

**UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
CANDIDATE QUESTIONS**

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1. Describe the qualifications and experiences you would bring to the State Board of Education and how they would be an asset to the work of the Board.

I feel that I bring a unique set of qualifications and experiences to the State Board of Education. My view on education stems in large part to my childhood. I grew up in a family that highly regarded education. My dad was a professor of law and religion at BYU and my mom taught art education at BYU. We learned early on the value of a good education. Later on, my dad served as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. I remember well the challenges he faced while trying to support a high quality education for Utah school children while dealing with limited resources and competing interests of stakeholders. At the age of 14, my father passed away in a tragic accident. Shortly after his passing, my mom returned for a doctorate degree in order to secure her job and provide for her family. I watched my mom live on limited sleep while teaching full time and working on her degree, as well as raising seven children. These were difficult years, but I learned a lot from them. In addition, I saw the passion my mom had about providing a solid teaching foundation for her students as they became art teachers in the Utah public schools.

I attended BYU and received my degree in Political Philosophy. I enjoyed philosophy because it required you to think through difficult issues with a variety of possible solutions. I often found myself taking the opposite side of my initial perspective just to understand the entire issue better. During my undergraduate, I completed an internship in Washington DC for Congressman Ernest Istook from Oklahoma. Working in Washington again taught me the importance of seeking a variety of different perspectives before making a decision. I also realized the importance of looking at the end goal of whatever bill was being discussed and not getting caught up in rhetoric that could distract from the ultimate objective. During my undergraduate, I began my entrepreneurial pursuits. I started a web development and web marketing firm. I realized the power and opportunity that the internet could provide for a business or organization. After graduation, I joined an early stage technology startup company where I was the first official employee. I helped grow the company to over 20 employees before deciding to start my own company. With two roommates, I started a leather manufacturing company. I personally funded the company using credit cards and was able to grow the business from the ground up. I learned a great deal about manufacturing, particularly with the challenges of competing with China. By utilizing technology and being innovative, we were able to build a very successfully company. We sold our products through over 1000 stores throughout the US, Canada and Japan and sold our products in the promotional space to companies like Disney, HBO, Lockheed Martin, Universal, etc. During this period I also decided to get involved in real estate. I obtained my license and began helping investors purchase and sell real estate. After reading in our local newspaper that there was an opening on the city council, I decided to jump into politics. I ran against seven other candidates, many of whom had been actively involved in the city, and won by the largest margin ever in our city. I was also the youngest to ever be elected. I believe my success was a result of understanding the goals and needs in our city and by providing clear objectives on how to achieve them.

During this period, I decided to sell my company to pursue my MBA, something I had always wanted to do. I chose BYU due in large part to the emphasis on

entrepreneurship. During my MBA, I was selected as a member of Cougar Capital, a student run venture capital and private equity fund. We made investments in many companies, some of which have since gone public and provided significant returns to the fund. I learned the investment process and the importance of finding ideas that could be truly disruptive and provide a high return on investment. During my MBA, I worked for USTAR as a Venture Analyst and for vSpring Capital as a Portfolio Consultant. In both, I worked closely with local Utah companies on business development, fundraising, financial modeling and strategy. After graduation, I took a job with Credit Suisse in San Francisco as a Private Banker. I worked on a team that managed over \$1.5 billion in assets. After two years, we decided it was time to move back to Utah. I was recruited by Key Bank in their Private Bank where I currently work as an Investment Solutions Specialist. I lead a team of investment professionals on all aspects of wealth management, including trust and estate planning, financial planning, tax planning, credit and banking needs and investment management. I also currently serve on several boards including the Utah Valley University Foundation Board, Hale Centre Theatre, LaunchUp (a group focused on helping entrepreneurs succeed), ConnectShare and the Saratoga Springs Planning Commission.

I believe my background will help the school board in several ways. For one, my entrepreneurial and technology background will bring a unique perspective on how we can help make our school systems more efficient. I believe I will bring innovative ideas on how we can utilize technology more effectively. With my political experience, I bring a background of dealing with very complex issues. This was particularly the case while serving on the city council during the recent market correction. Like many other cities, our city faced significant challenges when the housing market declined. Because we were a small city that was rapidly growing, we were hit particularly hard. We faced a decline of over 30% in city revenue, requiring us to make many difficult decisions. We had to make many cuts, including laying off a number of employees and cutting back on many amenities. Although politically difficult, we made the right choices and were able to put our city back on the right financial footing. As a result of our efforts, our city now has one of the highest bond ratings of any city in Utah. Throughout the process, I kept in constant communication with the public. I spent many nights up late responding to emails and phone calls. Often these conversations would begin with a very angry resident. By the end, I was able to help them understand the issue better and listen to their concerns. Even though we may not have agreed in the end, I believe we left on good terms and a mutual understanding. With my finance and investment background, I believe I can help ensure we are fiscally responsible.

In summary, I feel that my background and experiences, combined with my education and skills, will bring a unique and valuable contribution to the State Board of Education.

2. Name three key things you would like to accomplish as a member of the State Board of Education.
  1. I feel that we need to be more innovative in the way that we provide education to our students. Through the use of technology, there are new alternatives to our current system that can enhance their educational experience, as well as provide lower cost solutions
  2. We need to find ways to incentivize teachers and districts to hold students to higher accountability.

3. With my experience in the finance, investments and entrepreneurship, I hope to find ways to create more financially efficient means in delivering our education.
  
3. What do you think are the two biggest issues or challenges facing public education in the state of Utah? Why?
  1. I believe our biggest challenge facing public education in the state of Utah is that we have large families with many students and limited resources to support these students. We need innovative approaches to make more out of our limited resources. This includes utilizing technology and alternative strategies for educating our students.
  2. I believe our second biggest issue facing public education (which ties in to the first) is preparing our children for not only a national competitive landscape, but international competition from emerging economies like China and India. With the increase in globalization and the improvement in technology making globalization more seamless, it is more important than ever for our education system to produce the best and brightest to compete on an international level.
  
4. Describe the efforts you would make to communicate with your constituents and bring all stakeholders (state board, local boards, legislature, educators, parents) together to enhance public education.

I believe that open dialogue is critical in any public capacity. As a City Council member, transparency and openness were my highest priorities. As such, I spent a significant amount of time engaging with the various stake holders in our city (residents, developers, state legislators, etc). I was an early adopter of utilizing social media tools like blogs, twitter, facebook, etc. Even when residents disagreed with my positions, they felt that they were listened to. I plan to continue to utilize online tools, as well as directly interact with the various stakeholders. I plan on attending local district meetings, as well as other events to interact with educators, parents and the legislature.

5. What would you do to improve the academic preparation of students as well as their transition to higher education or other post-high-school training?

As a member of the Foundation Board for Utah Valley University, I'm aware of the challenges that we face in getting our students prepared for post-high-school training. I believe it is critical that we set a high standard for our students to ensure they are capable of handling the rigor of further education. I feel it is also important for teachers, working alongside parents, to help our students understand the need and importance of further education. I also believe that working with private groups, such as the Keys to Success and Junior Achievement, can help in providing goals and incentives to encourage students to reach for higher educational goals.