

SCGOP Questions for School Board Trustee Candidates

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1. What is the purpose of public education?

I see public education as an investment. Our community funds 13 years of learning, growth, and social interaction in hopes the students we're investing in will become contributing members of society and someday raise a better generation of citizens than the last. Public education ensures that every child, regardless of circumstances, is given the tools needed to succeed in life and opportunities to excel. My role as trustee is to see that our community's investment in our children is maximized.

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

In addition to the gradable skills assessed by tests and assignments, students should learn to become life-long learners. They should learn how to think creatively and critically, developing their own understanding of how the world functions around them and how to function in the world. They should learn to contribute positively to society. Ideally, students would develop the skills needed to progress to the next phase of life, whatever they choose to do.

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

No. The reality is technology is an integral part of every single day of life. Young students should learn to leverage technology properly as a tool to improve learning. Not simply getting assignments done twice fast, but learning twice as much. They need to be taught the risks and rewards of technology. Should young students learn to write in cursive? Absolutely. (There are dozens of studies showing the cognitive tie and benefits of fine motor skills.)

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

"Don't let schooling interfere with your education" - Mark Twain. Non-academic services are a vital component of a well-rounded education and our schools must strive to provide opportunities for success in every environment. Lessons learned in the huddle, on the stage, or in a work study program are as valuable as those in the classroom. Success in every setting should be the school's goal, as those successes (and failures) cultivate personal growth and are greatly needed.

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

A parent chooses to send their children to public school; there are other options. Doing so is a decision to support the school, its teachers, and staff. Parents should be responsible for their children's behavior, and committed to see their student put forth best efforts each day. If a student habitually comes to school without their homework complete, their lunch packed, and ready to learn - that's a parenting problem. A big gripe I hear about teachers is that they are failing to parent their students. That's not their job. A parent's best contribution to education is to be a good parent.

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

"The individual board member has no authority other than the right to cast a vote at such a meeting...and...cannot speak for the total board,...direct members of the staff, or...make other individual decisions."¹

However, the role might better be defined by what a trustee can do:

- Attend school board meetings, actively participate in discussions, and make decisions by voting.
- Review and approve annual budgets.
- Establish criteria for instruction, and review recommendations for curriculum.
- Approve or deny recommendations for personnel criteria, and employment contracts.
- Adopt policies which foster student growth and well being.
- Communicate and collaborate with members of the community.

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

Highly functioning school boards have been proven to positively impact student achievement and as a direct result, opportunities afforded them in life. The role of the board is to ensure our students have a safe and productive learning environment. Each member must work as a team, with the best interests of students in mind, to arrive at a consensus.

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

Supporting administration and teachers can take many forms. One example is to understand that the majority of teachers are also parents of district students. By making every effort to review and approve a yearly schedule which will allow for

¹ Wyoming Statute: 22-22-201 (Wyoming School Boards Association;
<https://www.wsba-wy.org/resources>)

parents to participate in events like state tournaments is indicative of our appreciation and support for them.

Support must be much more than a card during teacher appreciation week. It must be tangible action.

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

If I understand the question correctly, oversight (defined as regulatory supervision) of a school board is limited to the superintendent, as he or she is their only subordinate. Boards can't fire or even directly interact with teachers and staff. Often that structure is misunderstood. If the board wishes to address the performance or behavior of a district employee, they must follow the proper channels: superintendent, building principal, department chair...

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

Again, I hope I'm on the right page here. What is the difference between support and oversight? Superficially, support feels like positive interaction and recognition while oversight feels like corrective criticism. However, as a trustee, I might best support my teachers and staff by removing the superintendent or following the recommendation not to renew an administrator's contract. The two must be reconciled by considering the ever-present question: what is best for the students of this district.

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

The collapse of the noble profession of teaching is a real and current threat. Teachers are constantly asked to do more with less, put up with overbearing parents, tolerate and even inspire students who would rather be anywhere else, all while being paid insufficiently to do so. Teachers were once collectively revered; my parents might not have agreed fully with every one of my teachers, but they taught us to respect them all. They have been overworked and undervalued to cause teaching shortages in nearly every district in America. We are fortunate that people want to live in our district, but hiring is still a struggle. We must not lose our greatest asset to attrition and underappreciation.

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.

Yes. Every line item warrants a look, but specifically, I don't think our sports teams should travel to play Burns or Pine Bluffs. There are plenty of teams far closer to play. I don't think the district should incur the costs or time commitment of this overnight stay for a single game. By my rough math, the district spends roughly \$17K each year on these games.

Tournament and championship games are an exception, but I don't think an overnight stay for this game is justifiable. If the WHSAA would permit, I'd ask our athletic directors to schedule this game in Casper each year; both teams would save.

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

Yes. Currently, 86% of our budget is in the form of salaries and benefits for teachers, staff, and administration. Because of the state's funding model, District 2 is able to pay roughly \$10K more per certified position than we can in District 1. Our people are the greatest asset our district has. I would look at every expense and assess if more can be allocated to hiring and retaining the best teachers in the state. We can talk about ways to support our people, but financial support must always be at the top of that list.

12. What can your district improve?

The state places "band-aids" on the funding problem in the form of literacy and technology grants which have both positive and negative impacts on our district. We benefit from having specialized instruction in reading fluency, but in my opinion, a very myopic approach. These grants are short term and when the funding expires, so likely will the positions they fund. Great classroom teachers have filled the roles of mentors and coaches under these grant programs and I worry we will lose them altogether once the program ends.

Specifically in Big Horn, our Early Childhood Development program needs a proper home. Currently, classes are spread between the middle school and elementary buildings. We recognized the value of these programs, but I feel they are limited because of lack of space. Big Horn needs a proper setting for these young minds to thrive. In TRHS, the Ag and Industrial Arts programs are equally cramped. I'd like to see both settings improved.

13. What does your district do well?

Our standardized test scores are constantly among the highest in the state.

Our athletic teams compete regularly for championships.

Our speech teams and drama clubs put on incredible performances and have been recognized as such.

A large percentage of our teachers and administrators have advanced degrees and are passionate about educating our students.

A healthy rivalry between the two schools makes us better. A high tide raises every ship. When one excels it pushes the other to do so as well.

Each year, open positions are filled with candidates from district 2, a district which is able to pay substantially more than ours can. That speaks volumes about SCSD1, our district is a place where people want to work.

Our students graduate with the education required to be successful in their next step of life, college, military, trade school, or job market.

Families want to return and raise their children here. We have generational families who choose to live and work in this area because it is second to none.

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

YES / NO (Circle One) Yes

Why?

Assuming we have the support from the local law enforcement agencies and each candidate for carry is voluntarily putting themselves in a position to take the life of another, I would support this policy. Several other districts in the state have implemented it, thankfully without incident.

My thought is this, every teacher I know is going to scratch, claw, and fight to protect their students anyway. Why not allow them the opportunity and training for a fair fight?

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) Yes

Why?

I would not accept these funds. These issues are of a moral nature to me and I have an ethical responsibility as a community member, a parent, and elected official to uphold standards given to us by God. There is no such thing as the "school board police" so all I have to offer to the families of our district is my integrity. It may not be politically correct or woke, but I will not vote to approve any policy which directly or indirectly promotes something that is morally wrong regardless of the financial impacts. I feel the results of doing so would be far more costly.