

SCGOP Questions for School Board Trustee Candidates

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1. What is the purpose of public education?

The purpose of public education is to provide an opportunity for every child to receive the basket of goods and services that the Wyoming Legislature is required to provide. Our children should leave a public education with no less than the basic knowledge and skills to begin a path to a sustainable career or pursue a higher education. Further, a public education should prepare our children to be civically engaged citizens.

2. What skills do you believe students should learn in school?

Obviously, our children must learn the basics. Reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies are essential parts of an education, but health, humanities, arts, world cultures and languages, computer science and technical education are equally important in providing a well-rounded education to our children and allows for many more opportunities in their future.

I have a passion for the Common Core of Skills defined WY Stat § 21-9-101(b)(iii), being problem solving, interpersonal communication, computational thinking and computer applications, critical thinking, creativity, and life skills, including financial management. These are the skills that allow our children a fulfilling and prosperous future.

3. Do you think there is an overreliance on technology in the Elementary Grades?

No, for the most part, I do not think there is an overreliance on technology in our Elementary Schools. This is the world we live in, and the future of our elementary children will be reliant on technology. Our children need to understand the basics, the “why it works,” the principals behind the learning, but they also need to learn how to apply it in real world application. I want our young children to understand how to use technology responsibly and effectively but not to rely on it with no underlying knowledge base. Our children do need technology-free time to grow and learn, but technology is an important learning tool that needs to be used responsibly to help our children be prepared for their future.

4. What role does the school have in providing non-academic services?

Schools have a vital role in providing non-academic services to our children, specifically health care and food services. Not all children and/or families have this need. However, some really do, and the school should be there to support those children. It is important that all children be supported wherever their needs lie.

Extra-curricular opportunities that the school can provide extends the ability to develop those Common Core of Skills described above. These are frequently the programs that inspire passions in our children or motivates a student to stay in school through graduation.

5. What is the role of parents in public education?

Parents should retain the right to be in control of the care and education of their children-period. Parents should be as involved, as much as is practicable, as they see fit for the well-being of their children. They should be asking questions, be engaged in the education and services their children receive, and be supportive of a well-rounded education and the school staff striving to achieve this for their children.

I support the SCSD1 defined partnership whereas the school and parents share a common goal “to help all students achieve their maximum academic and personal growth potential.” Meaningful involvement of parents only enhances the education of children.

6. How do you define the role of an individual board trustee?

An individual school board trustee should represent the values and culture of their district in decisions regarding school board policy and the financial/budgetary aspects of the school district. Each trustee has their own expertise that can enhance the school board governance and should express their views and that of the stakeholders they represent. Each board trustee should commit themselves to be knowledgeable and effective leaders, and each is a link between the schools and the public. This is the reason I applied to fill the school board vacancy earlier this year; I want to be that link between my community and the school district. Even when I cannot share confidential information from an executive session, I want the stakeholders to be able to look me in the eye and trust that I am representing them, their values, and putting the kids first in every decision.

7. How do you define the role of the board of trustees?

First and foremost, the school board should always act in the best interest of its students. There is a separation of powers between the school board and the superintendent, and it is important that each knows their role to accomplish the vision and goals of the school district. The administrative detail is left to the superintendent, while the school board must be focused on setting and governing by school board policy, the yearly budget and the school district financial burdens, and creating or adjusting the strategic plan for the school district. The influence of the board of trustees lies in its action as a unit.

8. How do you define the board's role in supporting the administration and teachers?

The school board has the final say in where the money goes, so the board must make sure that it supports the teachers financially, with teacher salaries making up the vast majority of the school district budget. It's no secret that it is expensive to live in this area, so we must do everything in our power to have the most competitive salaries to recruit and keep our wonderful teachers. Therefore, we must have administrators in-line with our teachers.

Policy must be set and used to support our administration and teachers. Clearly defined educational goals and policy regarding curriculum, services, and personnel allow our teachers to be effective and protected, and it gives administration a well-defined focus and responsibility to the teachers they oversee and the students under them.

(a) How do you define the board's role in oversight of the administration and teachers?

An important role of the school board is the relationship with the superintendent. The superintendent executes the boards decisions and policy and is the administrative head of the school district, so having the right superintendent to evaluate administration and supervise instruction is critical. Therefore, the school board's role in oversight of the administration and teachers really lies in hiring and retaining the best superintendent possible or replacing the superintendent, as needed.

(b) As a trustee, how would you reconcile those two roles?

As a trustee, you need to be vigilant and know your place in the process. I will fight hard for competitive salaries for our teachers but be a responsible fiscal steward of tax-payer money. I will represent the values and culture of the stakeholders in my district when making and revising policy, as well as in the relationship with the superintendent. I will allow the superintendent to do his/her job, trust in his/her abilities to execute the job description, evaluate his/her performance, and take the necessary action.

9. What do you believe are the biggest threats to public education?

I believe budgetary constraint is the biggest threat to our public education right now. Things are expensive – we all see it in our every day lives. It is expensive to buy a home in this county; it is expensive to feed and clothe our families; and our monthly utility and insurance bills seem to be ever increasing. The same goes for our school districts – it is expensive to run a school district.

None of us want to see our taxes increase, and there is a genuine threat to our Wyoming mineral interests. With these two making up the vast majority of where the money comes from, our legislature will need to take a hard look at how our public education is funded in this state and our school district will need to get creative is how to retain our teachers and fully fund our programming. We cannot just increase the student to teacher ratio, reduce our extra-curricular activities, or get by on the bare minimum. We have great public education in Wyoming, and we need to protect it.

10. Do you believe there are budgetary items where spending should be reduced or cut from the budget? If so, please identify those items and why.

In our current budget, I could not find anything that I would have reduced. I feel like SCSD1 is penny-pinching as it is, while still trying to be proactive and forward thinking as possible within the current budget constraints.

11. Do you believe there are budgetary items where spending should be increased? If so, please identify those items and why.

I can make the argument that our teacher salaries should be increased, but with the current legislative formula on the money designated for each school district, I don't see how we can make that happen. Without reduce spending in other areas, I'm not sure where we find more money to pay our teachers, but we do need to increase their salaries for them to be able to afford to live here and want to stay in our school district. Teacher retention has to be a top priority for our school district.

12. What can your district improve?

It is easy to become complacent when you have such a strong reputation academically, so it is important that we continue to be proactive, forward-thinking, and creative in how we not only stay at the top but continue to strive for more. I think SCSD1 has done a great job at reaching the students at the low end and getting them the extra attention needed to get each one to proficiency, but I think our district can now turn the attention of the ever-growing number of students at the high end of the spectrum. Identifying students with outstanding abilities, who are capable of higher performance, and offering them qualitatively differentiated educational programs and services beyond the regular school programs is one area SCSD1 could improve.

13. What does your district do well?

Our district is consistently at the top of the list for school districts across the state and country, being known for its exceptional academic performance. We boast high proficiency rates, state test scores, and graduation rates, not to mention the athletic prowess and other extracurricular excellence that our school district has become known for.

Our small class size allows for increased one-on-one between students and teachers for a more personalized education, and our small-school atmosphere also gives each student the feeling of connection to the staff and other students as a family. The sense of community within each side of our district is extremely special.

14. Are you okay with allowing licensed conceal and carry holders on and within school property with a firearm? YES

Why? Those that have a conceal and carry license have passed a substantial background check and by most measures are highly responsible gun owners and law-abiding citizens. These holders far outnumber those wanting to do harm on school property, so for every one person intending to do harm on a school campus I believe he/she would be outnumbered by people ready to defend our children, teachers, and staff to the death, if need be. I believe our schools would be safer if criminals knew we had licensed conceal and carry holders on our campuses.

15. Are you willing to not accept federal funds if there are strings attached regarding gender identity such as: boys being in girl's bathrooms or locker rooms, males participating in women's sports, etc.? YES

Why? I would not vote to accept federal funds if we had to allow boys to use girl's restrooms/locker rooms, males to participate in women's sports, or any such gender identity issues. Tethering our school district to such policy, no matter the cost, does not align with my personal beliefs and values, and I am adamantly opposed to such federal regulations.