My daughter actually got one that had a big X in my face. But these people wanted to hear more from me. Let me give you my cell number first. This is my own personal cell. 9106208443. You can look at [WILDEBOERforeducation.com](http://WILDEBOERforeducation.com) is my website and then my Facebook page is [Wildeboer For NHCS Board of Education](#). You can donate on the website also. We're fighting that that battle. We're right at the end here. We're at that last sprint. I was a track runner back in my day and ran the quarter mile and we're on that last curve coming around ready for that last sprint. And every bit can help because we do need more handouts,

we need more signs, we need so many other things. So any \$25, \$50, any bit can help. I also would ask for your prayers because I do believe that God is on throne and he's going to put the best people in those important roles. So thank you so much.

**Reuel Sample:** Amen. Hey, Pete, thanks for being here. Thanks for taking the time out. And we're going to get you across that finish line. Thanks for being here.

**Pete Wildeboer:** Thank you, Reuel. Thank you for your time. And again, please vote WILDEBOER for his NHCS Board of Education.