

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

2012

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.

My experiences as a student, a parent, and an educator have prepared me to represent constituents of district 12 on the State School Board.

As a student, my educational experiences were very broad. During K-12 years I attended public schools, private schools, and home school. This gave me an open mind about education and taught me firsthand that there are many ways to achieve desired educational goals.

As a parent I have seen the positive difference that dedicated teachers make. I have seen how frustrating and inefficient their work becomes when their hands are tied by excessive legislation and how brilliantly they teach when they are encouraged to do their best and given the tools to do so.

As an educational administrator in higher education, I work with students every day who are unprepared for college. I am concerned about growing numbers of students who lack basic competencies, not just for college, but for life. My professional expertise is in learning assistance—understanding college readiness and student success issues, assessment and strategic planning, and student support factors. This background gives me a unique perspective on K-12 issues.

2. Name three key things you would like to accomplish as a member of the State Board of Education.

One, while I believe the State Board of Education is a good example of transparency and open government, I would like to see stronger communication regarding decisions made and the thought behind the decisions. I would like to create a more robust open dialogue between the State Board and all stakeholders.

Two, I would like to develop meaningful assessment that puts students' best interests first. Assessment is always a complex and challenging endeavor, especially given all the variables involved in K-12 education. I would like to see broad assessment that allows educators to meet individual needs of students in multi-faceted ways while maintaining high academic standards.

Three, I would support efforts to empower parents to be the best advocates and decision-makers for their children's education. The most successful students are those who have engaged, proactive parents. Inviting parents to be active partners in their children's education in significant ways greatly increases the success of that individual child, and exponentially, the success of the school and the state of Utah.

3. What do you think are the two biggest issues or challenges facing public education in the state of Utah? Why?

*Number one, lack of funding. The lowest per-pupil spending in the country?** We have a problem here in Utah. Obviously this is outside the scope of the State Board of Education, but as a member of the board I will be a loud and active advocate for increased funding for education. It is naïve in the extreme to ignore the connection between poor educational outcomes and lack of funding, yet that seems to be the pattern of the state legislature.

Two, apathy. Parents give up when they feel their voices are not heard. Teachers burn out when they feel their hands are tied and their efforts unappreciated. Students stop caring when they are forced into cookie-cutter molds that don't teach to their needs. If this is to change we have to prove these perceptions wrong by listening to parents, working closely with teachers, and providing options for students.

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.

First and foremost, I would use technology. Specifically, I would maintain a website, blog, facebook page, twitter, and email list to communicate regularly with all interested stakeholders. I would use these tools to solicit feedback as well, through poll & survey resources in blogger and facebook. It would be a high priority to me to regularly visit schools and hold open houses with parents & educators. The most important component of communication is listening. Seeking, listening, and acting on input from constituents is the only way I could do the job.

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?

I would look to research-based best practices in determining what best prepares students for future life planning, including higher education and post-K-12 schooling. I would favor clear, attainable outcomes and allowing teachers flexibility in how to reach them. Lack of preparedness for college is a growing problem in Utah. Solutions will only be found as all stakeholders share knowledge and ideas. I would work to facilitate that communication and coordination.

*<http://www2.census.gov/govs/school/07f33pub.pdf>