

SCGOP Questions for School Board Trustee Candidates

Candidate's Name:

Justin Kidneigh

School District:

**Sheridan County
School District #1**

e-mail:

**jkidneigh76@gmail
.com**

Phone #:

(307) 258-1422

1. What is the purpose of public education?

The purpose of education, in my opinion, is to develop the knowledge base and skills of students that will help them develop into economically productive citizens that will continue to respect and support the practice of democracy in the protection of our rights and freedoms. Much of my perspective is driven by my having been a teacher of history and government for 31 years and teaching the origins and application of the Constitution.

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

Students should have a strong foundation of knowledge in writing, reading, math, science, and history/government. As students learn these subjects, their critical thinking skills need to be developed and challenged in order to create effective workers in today's economy and to create citizens that will think for themselves.

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

Technology can be a powerful tool if used in moderation and where it can be most effective. Though, sometimes I think that the novelty of new technologies causes overuse when it may not be the most effective education strategy. There are apps, programs and websites that can be very effective with young students in giving

immediate and relevant feedback as they practice their writing, reading and math skills. But, these cannot be the only things used to teach these skills. There most definitely needs to be person to person instruction as well, because learning in a social interaction in its most effective form.

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

As a teacher for 31 years, I have observed an extremely wide range of students and the conditions they come from. Many students come into school with supportive parents that can provide abundantly, others have adequate support but may be lacking in certain social and learning skills that can adversely impact their learning. Some students come to school with inadequate food resources that impact learning due to low energy and distracted thinking focused on their hunger. Then there are students that have demonstrated disabilities in learning or of a physical nature. Keeping in mind that I believe public schools are to help develop economically productive and democratically supportive citizens, then I feel that schools must provide those services that help all students to achieve their highest level of learning.

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

Parents have a couple different roles in public education. First, they model the importance of an education by how they raise and teach their children. Children that have parents that are supportive of education tend to enjoy much success with learning. Second, parents are the primary advocates for their children and their education. Third, parents as stakeholders in a school district should be willing to participate in various ways, such as PTA, classroom parents, volunteers, school board meetings, school members, district/school committees and any other opportunities to support students and teachers that arise.

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

A board trustee has a very sacred duty to see that students receive the very best learning environment that is challenging, relevant, orderly and safe. A trustee must weigh and balance many considerations when deciding how to vote. One thing a

trustee must keep in mind are the community standards held in common by most of the constituents. A person in this position should not be seen as a politician, but rather a trustee of our children and their educational experience.

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

A board of trustees serves as the governing link between the community and the schools. A board oversees the development of policy, responsible distribution of resources, fiscally responsible spending, and the creation of a culture in the district that supports learning and recognizes the accomplishments of students and teachers. One of the most important decisions a board has to make is the hiring/retention of the superintendent. This is due to the superintendent will see that a strong culture will be established and that there is accountability throughout the district.

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

The board must support its administration and teachers in their efforts in educating students within the principles and policies established by the board. The board must also be engaged in knowing how things are going and must be the final accountability check. The board represents the community at large and therefore must be willing to hold themselves and the district accountable.

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

The board hires the superintendent to oversee the daily workings and personnel of the district. The board must maintain a certain distance and members should not get involved in personnel matters, unless the superintendent brings it to the board. The board must enforce/support the chain of command in personnel matters. The board does have the final say in hiring and firing when the superintendent brings forth their recommendations.

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

Just like any position in which a person or group is in authority, you want to support your employees to be as successful as possible. But, that person or group must also hold employees accountable to the purpose of the organization and how effective the workers have been in accomplishing that purpose.

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

The biggest threats have to do with the politicizing education and the extreme positions and agendas. These political battles influence funding of schools and threaten local control of school districts.

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.

I would say that all budgetary items must be justified by how well they support, either directly or indirectly, the learning of students. I feel that cuts that directly impact the classroom and the experience of students must be avoided.

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

I feel there is always room to increase more funding for students instruction resources and to provide expanded and enriching learning experiences for students.

12. What can your district improve?

I feel that District #1 needs to focus on building a more cohesive and supportive environment/culture between the two sides. I think that there needs to be a discussion to revisit how to best meet the needs of both school systems in the district and how spending and resource allocation will be prioritized.

13. What does your district do well?

The district consistently provides a solid educational experience and many students excel.

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

YES / NO (Circle One)

Why?

Having been a teacher for 31 years, I tend to favor being as protective as possible of students who are defenseless in a school setting.

I am sure that there have been parents and community members that have concealed and carried a weapon on campus at various times. If they were to take that weapon out and display it for whatever reason, then that has to be dealt with under existing laws and policies. I am not in favor of metal detectors or preventive searches to discover possible concealed and carried weapons.

Knowing though, that schools are charged with providing safe environments and yet are limited in their ability to protect students against an armed intruder it seems prudent for schools to have policies against firearms being on school property.

I do support a citizen's right to own firearms and to conceal carry in public.

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 / NO (Circle One)

Why?

I feel this would be a political move by certain groups at the national level to push an agenda. And this is a federal overreach into state and local control of education. I do not feel

that these requirements advance the education of the students as a whole. The loss of federal money means that the state legislature would need to step up and provide needed funding to support student learning that would be threatened by the loss of the federal money.