

**UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
CANDIDATE QUESTIONS**

Leslie Castle

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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.

In the past three years I have demonstrated my commitment to the State Board of Education as well as to the education program in this state by working hard to be consistently prepared for my duties and responsibilities. I have only missed one monthly State Board and only one monthly Advisory Council (AC) meeting for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (USDB) in the past 3 years.

I am a parent of children who have attended Charter School, district schools and private schools. I have consistently volunteered in those venues and I am still working as a volunteer. I am a strong supporter of parents' and students' right to have a choice in the setting of their education.

I am an active member of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). In 2011 I was a member of the national study group, Gearing Up: Creating a systemic Approach to Teacher Effectiveness. This year I am a member of the national study group looking at the problems and solutions associated with introducing technology in to the public school system.

I have worked in the system of higher education as a clinical faculty advisor at the University Of Utah College Of Nursing.

I am passionate believer in public education. I believe that a democratic republic depends on public education in order to exist. I can be out-spoken, articulate and brave when I have to defend the system.

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

I would like to continue my work on the issues that surround teacher effectiveness. I would like to see the principles of Promises to Keep fairly distributed among ALL students, especially those who are poor, ethnic minorities and children with disabilities. This would include, but is not limited to, my work with USDB. I would like to make improvements in the UPAAC process that will bring more consistency and predictability to the disciplinary process.

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

The Common Core Standards implementation is going to be one of the biggest issues and challenges in the next few months and years. There is worry and misunderstanding in the public about these standards. We have important work to do to understand and address the public's concerns as well as the coming process of implementation.

Teacher effectiveness is a big concern of mine because teachers are the "center of the universe in education". There is work to be done in the areas of rigorous selection process, rigorous and relevant curriculum for education programs, appropriate clinical experience, induction and mentoring, professional development, incentive strategies, and a fair and effective evaluation system. This dovetails nicely with the work I have been involved in with the NASBE study group.

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.

In the past three years I have worked to communicate with my constituents and stakeholders by:

Attending my district board meetings

Contacting my superintendents regularly and before every board meeting

Contacting my district board members and local legislators to solicit their input and keep them informed

Arranging meetings with local legislators to discuss complicated and controversial issues

In my work with USDB I have visited the USDB programs in Weber, Salt Lake and Utah County. I have met with teachers, parents and administrators in those programs on a regular basis. I have attended their town-hall meetings. I was instrumental in establishing the USDB committee made up of State Board members to address the complicated and controversial issues at that school. I was on the task-force committee made-up of School Board members and legislators to make changes in the law regarding the USDB.

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?

It is essential that we stay focused on Promises to Keep.

Students must learn to read.

All kids need to be math literate.

Teachers need to provide high quality instruction.

The curriculum must be relevant and rigorous.

We must have reliable formative and summative student assessments. This sounds simple but it is an important part of the answer to getting kids prepared.