



THE NHC GOP Podcast Transcript

Season 3, Episode 16: Addressing Challenges in NHC Education: Nikki Bascome

Reuel Sample

Welcome to the NHC GOP Podcast. I'm Reuel Sample. Nicky, the last time I talked to you for any length of time, you were at the pool watching kids and overseeing kids swim. How did that go? What are you doing out there at the pool,

Nikki Bascome

Well,

My kids have been with the Wilmington Swim League for I think eight years now and I just started moving up the ranks, doing a little bit more timing, stroke and turn judging, and now I'm secretary of the Wilmington Swim League and we have 12 teams here between New Hanover County. We have a Southport team and a Hampstead team that does meets throughout the year or throughout the summer. And this past weekend we had our championships at

Fair Country Club. All 12 teams, 160 volunteers, who knows how many staff members from Cape Fear Country Club.

997 children swam in the championships this weekend. It was phenomenal. It was hot. It was very long two days, but lots of cheering, lots of happy kids, lots of little duckies being handed out for heat winners, lots of ribbons and a lot of amazing fast times. It is amazing watching these kids.

Just thrive and have fun and have that team spirit and having 12 teams come together, you would think there was a rivalry, but it's a friendly rivalry. Like there's there's no angst. There's no anger. There's no yelling. Every once in a while, if someone gets DQ'd, you might have someone that's a little bit upset. But for the most part, it's an amazing two days. I didn't sleep for two days and I would do it all over again. I wouldn't trade it for the world. It's amazing.

Reuel Sample

I'm of course talking to the incomparable, indefatigable, say that one three times fast Nikki Bascome who is running for the New Hanover County Board of Education. And the reason why I brought that swim meet up is that even though you're out there hurting around what over 900 kids at the same time, you are talking to both parents and teachers about the state of education here in New Hanover County. What are you hearing from parents and teachers?

Nikki Bascome

I am hearing a lot of that they're nervous of where our school district was going. Our curriculum was not meeting our children, especially our kindergarten first, second graders. Our literacy was.

It's falling through the cracks. It's not meeting them on a foundational level that they need to be. A lot of the teachers are concerned. A lot of the parents are concerned. A lot of parents are concerned because they didn't. They didn't understand what was going on with Faust and the district. They didn't understand that there was such a big disconnect between the school board and what was going on in the schools itself. You think of the school board and you think they know everything that's going on in the schools and they really don't. There was a huge firewall put up.

Reuel Sample

I want to go with that for a little bit. You and I were talking about this yesterday while you were at the swimming pool. There was a firewall that was the superintendent's office that he set up between teachers and the elected school board. Tell me a little bit more about that firewall.

Nikki Bascome

So from what I found out in his contract, it said that there couldn't be contact between the school board and school staff level, so every all communications had to come through him, which I think is why teachers felt like there there might be retaliation if there were complaints or if they said anything bad that was going on in the schools. And I honestly feel like a lot of the reports that came from the district office to the school board was, no, look, our schools are beautiful. wonderful. Everything's going well and it wasn't. I saw it on a school level that it things weren't going very well. Parents could feel it. Teachers could feel it and I feel like our school board was left in the dark about that. I'm hoping now that Faust has been removed. I hope that that firewall has been removed and we can learn to get back into the schools. I I love being in the schools. I love talking to the teachers. I met a lot of teachers on the swimming deck

Some that I didn't some that are friends of mine that I didn't even know that they were teachers because we just swim during the summer That's that's what we do. We don't talk about politics. We don't talk about our jobs We just swim and so now it was like a different view of them but then they also got a different view of me and I'm not afraid to go into those classrooms and Not go in and make some big fanfare here. Let me bring all my camera crew or let me bring my staff with me or you know, make it a media thing. No, I want to go in the classrooms and I want to help wash hands. I want to help read stories. want, you know, do you need to go on a lunch break? Do you have everything you need? What can I do to help you? I want to help do the hard jobs. Just like with the swim league, one of my jobs is I make all the name tags for the volunteers. I was up until 2 30 in the morning making name tags for 160 volunteers because that's what you do.

You get in there and you do the hard jobs that no one else wants to do because...

You want to do the right thing, not because you want the fanfare, not because you want the publicity, not because you want your name in lights. My name's already in lights. It already is because of my good heart and the things that I'm doing in the community. I don't need anyone else to recognize that. I think that's the hardest part going into running for school board is I'm used to doing things on the backside. I'm used to...

taking out the trash or putting up a tent or moving a chair or covering a crazy classroom because the teacher needs to use the bathroom for five minutes. I'm used to doing that without posting on social media. Hey, look at me, look at what I did.

Being in this role of running for a campaign now, now I have to do that. I have to say, hey, look at me. This is what I'm doing and this is what I'm going to do for you. This is what I want to do for our community and I am doing it for my community. I don't want to put it on social media. I feel like I'm becoming a braggart and I don't like that.

But I want you guys to see that that's what I've been doing all along. That's my heart. That's my soul. Are you still there? Because it says it's trying to reconnect to you. My computer says it's trying to reconnect. Did we lose each other?

Reuel Sample

You're fine. You've reconnected. You've reconnected. So speaking of social media, you have been killing it lately on social media. It's hashtags, where's Nicky Bascom, and you've also been doing a series of videos around, and we're going to start seeing more of those. Here's one of those videos.

[Nikki Bascome Election Video Plays]

You're just getting started. Nicky Bascom laying down the, laying, laying it down.

Nikki Bascome

Just kidding. You haven't seen nothing

Reuel Sample

But you have been, you have done it all in this area. are a Carolina Beach girl, born and bred there out on the beach and you run a very successful beach non -profit, Surfing for Healing. Am I

Nikki Bascome

Surfers Heal, it is Surfers Healing Autism Foundation. are

Reuel Sample

Surfers healing autism and you are extraordinarily connected with the community. And it's just amazing how you have stepped into this role of candidate for board of education, but it's almost natural for you. How has education changed here

New Hanover County, you've got kids that have been through the system that are in the system. What are the changes that you've seen, good or bad, that have prompted you to run for this position?

Nikki Bascome

You know what, our school district has grown so much, but one of the things that I remember growing up is there was a lot, and we talked about this on the last podcast, is the connection between teachers and parents knowing each other. You either went to church or you saw them at the baseball field.

Everybody knew everyone. There was a big connection in the community. And I feel like slowly but surely that's been unraveled. I think COVID was a huge part of it.

there was during COVID, was a huge us against them war that was perpetuated through social media. And I feel like the parents were not happy with the schools, taking it out on the teachers. The teachers were not happy with parents taking it out on parents. And no one was talking to each other anymore. think I don't ever remember politics ever being an issue in our schools. I ever remember when my first two children went through the school district, you didn't know if a teacher was a Republican, a Democrat, who they were voting for, who they weren't voting for. I think social media has really damaged those relationships. And I think it's the loud people, it's the keyboard warriors on social media who have really perpetuated this and made it really hard to navigate and made it really hard to come back together. And it's also made it really hard for good, honest and true people to jump into the political arena and do the right thing.

Reuel Sample

It is tough to get good teachers in the schools.

Nikki Bascome

Hmm, yes.

Reuel Sample

Why aren't people teaching? Why aren't they? What are the things that are stopping good teachers to get into New Hanover County Schools?

Nikki Bascome

Well, I think across the board, well, one thing everyone keeps saying that the teacher pay is too low. They keep talking about the disrespect there's in our school district in particular. I keep hearing there's no discipline in the schools and.

Honestly, I haven't spoken to the thousands of teachers and admins that are out there. There are a lot. I wish I could, but I can't. I can go off of what I hear in my school. I can go off of what people have contacted me with, and I can go off of that climate survey that says the same things that I've been saying since January, which means that the people I'm talking to are hitting the mark. They know what's going on. They see that discipline is issue. They see that the pay is the issue. They see that the disrespect and they're not trusted to do their jobs. Just like this curriculum issue. I mean, they went to school. They know curriculum. They know age -appropriate practices and this curriculum is giving them that. It's not doing what they need it to do and our children are just going to start falling behind. It's not building on the foundations that they need to get into third and fourth grade where we're going to start doing those end of grade testings. It's going to be almost impossible.

Reuel Sample

You're not just making this up. A Pew research report dated April of 2024 says that about half of U .S. adults say that the country's public K -12 education system is generally going in the wrong direction. Is that this is not just a new Hanover County thing. This is going on all across the

So what can we do about it? When you get into that boardroom come next year, you cannot wait. What are the things immediately on your plate?

Nikki Bascome

I immediately as I want to start building those connections again with the families and with the teachers. I don't think a lot of people realize one thing that Faust did do right, and I'm not sure if he did this or if it was his office that did it, but in October they started a family advisory council that met once a month during the school year and there was a representative from every single school and it was me as active as I am in the schools. It was really amazing to hear from parents of other schools and to get me outside of that bubble and to about where all the fundings are, the four different buckets that things come from, the way that our grants are used. It's so easy to get on this platform and say, the county commissioners need to fund our schools. Well, it comes from a lot of different places.

And until I was in this family advisory council, I didn't understand it. It is super important. I hope New Hanover County Schools continues this family advisory council and I hope it grows. And I would hope that that people can see what's going on from a different side of it. And I hope that we can grow one with teachers and maybe one day have the teachers and the parents come together.

I could say I would want it to be recorded, but I know there's a lot of conversations and a lot of questions that would not be brought up and would not be asked if it was being recorded. But definitely something like minutes being these are the questions. These are the issues that were brought up and here's the possible solutions. Just like wit and wisdom, everyone keeps screaming. it's gotta go. The curriculum has to go. But then what? Where do we go from there?

Reuel Sample

So it's, yeah, you threw, just threw out something that a lot of people might not know. What is wit and wisdom other than what, you know, we're examples of wit and wisdom on this podcast, but what is wit and wisdom in relation to the New Hanover County Schools?

Nikki Bascome

It is our literacy curriculum.

Reuel Sample

Okay, keep going. you and I, as we were talking about this, is that the school district had to pick out from a variety of sources these curriculums, and they only had about two hours to review them each. Am I remembering our conversation?

Nikki Bascome

Yes. So there were multiple curriculums that were presented to teachers. So if you hear that Witten Wisdom and our literacy curriculum was chosen by teachers, it was under complete duress. They did not have the time to go through the complete curriculum. So they chose what they thought would be the best.

And as they started going through it. let's also include that not only did they not have time to go through it, but then it was just the rusted upon them and they were trying, they were playing catch up. were behind the eight ball.

had to have literacy coaches come in and help them get through the curriculum. And it's so, this is what breaks my heart. Reuel, do you have a teacher that you just remember because of something they said or something they did or their personality just came shining through and just.

Reuel Sample

Many of them, yes.

Nikki Bascome

Or they saw that you were struggling and they spent just a little bit of extra time connecting to you or connecting to the parents or whatever it may be. Well, this curriculum is so scripted teachers don't have any way to make those personal connections. They don't have any way that their personality comes out where they can touch the child. And I'm not talking about indoctrination. I'm talking about helping this child excel, helping this child build the foundations of literacy that they need to be successful later on. And the teachers aren't able to do that. And they're given a certain amount of time to meet this curriculum, to meet this lesson and then move on. It doesn't matter if all the kids have met the goal. It doesn't matter. We have to move on. And that's.

Reuel Sample

So the goal of each day, the goal of the curriculum is not education, learning a particular topic. It's check off the box. I've covered this topic here and whether they...

Nikki Bascome

And I said these were, I said the script perfectly and whether the children understood it or not, I don't have time to cover that because we've got to move on. We just have to move on. And it might not be that in every classroom, but I've been trying to reach out to as many teachers that are welcoming.

there are any teachers that want to tell me that I'm completely off base, feel free. I'll give you my phone number. I'll give you my email address. Talk to me. Tell me what's going on because the way I believe it and the way that I see it, the school board is supposed to be making policies to help education and the people that are doing the education are the teachers and the staff. And if we're not supporting you and your job,

What are we doing? What are we doing?

Reuel Sample (19:40)

When I was going to school and when I was actually teaching at the college level is that my goal was not to necessarily complete the book to my students. what does that sound?

Nikki Bascome (19:54)

Do you hear that?

Reuel Sample (19:55)

I do hear that.

Nikki Bascome (19:57)

That's my husband opening the garage underneath us.

Reuel Sample (20:00)

Welcome home!

Nikki Bascome (20:06)

We are actually, we have a detached garage from the house that is my art studio and my husband has his work garage underneath. And I guess he forgot that I was up here, but that was the garage door under my feet. Sorry. Life happens all the time.

Reuel Sample (20:11)

Mm -hmm.

That is just fine. That is just fine. Life happens even on podcasts. So my point is this is that, is that it used to be education. The goal of education was to increase understanding and thinking. And so whether you get through a particular chapter or particular curriculum was secondary to getting across an understanding of a particular topic.

And maybe there's time you would need to explore that topic further. Or if they cover it quickly, just go on to the next one if there's understanding. And the modern approach to education does not keep that in mind, it seems like. It's all about checking in the boxes. I've said these words, I've done it this way. And congratulations, I've taught.

Nikki Bascome (21:12)

It doesn't.

And also some something else that if you haven't been in a class and I'm not saying that everyone needs to go into a classroom to understand you don't you can be a parent and you can see it but as a teacher during your day there's all of these small teachable moments and and if you've had if you've had any background in education you know what I'm saying when I say there's teachable moments

a child hits one child. That's a teachable moment. Someone said, you know, picks out just one little phrase in a book and you start talking to them about it. That's off script, that's off cricket. It's a teachable moment and we're taking that away. Unfortunately, that's a lot of where we're teaching our children.

how to interact with other people is these small teachable moments and figuring out are you okay?

are you catching up with everyone else? Are you learning what you're supposed to be learning? But we're not, we're taking away all of those teachable moments to the point that it doesn't matter if you're okay. It doesn't matter if you're catching up. It doesn't matter. And I think it's just, it's sad for the teachers, but it's also the parents are starting to notice now.

Reuel Sample (22:38)

Bye!

I've got to think that teachers who are really dedicated to their craft and teaching really is a craft. There's not a science to teaching, it is an art form, it's a craft that the really good ones are really frustrated by this approach to education that you've got to check the boxes, which leads to frustration in other places.

Nikki Bascome (23:13)

something that I was talking to a former teacher. She was 30 years in our school district and I was talking to her about it and I said, you know what? I don't have all of the answers. It's not my job as a school member to have all of the answers. It's my job to listen and let's come together and let's talk about

know, Witton Wisdom's not working, but where do we go from here? You know, all of these teachers know how to write, or at least they learned how to write curriculum in college. Do you want to write your own curriculum? Do we look for other curriculum? What are you looking for? How can we support that process? But let's come up with some solutions. Let's not just

Let's not just rely on the climate survey and say, the climate survey said this, and I think we need to go in this direction. Let's talk about it. Let's find some solutions and not just one. Let's come up with multiple solutions because there's thousands of staff members. You're not going to please everyone. And you notice in the climate survey, there's multiple teachers that say that the curriculum is fine. You know, it took a little getting used to and they're okay with it.

And there's going to be those teachers out there. Maybe those are the ones that become our coaches that mentor other teachers to help them come up the way. But let's

talk about it. Let's not get into keyboard wars and degrade each other. Let's figure out what we need to do to move forward and to do what's best for our children. I don't

the children today not doing well on EOGs two years ago, two years from now because we screwed up on this curriculum. Let's figure out a solution and go forward.

Reuel Sample (24:58)

Multiple children have multiple gifts and multiple talents. And one of the big things that have come up is the role and the necessity of vocational training and vocational education. What does training in the trades play in a Nikki Bascome board of

Nikki Bascome

I love this. I wish we got back to home ec and I love the fact

Reuel Sample

I'm sorry, for those of you who are Gen Zs and possibly millennials, home ec or home economics is when you spend an entire semester in a kitchen or in a sewing room or whatever as part of a class. it was required for when I was in school. And so that's home ec.

Nikki Bascome

Workshop. We have a friend that lives down the street that has a huge garage. He loves tinkering with cars, antique cars, and he owns a business outside of auto mechanics, but he realized a lot of his new staff members, they were all young.

They didn't know how to change an oil or change a tire or do anything like that. So what he does on his weekends is he invites the staff to his home and he teaches them how to change the oil, change a tire, change a spark plug, change your windshield wiper. I think these are things we need to know how to write a check. I mean, I forgot how to write a check for a while.

I mean, there might come a day that you need to write a check. These are life skills. It's not, and it doesn't mean that they have to go out and that's gonna be their career, but at least let them explore it. I wish I would have paid attention in my home economics class because when I came out of high school and college, I was the worst cook ever.

If it was not microwavable, Nikki was not making it.

I couldn't sew it was no that was not me but you you fast forward to now where I was a stay at home mom I was actually a single mom for a while with two children and I had an in-home childcare facility I had to learn to do a lot of things on my own I to learn how to drain the water heater because it was getting clogged I did it I learned how to mow the grass and now I am an amazing cook to point that my kids don't even ask for Burger King, Taco Bell, they don't ask for that stuff anymore. They're like, Mom, can you make this? Can you make that? I'm like, let's go. And I know how to sew now. I wish I would have known those things when I was younger. wish I would have known learn those things. High school, college, and it doesn't mean that I was going to go out and be a seamstress for the rest of my life, but at least I had those skills and I think it teaches you a different way of life and a resilience. It teaches you. I think self confidence. You don't have to ask anyone for help. You can rely on yourself. You can do it yourself and I think that's something that our our kids really need. They need that self confidence boost, look what I did, look what I built, look what I can do. We need those things. It's not just the academic world. It's teaching them to go out into the community and be a good person to live.

In a world where you have resilience and you can, you don't have to lean on someone else and maybe even you can help someone else and just be good citizens, good stewards of our world. I think that's what high school needs to be about, not just the academics. We have time for that too. But teaching real world things.

Reuel Sample

Not every person can go to college. Not every person should go to college. Not every person should go and devote tech. You don't want me welding. I did welding in shop class. You don't want me welding. It's that if you have to rely upon my welding, you're done. You might as well just buy something new. every person, that's really, of the goals of an education system is helping kids find out who they are. Find out what they want to do in life and take the time to discover their God-given talents. And then the education system comes in and reinforces those talents, challenges those talents. And we've often failed our kids to do

Nikki Bascome

It's, I feel, I feel like we've become babysitters in the school system. Just get through your day, you get through your day, you're alive, you're clean, you're well. I think that that's what, I don't know, that's what I felt like for a while.

And I think I lost you. My computer keeps saying that it's reloading.

Reuel Sample

No, I've got you. You're slowing down a little bit, but with your schedule, you should probably slow down a little

Nikki Bascome

I need to slow down. Maybe, but I love, you know what I love? I love New Hanover County. I've moved away multiple times. I went away to college, but I always land right back here. I love New Hanover County. I've met maybe a handful of people that I'm like. not going to be my friend but I don't hate you and I'm not going to talk bad about you. But overall I just I love this community and I want to give back to it in any way that I can. I do say I'm the perpetual volunteer. I did have to read a book. There is a book called The Best Yes and I've read it twice and it talks about saying no and saving the best of yourself for your best yes. I'd like to say that every yes is my best yes and I still haven't figured out how to say no. But maybe one day I'll figure it out. We'll see.

Reuel Sample

So, Nikki, you are one of three Republican candidates running for school board. You are out there talking to people. are out there getting to know once again, your community using your incredible talents to convince people about your vision for the New Hanover County Schools. First off, how can people get get to know you more, what's your website and your Facebook, how can people find out more about

Nikki Bascome

So my website is [www .nickie4schools .com](http://www.nickie4schools.com). That's N -I -K -K -I, the number four, schools .com. also have a phone number that I'm not afraid for people to text. It's better to text me. I'm probably not going to answer the phone. I'd love a text to say, hey, I'm so and so from this school and I would love to tell you that you're completely wrong. I'm

fine with that. Tell me I'm wrong. I'm a big girl. I can handle it. OK, I'm wrong. So let's come together. Let's talk.

But my phone number is 704 -682 -5133 704 -682 -5133 and on Facebook, oh gosh, I think it's Nikki for Nikki Bascom for school board for New Hanover County School Board. I would have to assume so. And I started that hashtag of where's Nikki because someone made a comment that I was hiding from the public and

I am everywhere. or at least my car. The mileage of my car says I'm everywhere and if I keep spending money on this gas, my husband's going to have my head. But I I go everywhere. I take pictures of everything that I'm doing. I'm taxi for my kids just because I'm not engaging in.

Social media keyboard wars does not mean I'm hiding from anyone. I would rather have a face -to -face conversation than a keyboard war. don't think keyboard wars are not helping our district. They're not bringing any any solutions to the table whatsoever and they're not helping our staff or our children or our families and they're not helping anyone feel better about our future and that's what we need to start working on.

Reuel Sample

Election campaigns are not cheap, especially today in New Hanover County in North Carolina, where we are a battleground state. The Democrats are pouring a lot of money in our county and in our state. So how can people help you financially?

Nikki Bascome

If you go to [www .nickie4schools .com](http://www.nickie4schools.com) at the very top there's a donate button. I also have, I don't think I have any around here. look, here is, can you see that?

Reuel Sample

I can't see it well.

Nikki Bascome

Aw man, I do have koozies that I'm handing out to everyone and on the backside, I'll drop some off at the GOP office, but on the backside of my koozies there's a QR code that goes straight to my donation page. I would

if you can and no amount is too small don't think just because you're not able to give a hundred dollars that it's not going to help twenty five dollars every once in a while and I I've lived here my whole life challenge five of your friends to get to know me and if they don't like me they don't have to donate but if they do like me donate twenty five dollars say hey I challenge you

And if everyone that I know challenges just five people to reach out and say hello to me or find me out in the public, why don't you volunteer with me a day? Come on, come out to the pool, come out to wherever I am for the day, come out to Surfers Healing Autism Foundation. I'd love to have you come on out and get to know me, see what I do. And then if you don't like me,

It's okay. I'm alright with that. I'm doing my best and that's all I can do.

Reuel Sample

She's doing her best and she's just getting started. Nikki Bascom for New Hanover County Board of Education. All the best for you. We're going to be talking with you a few more times throughout this whole election season. I know you're very busy, but thank you for coming on and best of luck. And I can't wait to talk to you

Nikki Bascome

Thank you, Reuel. I really appreciate it.