



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 starting point of any funding discussion is the quality of education we wish to provide our children. We have an excellent school system and I want to maintain it. I have made many door-to-door contacts and initiated conversations with taxpayers. In every single case they want a quality education and quality schools for our children. Excellent schools are a vital economic engine for our community and are critical in attracting new businesses and providing qualified employees.

That said it must be balanced with fiscal realism. We must balance the quality essentials with economic reality facing individuals, families and businesses in Lincoln. The school cannot spend or make long-term financial decisions without this perspective.

LPS must look to operate more efficiently and strive towards a lower tax levy. This is challenging as we experience a consistent growth in students and the city continues to expand.

Schools have limited revenue sources and they are dependent on property taxes for the majority of their funding. I would encourage the exploration of other revenue sources to broaden the tax base and lower the reliance on property taxes. This includes the restoration of sources removed including the direct payment of monies generated from fines and violations (traffic, etc.). Although the schools still receive these funds the state aid to each school district is reduced by this

amount creating a net amount. Another possibility is to restore state funded Drivers Education; now a burden of each school district.

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?

Offering a perspective I call “Fiscal Realism” is one of the primary reasons I wish to serve on the school board. We must balance the quality essentials with economic reality facing individuals, families and businesses in Lincoln.

I would challenge our administrators and each department head to develop recommendations to find efficiencies within their area. I would also encourage them to engage the people in their departments and in the school buildings in developing these recommendations. (I do not believe in across-the-board budget cuts. This approach only perpetuates the inefficient and damages what is truly valuable.)

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?

A quality school starts with quality teachers, staff and administrators. They should be compensated competitively to retain them and so we can attract future talent. However, Lincoln has much to offer potential employees. Our quality of life and employment opportunities for spouses allow us to provide compensation that is in the competitive middle rather than at the top of the range. It is important to keep this perspective.

The majority of our personnel costs are in collective bargaining agreements. Tough, yet constructive, open negotiations will be my approach and directive to our negotiating team. The current economic conditions will require realistic expectations on all sides in future contracts.

Yes, I support a “merit-based” compensation system, if appropriate ways to measure and reward performance are identified.

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?

I have been Union Bank's coordinator with LPS on two major partnership programs; the introduction of the International Baccalaureate Program and the Learn to Dream Scholarship Program offering SCC scholarships to every Lincoln high school graduate that is considered in poverty. I have seen first hand how the business community can effectively partner with LPS to make a difference.

Here are several ideas:

- The business community supporting additional Focus Schools such as health services, trades/apprenticeships, etc.
- The Chamber sponsor a summit or series of "coffees" where LPS and Chamber members can openly discuss the needs and opportunities. The goal would be a new business supported initiative of a specific educational need.
- Increase job shadowing and short term internships in Lincoln businesses for both students and teachers.
- LPS offer in-school shadowing and tours for businesspeople with an opportunity for discussion with teachers and administrators.
- Continue and increase the Chamber's support and active recruitment of mentors through Teammates, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, etc.

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

Our biggest challenge is to continue providing high quality education to our growing and increasingly diverse community within our ability to fund it.

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

There are three primary roles:

- A Board member is the liaison between the many community constituents and LPS administration. It requires careful, thoughtful listening with an interest in all sides of an issue; yet decisive and independent.
- The Board sets the overall goals and direction for the school district without becoming a micromanager.
- The Board is responsible for overall fiscal policies and decisions and determines if there is an appropriate return on the taxpayers' investment.

Kevin Keller Profile:

- First Vice President, Marketing for Union Bank & Trust Co.
- At Union Bank serves on the following committees: Management Committee, Asset/Liability Committee, Human Resources Committee, Compliance Committee, Business Recovery Committee, Marketing Committee

- Graduate Nebraska Wesleyan University
- Married with four children and four grandchildren
- Experienced school board member in Kansas
- PTA chairperson
- Little League baseball & basketball coach
- Basketball referee
- Recreation association board member
- 4-H project leader
- High school football & basketball game announcer
- College football game announcer
- Church board member
- Children's church leader
- Sunday school teacher
- Fellowship of Christian Athletes huddle leader
- Fellow of Leadership Lincoln, class XIX

Board Member of:

- Lincoln Municipal Band
- American Marketing Association
- Samaritan Counseling Center
- Southeast Nebraska FCA
- Board of Education, USD #230, Spring Hill Kansas