

**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.

I have a broad and varied background in engineering, business, charitable work, and entrepreneurialism, all of which would contribute to various aspects of the Board's responsibilities. In the professional engineering and financial realms, I have extensive experience in recruiting, personnel management, business development, financial management, relationship management, and the simultaneous oversight of highly differentiated projects. These professional experiences provide a basis for developing an informed, reasoned, and independent perspective on the myriad issues overseen by the Board. In the meantime, my project management experience emphasizes an ability to push forward multiple concurrent and interconnected initiatives, especially when interacting with the various stakeholders, including the legislature.

Additionally, my experience developing, managing, and growing scholarship and leadership based educational foundations provide exposure to educational outcomes, especially through scholarship and grant candidate evaluations. In conjunction with recruiting, this provides a very clear perspective of the quality of educational outcomes and the factors which motivate those outcomes.

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

Communication/Interaction with the General Public - One key objective is to increase communication with the general public. I've lived in multiple state school board districts over the years but don't remember ever receiving a proactive communication either directly from the Board in an official capacity or from a representative or candidate as part of a campaign, initiative, or individual outreach effort. I suspect that many members of the general public could not name the state school board district in which they reside, much less their corresponding representative, and often have only a vague sense of its existence and responsibilities. The central role of education in our lives and society makes this surprising - and disappointing. Accordingly, I'd work to proactively bring the Board to the general public, increasing communication and exposure within my district and its constituent communities (and inviting the same from the other members). A more concerted effort to encourage communication with voters and the general public would increase interest and participation in public education throughout our state.

Core Curriculum - A critical part of education is developing, implementing, and continually improving the core curriculum which become a student's academic foundation. Certainly, there are certain aspects to education which are inherently local and should remain local, just as the decision to implement a core curriculum - and the nature of that core - should remain a state decision. However, there remain core skills - in mathematics, sciences, and critical thinking, among others - which are essential to the competitiveness and long-term success of all students regardless of whether they live in Blanding, Logan, Cedar City, or Salt Lake City. The new "Common Core" standards move the state in the right direction. I'd take an active role both in encouraging and

supporting the implementation of the common core in our educational system as well as continuous improvement of those standards for future generations.

Infrastructure - My professional engineering background inevitably results in an interest in buildings and environments. Capital infrastructure, next to our educators, is the single largest asset of any school district and the learning environment in which our students invest years of their lives. In working with numerous schools and districts around the country, I know opportunities exist to improve these environments, sometimes with limited capital investment. My professional background would allow me to serve as a highly effective point of contact for leading efforts to identify, develop, and lobby for investment in these opportunities. I'd couple this with a focus on working with the legislature and school districts to develop long-term capital improvement programs, especially where capital investment may allow us to reinvest long-term savings back into our educational system.

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

Funding - Inevitably, the government's resources are limited and though education is critical to our society it is not the state's sole commitment. As a result, funding will always be a point of contention in public education. However, educational quality is not simply a matter of increasing absolute resources but also a function of how effectively we use those limited resources. In addition to sufficient funding, we must also seek continual improvement towards - and innovative ideas about - maximizing the effectiveness of available education funding. In fact, this effort may be even more important than simply pursuing increased funding since, in the public eye, it is the prerequisite to a greater willingness to invest in education on the merits. In continually demonstrating that education funds are being utilized to their fullest potential benefit, we develop the strongest possible argument for additional absolute funding to present to the legislature and ultimately to taxpayers.

Institutionalizing the Common Core - Institutionalizing a core curriculum into any system is challenging, especially when doing so is fraught with potential misunderstandings, limited communications, and sometimes even misplaced fears. In many cases, these concerns can be addressed through intensive communication. In addition, there are practical questions about evaluation, progress, methodology, etc., which will need to be addressed but will always be part of an ongoing process. However, core standards are ultimately the cornerstone to a solid academic foundation, a competitive student population, and a rigorous academic environment. It then becomes a matter of continually educating various stakeholders of the advantages and necessity of doing so to encourage implementation - and ultimately entrenchment - of core standards in our educational system.

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.

My approach to increasing communication with stakeholders would begin with a concerted effort to create a more proactive public presence by attending district events specifically as a representative of the Board - neighborhood and community meetings, local school board meetings, meetings at individual schools, perhaps even occasional district town hall sessions. Ideally, it would be possible to do these in conjunction with

legislators to present an active face of government. The objective is to both educate the general public about the Board and open new direct lines of communication through personal connections with constituents. In doing so, the Board would become more accessible to the general public who may then feel more comfortable approaching board members with questions, comments, or observations. Ideally, providing a regular annual or semi-annual mailer to constituents in the district to discuss education matters would be a next step, but given the potential cost and impersonal nature, building personal connections is the best initial approach.

However, we also should not forget the primary stakeholder in public education: the students. Of course, students themselves should not by any means drive the agenda, but their ideas and input are still important to have a comprehensive approach to managing and improving education in our state.

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've discussed the critical components of an academic foundation from which we can improve our students' academic preparation throughout these responses - implementing and continually improving core standards, maximizing the use of available education funding (and expanding funding where well justified), and creating the physical environments in which students can thrive. I've also discussed the challenges we will overcome in our path towards improving academic preparation and how my efforts will help overcome those challenges.

However, we also need to think innovatively in approaching the challenges we face, balancing our focus on short-term concerns with a vision and strategy for long-term improvement. It's critical, for example, to identify and retain our best potential educators, perhaps by developing a state funded loan program for future educators in our state's higher education institutions. In such a program, the best prospective future educators would receive loans which would be incrementally forgiven after graduation upon completing a certain number of years of service with a Utah school district. I'm also intrigued by approaches which would expand the pool of potential educators by drawing in others who may not have a background specifically in education, perhaps into professionally oriented programs for students, or which would cost effectively leverage quality across the state and across school districts. For example, Alabama's approach of using online education tools to bring the best educators to students in smaller or more remote school districts (which would otherwise struggle to attract and retain high quality educators in every subject).

Our current education system has yielded many excellent results, as reflected in rankings for college preparatory exams, but any system or organization, no matter the type, will benefit from continual development and improvement. The path and necessary experimentation will occasionally be disruptive and may not always be popular, but it is the best way to serve and improve our schools, our educators, and our students.