



Chamber of Commerce

*Response from Katie McLeese Stephenson  
Candidate for District 6*

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

**1). Current fiscal constraints at the state-level is affecting State-aid to Schools. This could directly impact the amount of funding Lincoln Public Schools receives.**

**Can the school system operate on fewer funds, or would the district automatically need to raise property taxes to cover the shortfall?**

The answer to this question will in part be determined by how large the decrease is to state aide for LPS. I believe that the first solution is to look at the current budget line by line and determine where there are efficiencies to be gained or reductions to be made. Any reductions should be kept as far away from the classrooms and students as possible. A critical review of all non-mandatory expenditures is needed followed by a prioritization process. I would encourage an open input process with feedback from students, parents, teachers, administrators and the community at large. The Board will ultimately make the decision regarding the budget.

Raising property taxes is not the first alternative and should be considered final alternative if other strategies prove unsuccessful.

**2).The Lincoln Public Schools system is nearing its general-operating-budget-levy limit. Any changes in property valuation or State-aid to Schools could place the system in a position to have to ask the citizens of Lancaster County for a higher operating levy.**

**Would you support asking voters to override the current levy limit?**

Lincoln is fortunate to have an outstanding school system that helps to develop exceptional learners and contributors to our community and our economy. It is important that our schools are adequately resourced to continue this tradition of excellence.

If external forces like property valuation and State-aid to Schools negatively impact LPS' ability to adequately resources the needs, then it may be necessary to vote to override the current tax levy limit.

As a homeowner I am concerned about property taxes and will work hard to keep expenses within the budget. I understand that budgets are tight for all levels of government as well as the Lincoln Public Schools and family households. The school board has an important role to play in the LPS budgeting process.

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

**Can Lincoln Public Schools be more efficient in its use of human and capital resources?**

I believe in a budget of over \$300 million that there are places to find efficiencies in human and capital resources.

[and}

**In what ways?**

Administration at the District Office would be a place that I would want to evaluate. In addition as stated previously a critical review of all non-mandatory expenditures is needed followed by a prioritization process. I would encourage an open input process with feedback from students, parents, teachers, administrators and the community at large. The Board will ultimately make the decision

**4). 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?**

It is important that personnel costs are reasonable for the market, but at the same time are adequate to attract and retain high quality teachers.

**5). 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?**

There are important ways that the business community can better partner with the public schools to meet this need. Businesses need to help educate the students of LPS about career opportunities, speak in classrooms, allow chances for shadowing and internships and be willing where appropriate to hire students into their business while in school and/or upon graduation.

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

- Increasing the high school graduation rate-this has a tremendous impact on the individual student and the economy,
- Decreasing gaps in student achievement-these are evidence of systemic flaws in the system where needs are unmet.
- Developing a plan with broad community input to address growth in student enrollment-the projected growth will require a community conversation and solution. We are nearly at capacity in many schools and there is a project 3,000 student increase in the next four years.