



Lincoln Public Schools Candidate Questionnaire
(Please feel free to attach your answers on a separate piece of paper)

1). The Lincoln Public Schools consolidated tax levy is currently \$1.37 per \$100 of valuation. Overall, Lincoln Public Schools receives 63% of all property tax revenue in Lincoln, the City of Lincoln receives 14%, Lancaster County receives 14%, and all other taxing authorities share the remaining 8%.

Do you feel this is the appropriate level of funding for Lincoln Public Schools?
[AND]

Is the way, we as a community, currently allocate the overall property tax levy appropriate?

I support the efforts the LPS Board of Education has made to lower the property tax levy by 4.7 cents, from \$1.314 to \$1.267, over the past four years. I believe that both the current level and the downward trend in the LPS property tax levy are appropriate. I support the current allocation system of each local taxing authority setting its own levy rate, within the parameters set by state law. Beyond allocation, I would support all local taxing authorities working together, and with the state legislature, to shifting funding toward sales and income taxes. The long-term goal would be to lower the overall property tax burden and not just to change the allocation.

2). In our Six Statements of Core Policy, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce encourages fiscal responsibility and the pursuit of government efficiencies.

In what ways do you plan to encourage fiscal responsibility and efficiencies in the Lincoln Public Schools System?

As a member of the Board of Education I would support the creation of a task force, including teachers, parents, and citizens, for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of current LPS programs and practices. In addition to finding efficiencies, this would also help address the issue of teacher workload. I would also support increasing the time the proposed budget is available for public review, before approval, and increase the opportunities for public comment on the budget.

3). Personnel costs are most often the largest driving force behind municipal budgets.

As a member of the Board of Education, how will you work to keep personnel cost manageable?

[AND]

Should the district move to a “merit-based” system for salary increases?

Personnel costs represent 89% of the current LPS budget. Keeping personnel costs manageable will require balancing three competing goals. Those goals are paying competitive salaries, so that we continue to attract and retain the best teachers; maintaining appropriate class sizes, in the face of anticipated growth of 3000 students in the next five years; and levying property taxes at an acceptable level.

I support the concept of merit pay for district employees, but recognize that there are many challenges in crafting a process for merit pay that accounts for the differing job responsibilities of educators. My support for a specific proposal for merit pay would depend in part on how well the proposal addressed those challenges.

In the specific case of the Superintendent and the Executive Committee, I believe the Board should implement performance-based compensation, based on objective measures of district-wide student achievement. The evaluation criteria used should be open to the public and should provide clear expectations to the executive team. A formal process to establish this system would provide an opportunity to strengthen public support for our District.

4). What are some ways in which the business community can better partner with the public schools to meet the ever-growing need for an educated workforce in Lincoln?

The support of the business community has been, and will continue to be, vital to the success of Lincoln Public Schools. LPS needs the expertise of business leaders to identify potential efficiencies in its budget, and to serve as role models for students through mentor programs like Team Mates. The business community can also partner with LPS and other local taxing authorities to work with the state legislature in shifting funding away from property taxes. Expanded internship and work experience programs can also benefit students and give them a head start toward entering the workforce.

5). What will be the biggest challenge facing the Lincoln Public School system over the next 5 years?

The biggest challenge facing Lincoln Public Schools over the next five years will be increasing community support in the face of many unfavorable circumstances. The rising adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements of No Child Left Behind will result in more schools identified as failing to meet AYP, even if raw test scores improve. The heavy reliance on property taxes for school funding that is part of the Nebraska system will continue to link public education to the most unpopular form of taxation. However, despite these circumstances, I believe LPS can increase community support by being transparent in its operations, increasing opportunities for public input, and demonstrating a commitment to seeking cost-effective ways to meet student and teacher needs.

6). What do you see as your role as a member of the Lincoln Public Schools Board of Education?

My role will be to work with the other six members of the Board of Education to establish and revise District policies, to approve a responsible budget, and to communicate and collaborate with the public on education issues. My twelve years of volunteerism in the LPS, parent, and business communities have given me a knowledge of LPS practices, an understanding of the community's concerns, and a passion for the mission of educating Lincoln's children. I will bring those experiences to the Board to help make a good school system even better.