



**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?**

The two largest sources of funding for the school district are local property taxes and state aid. Funding the district this way gives us a stable source of revenue. During any particular year, we are less affected directly by lagging sales, and I think it's very important to maintain this stability. That being said, I believe that our current funding method leaves us overly reliant on property taxes. I would like to see the Legislature come up with a funding solution that provides meaningful property tax relief to our community, but that maintains stable funding for educating our children.

As to the question of how our community allocates revenue to local governing bodies, I think that any conversation is meaningless unless you factor in all sources of revenue. For example, the City collects 100% of the sales tax that stays local, and the school district receives none. The City also funds development at the expense of the school district through the use of tax increment financing (Please note that I'm not opposed to the concept of TIF. I would just like it to be acknowledged that the use or overuse of TIF has an effect on revenues the school district receives). I would be very willing to have a conversation about local allocation of resources that includes *\*all\** sources of revenue.

**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?**

I can point to several examples of fiscal responsibility and increased efficiencies that have occurred during my tenure on the board.

- 1) In 2006 we pass a record breaking bond that is providing for new facilities and improvements to existing facilities across the school district. Before the bond, we levied 10.8 cents to pay for indoor air quality projects as allowed by the unicameral under 1994 legislation. By rolling those IAQ projects into the 2006 bond, we were able to use that same 10.8 cent levy to finance the full bond. The length of time we'll be paying was extended to accommodate the bigger numbers. But by doing it this way, we were able to accomplish work across the city with no effect on the levy rate. In fact, as valuations go up over time, this levy rate goes down. Currently it sits at 9.9893 cents.
- 2) Shortly after I was elected, I convened a new Technology Committee. One of the outcomes from the work of this committee was the consolidation of two separate computing departments (instructional and centralized/district) into one IT department. This resulted in the elimination of an administrative position and allowed us to better take advantage of economies of scale.
- 3) For the 2004-2005 school year, our overall budget went down. This isn't to say that there was a reduction to an increase. I mean that we actually spent less that year than the year before. I'm not aware that any other legislating body (City, County, or State) has done that in the eight years that I've been a school board member.
- 4) During the last three years, we have been implementing district-wide, all-day kindergarten. We have also opened Adams Elementary, and will be opening Kooser Elementary and Schoo Middle School. We have been absorbing these new costs into our existing budget without asking the community for additional funding, e.g. a levy override. And we are currently levying less than the full \$1.05 general fund rate allowed by law.
- 5) We don't use one-time revenue to pay for ongoing expenses. And we have a system that we use to project the effect of any spending on our budget for out years. We keep long-term sustainability in mind for every budget that we produce.

**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 constitute about 88% of our budget. Salary increases and increasing insurance rates have a huge effect on our bottom line. One example of how we try to mitigate these costs can be found in our latest contracts with the teachers. Part of the pay increase the teachers have received for the last couple of years has been offered as payment for more time. We have lengthened the amount of time that teachers are working, and we have worked payment for that additional time into the compensation package as part of their annual increase.

Merit pay is something that we have talked about many times as a school district. I very much support the use of a merit based system for administrative staff. And although I haven't seen a model that I like yet for teaching staff, I'm very open to having that conversation as well. In general, I support finding ways to incentivize and reward our excellent performers.

**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?**

In my experience, Lincoln's business community has been extremely supportive of our school system. As examples, I would point to the VIP program and the Junior Achievement volunteers who spend time in the classroom teaching our children about business principles. I would also note that the business community was supportive of our 2006 bond issue, and I know of many business leaders who gave of their time to serve on our Student Housing Task Force in preparation for that bond.

The school district needs to continue to take advantage of the knowledge and enthusiasm that our business community offers, especially as we work on our budget during very difficult economic times. I would like to see us reach out more to business leaders and to the community in general as we make big decisions that will have wide reaching effect.

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

I believe that funding will always be a major concern for our school district and for our community. As an example, Lincoln pays quite a bit of money into the state aid system, but I'm not convinced that we're getting our fair share of state aid. It will be very

important for the school district to continue to advocate for a stable and fair funding mechanism.

And while we're working to ensure funding for our children, we must also make sure that we keep spending under control. We need to continue to be innovative in looking for efficiencies. We must continue to keep an eye on long term sustainability. And we need to keep in mind that every budget we produce has an effect on the pocketbooks of our community.

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

The most important things we do as board members are as follows:

- 1) Set policy
- 2) Manage the Superintendent
- 3) Create a budget that supports student achievement and is mindful to the needs of our entire community
- 4) Provide for facilities that support learning
- 5) Support a rigorous curriculum
- 6) Communication with the public
- 7) Working with other governmental bodies