

# WESTLAKE GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL PARENT BOARD ELECTION (18 MONTH TERM) CANDIDATE PROFILES

## GIRI, Sujata



My name is Sujata Giri, and I am seeking re-election to the Board of Trustees for Westlake Girls High School. I have been fortunate to be part of the Board for the last 2 years, working alongside dedicated educators and fellow board members in supporting the success and wellbeing of our students. I live in the local community and my daughter is currently in Year 12. Professionally I bring over two decades of experience in Finance, Operations and IT. This background has enabled me to contribute to initiatives that strengthen academic outcomes, enhance student and staff wellbeing, and ensure responsible stewardship of school resources. My approach has always been guided by transparency, and collaboration to build strong communication. I am proud of what the current Board have achieved. Some of the highlights, include:

- Upgrading of the schools IT infrastructure.
- Strengthening Financial oversight of school funding and resources.
- Increased funding for student support services, including counselling and learning support.
- Promoting a safe, inclusive school culture based on Westlake's core values, and upholding behavioural expectations.

I have a deep respect for the diverse voices within our community and nurturing this throughout our school to ensure everyone can thrive and discover their potential. I am also thrilled to see our students' successes across academic, sporting, music, and cultural activities. If re-elected I am committed to:

- Advocating for inclusive and future-focused curriculum development.
- Continued support for staff and student wellbeing initiatives.
- Strengthening communication between the board and the community.
- Ensuring fiscal responsibility and strategic planning for long-term success.
- Supporting long-term investment in school resources and updated facilities.

Westlake Girls High School is a place of excellence, and I am eager to continue contributing to its vibrant future. I welcome the opportunity to serve again and work with our community to uphold the values that make Westlake Girls High School exceptional. Thank you for your consideration.

## JOHNS, Heather



As a parent of two daughters, one currently in Year 9 at Westlake Girls and the other soon to join in the future, I am committed to supporting their educational journey. I have always been an active participant in their school lives, attending events and volunteering whenever possible. My flexible job has allowed me to stay involved, ensuring I can give my time to their development and the school community. For the last six years, I served as a parent representative on the Manuka Primary School Board, where I gained valuable insights into the workings of a school board and how to foster a positive school environment. During this time, I also served as secretary, honing my skills in minute-taking and communication. Until recently, I ran a small dance school for eight years, where I handled both administration and teaching until a physical injury prevented me from continuing. This experience has equipped me with strong organisational and leadership skills, as well as a deep understanding of balancing multiple responsibilities. I am eager to bring my experience, commitment, and passion for education to the Westlake Girls Board, working collaboratively to ensure all students have the opportunity to excel.

## PEARSON, Steven



I am writing to express my interest in serving on the Board of Trustees at Westlake Girls High School. With a strong commitment to learning and a passion for fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment, I am eager to contribute my skills and experience to the governance of the school. I have two daughters attending Westlake Girls High School: Ava, who is in Year 13, and Delaney, who is in Year 11. As a dedicated professional with a background in the construction sector, I bring knowledge and experience in managing high-performing teams, strategic planning, and growing people. My experience as General Manager for Woods Glass, working on some of the largest commercial construction projects across the country, has equipped me with the ability to navigate complex challenges, make informed decisions, and collaborate effectively with a diverse range of stakeholders. I have a passion for growing people, and through my role as General Manager at Woods Glass, we have put 27 of our Kapa through apprenticeships in the last 5 years. I initiated a gateway relationship with One Tree Hill College that resulted in three of the students receiving apprenticeships in the first year. Through this relationship, we were a foundation sponsor of the One Tree Hill College Trades Academy project, which involved the deep retrofit of a 1970s state home renovated to meet a Homestar 7 rating, the first of its kind completed by secondary school students in NZ. The project received the sustainability award at the 2025 glass and glazing awards, which we are very proud to have contributed to. This experience has reinforced my belief in the importance of providing young people with opportunities to develop their skills and achieve their potential. In addition to my professional qualifications, I played premier cricket for over 15 years, representing Auckland at the provincial level. I am currently a committee member of the Movenber Sports Club supporting men's mental health and a member of The North Harbour Club, which provides financial support for high-performing young people in the North Harbour area. My experience in high-performance teams has taught me the importance of discipline, resilience, and collaboration, and how closely these qualities align with success in business and life in general. I am confident that my ability to build strong relationships and my dedication to being a supportive team member will be valuable assets to the Board. Sincerely, Steven Pearson

## SINGH, Royleen



I'm standing for the Board because I care deeply about Westlake's continued success. As the parent of a thriving and involved Year 11 student, I've seen first-hand what makes this school special. I'd like to contribute to its future, helping ensure it remains academically and culturally rigorous, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of a changing world. Professionally I serve as Corporate Sales and Design Manager at a New Zealand-owned, multi-generational manufacturer and I bring a strong understanding of how schools operate. In my role, I lead the school sector of the company, working closely with schools across the country, from state to private to integrated, alongside their leadership teams, boards, alumni, and wider communities. This experience has shown me how schools manage competing priorities, navigate change, and stay focused on what matters most: the students. In addition, I am the Co-founder of a start-up Design and Digital Strategy Studio that works with small businesses and purpose-driven organisations to help our clients communicate clearly, build strong brands, and navigate growth through thoughtful, strategic design. My formal background is in fine arts and design, which laid the foundation for how I approach visual communication and problem-solving. That's been strengthened by years of hands-on experience across branding, strategy, and creative leadership, giving me the tools to tackle complex challenges with both structure and creativity. With a perspective shaped by a diverse set of experiences, I understand the importance of inclusive thinking at the decision-making table. I'm committed to ensuring that every student at Westlake feels supported, seen, and equipped to succeed, regardless of their background, learning style, or personal circumstance. Thoughtful governance plays a vital role in shaping a school's long-term success. Our daughters are growing up in a complex world; they need an education that prepares them to meet it with confidence, empathy, and courage. It would be an honour to support that mission as a member of the Board.

## SLIERENDRECHT, Scott



Kia ora, Kia Ora Koutou As a senior leader in the retail sector and a proud Māori parent at Westlake I would like to put myself forward for the board because I believe in strong leadership, inclusive education, and supporting the success of all students and our wahine toa. With years of experience in managing large teams and strategic operations, I bring practical governance skills, a collaborative mindset, and a deep commitment to our fostering school community. I'm passionate about ensuring our kura reflects the values and aspirations of all whānau. I'd be honored to contribute to the continued growth and excellence of our wahine at Westlake. Ngā mihi Scott Slierendrecht

## WITANA, Darius



Tēnā koutou katoa, ko Darius Witana tōku ingoa. Ki te taha o tōku pāpā, no Te Aupōuri. Ki te taha o tōku māmā, no Ngāpuhi. No Te Tai Tokerau ahau, engari no Te Raki Paewhenua tōku kāinga noho. My wife Tracey and I have lived on the North Shore for the past 25 years. After leaving the far north to go to uni, our 3 kids have grown up here attending schools within our Pupuke Kahui Ako, Westlake Boys, Westlake Girls and Sunnynook Primary. As a parent and active member of our community I've been part of the Sunnynook Primary board of trustees since 2020. I have enjoyed the challenge of this role, supporting the school, kaiako, ākonga and our community. I'm proud of the great work our board has done and continues to do. Guided by principles of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, I believe in building strong relationships, showing respect to all, and ensuring all ākonga feel valued and supported. I'm grateful to be able to give my time to our community, and over the last six years I have taken both the Sunnynook Primary and Wairau Intermediate kapa haka groups. Seeing these amazing ākonga flourish to become confident young people is more than a highlight. I enjoy working together to create a safe and inclusive environment to support the success of every ākonga, whānau and kaiako within our schools. Taking the learnings from these experiences, along with my skills and knowledge I'm ready to bring these to the table to ensure our kids have every opportunity to thrive and be the best they can be.

## DU PLESSIS, Christian



I'm Christian du Plessis, a regional operations manager, former high school teacher, and ex-director of sport. I bring leadership, accountability, and a passion for student success. I'm committed to supporting Westlake Girls to thrive—ensuring every student has the opportunity to reach her full potential.

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