

## Natrona County Education Association

### 2024 School Board Candidate Questionnaire

1. Why are you running for NCSB School Board? I am running for the Natrona County School Board to bring meaningful change to the district by prioritizing parental involvement, transparency, and financial responsibility. With my background as a nurse and experience on community boards, I have been a strong advocate for children, parents and community members.
  2. What are three priorities you would accomplish during your time in office? Parental involvement and transparency:  
As a top priority, I will work to ensure that parents have a strong voice in their children's education. Parents should not only be aware of what is happening in schools but also actively involved in shaping the educational experience. This means promoting transparency in school policies, curriculum choices, and decision-making processes. It is vital that parents understand their rights and responsibilities, particularly their right to know what is being taught in the classroom and to voice concerns when necessary.  
I also support a traditional, content-rich curriculum that emphasizes foundational skills in reading, writing, and mathematics because these are the building blocks of a successful education. Mastery of these core subjects is essential for students to think critically, solve problems, and engage meaningfully with more complex material in later grades. A strong focus on these foundational skills ensures that every student, regardless of their background or learning style, has the basic tools needed to succeed academically and in life.  
Ensuring prudent management of resources to maximize educational outcomes. My goal would be to strike a balance between fiscal responsibility and educational excellence, ensuring that every dollar spent directly contributes to improving academic outcomes, supporting teachers, and enhancing the overall educational environment. By managing resources effectively, we can create a system where every student has access to the opportunities they need to succeed, without placing unnecessary financial strain on the community.
- How would you go about reaching them? To achieve these priorities, I plan to actively engage parents by creating policies that encourage parental involvement and ensure their voices are heard in decisions that affect their children's education. I will work to foster clear and consistent communication between parents, teachers, and school leaders so that parents are informed and empowered to participate meaningfully in the decision-making process. I also strongly support a traditional, content-rich curriculum that focuses on foundational skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, and I will advocate for the integration of these principles across the district to ensure a high-quality education for all students.  
Additionally, I will prioritize financial oversight and accountability, ensuring that every dollar spent is used efficiently to improve educational outcomes. This means managing resources with a focus on maximizing student success, supporting

teachers, and maintaining transparency with the community so that taxpayer funds are spent wisely and effectively. By addressing these key areas, I believe we can create a stronger, more transparent, and accountable education system that puts students and families first.

- Why are they most important to you? These priorities align with my beliefs in high academic standards, responsible budgeting, and respect for parental roles. I believe these aspects are crucial for creating a supportive learning environment that prepares students for future success while honoring family values.
- How will you be proactive in communicating and interacting with your stakeholders, including district employees? My platform stresses the importance of transparency and communication as fundamental. I have been actively involved in the community, and I understand the value of genuine engagement with parents, educators, students, and district employees. To foster this, I will work toward the creation of teacher, parent, and student advisory councils. These councils will serve as collaborative spaces where each group has a direct line of communication, ensuring that their concerns, ideas, and feedback are not only heard but actively considered in decision-making processes. By including all voices, we can create policies that truly reflect the needs and priorities of the community. Additionally, I will advocate for the use of anonymous reporting systems to give all stakeholders, especially students, a safe way to report concerns without fear of retaliation. Whether it's addressing safety issues, bullying, or policy concerns, anonymous reporting empowers individuals to raise issues that may otherwise go unaddressed.

3. How would you describe the role and responsibilities of the NCS D Board of Trustees? The NCS D Board of Trustees is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction and policy-making for the district. Its primary functions include:
  - Setting educational goals and policies: The board ensures that the district's policies align with state regulations and reflect community values. These policies guide the district's instructional programs, student services, and overall operational framework.
  - Budgeting and financial oversight: The board approves and monitors the district's budget, ensuring financial decisions maximize educational outcomes while being fiscally responsible.
  - Hiring and evaluating the superintendent: The board hires the superintendent, who manages day-to-day operations, and regularly evaluates their performance.
  - Advocating for the community: The board ensures that the district's direction reflects the community's needs and expectations, fostering transparency and accountability.
  - Curriculum approval and oversight: The board is responsible for approving the adoption of curriculum materials, ensuring they align with state standards and district goals.

How would you describe the role and responsibilities of individual Trustees?  
Individual trustees have a governing and oversight role within the board's collective responsibilities. Key responsibilities include:

- Collaborating on policy decisions: Trustees participate in discussions and decision-making on policies that guide the district's academic and operational direction.
- Serving as community representatives: Trustees are elected to represent the community's interests, acting as liaisons between the district and the public. They are responsible for understanding the needs and concerns of students, parents, and community members, then advocating for those interests at board meetings.
- Maintaining ethical and legal standards: Trustees must uphold state laws, district policies, and ethical guidelines. They ensure transparency and accountability in all board matters.
- Active participation: Trustees are expected to attend meetings, stay informed about district issues, and contribute constructively to discussions.

4. NCS D # 1 has always prided itself on providing an excellent education to all of the students in Natrona County. How do you plan to support the whole child in NCS D # 1? While NCS D #1 has long prided itself on providing an excellent education, the data from WYTOPP scores since 2018 have shown a concerning decline in all major areas, including reading, writing, and mathematics. This suggests that despite the district's efforts, there has not been enough focus or tangible change in addressing the root causes of this decline. For example, the district has largely continued with the same programs and strategies, without making adjustments based on the data to improve academic outcomes.

When it comes to supporting the "whole child," I believe that this responsibility ultimately lies with the parents and families, who know their children best. The role of the school district should be to focus on providing a solid, content-rich education that equips students with the academic skills they need to succeed no matter what their background is.

Education's primary lane is academic, and we must stay focused on delivering quality instruction and ensuring that students meet state standards in critical areas like reading, writing, and math. However, I also believe the district can support parents by providing access to resources and community programs that help address other aspects of a child's development. For instance, we can strengthen partnerships with mental health professionals, social services, and other organizations to support families without overstepping the school's educational mission.

How will you ensure the needs of our students continue to be met for diverse learning opportunities including art, music, PE, social emotional learning, world language, CTE, advanced placement courses, etc.? The school district currently offers a wide range of programs that provide amazing learning opportunities for students,

and I strongly support the continuation and enhancement of most of these programs. Programs such as art, music, physical education (PE), and world languages not only enrich students' academic experience but also promote creativity, physical health, and cultural awareness. Additionally, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and Advanced Placement (AP) courses provide students with pathways to develop specialized skills and prepare for college or career readiness. For example, the district's CTE programs offer hands-on learning in fields like construction, health sciences, and automotive technology, giving students practical skills and exposure to potential career paths. These programs are vital in preparing students for the workforce or further education and need to be continually supported and expanded to meet the growing demand for skilled labor in Wyoming and beyond.

Likewise, NCS D's Advanced Placement courses allow students to challenge themselves academically. By maintaining strong support for AP programs, we can ensure that students seeking rigorous academic opportunities have the resources and instruction they need to excel. Additionally, the district's gifted and talented programs are crucial for students who require accelerated learning options. These programs help foster intellectual curiosity and allow students to dig deeper into subjects that interest them, ensuring they remain engaged and motivated throughout their educational journey.

In terms of social-emotional learning (SEL), NCS D has implemented numerous programs designed to help students develop self-awareness, manage emotions, and build positive relationships. I believe these programs can remain an outlet for students that may need them, but supporting them without shifting the primary responsibility for emotional development away from families.

5. Describe the importance of students in NCS D #1 receiving an education that prioritizes honesty in history and civics education.

It is crucial that students receive an education in history and civics that prioritizes honesty and accuracy, focusing on the historical facts and the complexities of our nation's past. This means teaching history with an emphasis on understanding key events like slavery, the Civil War, and other significant milestones in American history from a factual perspective, rather than through the lens of political or social agendas. Students should learn about the origins of our country, the struggles we have faced, and the progress we have made as a nation, all while maintaining a focus on historical truth rather than politically charged narratives.

By prioritizing honesty in history and civics education, we provide students with a well-rounded understanding of how our government was formed, the challenges we've faced in striving for a more just society, and the importance of civic participation in maintaining our democracy. When history is taught with a clear, factual foundation, students are better equipped to critically evaluate past events and their impacts on today's world, allowing them to form their own informed opinions.

6. What should the role of Trustee be in the development of curriculum (what students know and should be able to do at each level)? The role of trustees in curriculum development is primarily one of oversight and governance rather than direct

involvement in the specifics of curriculum design. Trustees should ensure that the curriculum aligns with district goals, state standards, and community values, while also meeting legal requirements. Their role includes:

- Approving or rejecting proposed curricula based on recommendations from educational professionals and the superintendent.
- Ensuring transparency and accountability, involving community feedback in curriculum decisions, and representing the voice of parents and students.
- Monitoring the implementation of the curriculum to ensure it is achieving the desired educational outcomes for students.

How should that role change when content may be seen as controversial (e.g., origins, climate change, civil rights, religion, politics, etc.)? The role of the trustees does not change, regardless of the content being considered. Whether the subject matter is uncontroversial or touches on more sensitive topics like origins, climate change, civil rights, or politics, the trustee's duty remains consistent: to ensure that the curriculum is fact-based, academically rigorous, and aligns with state standards and community values.

Do you believe we should adopt curriculum K-12? Why or why not? I believe that while it's important to have a foundation of approved resources and guidelines to ensure consistency across the district, a one-size-fits-all K-12 curriculum is not the most effective approach. Instead, I support continuing to allowing teachers the autonomy to craft their own curriculum from a range of approved resources. This approach provides flexibility for teachers to tailor the curriculum to the unique needs of their students and their teaching styles, rather than being restricted to a rigid, uniform set of materials.

7. Locally and nationally there has been conversation on the mental health of students. What role do you see certified support staff having in addressing this mental health crisis? How do you, as a NCSD # 1 Trustee, ensure that those staff members (ie counselors, social workers, nurses, etc) are prioritized in the budget so we can address those critical mental health issues facing our youth within NCSD #1? While I recognize the importance of addressing the mental health crisis among students, I believe the most effective approach is to leverage community resources to support students and their families. Certified support staff, such as counselors, social workers, and nurses, play a vital role in connecting families with community organizations and services that can provide lasting assistance.

As a Trustee for NCSD #1, I would support ensuring that our budget prioritizes initiatives that foster community partnerships. While trustees do not directly manage support staff, they have the ability to influence resource allocation and set policies that guide their roles. I will advocate for funding that empowers our support staff to effectively navigate and utilize community resources, ensuring that they are equipped to meet the diverse needs of our students and families.

8. How will you, as an NCSD #1 Trustee, actively ensure the physical and mental health and safety of all district students, including our students of color and LGBTQIA+ student population? As an NCSD #1 Trustee, my commitment is to ensure the physical and mental health and safety of all students, recognizing that every child

deserves equal support and opportunities to thrive. I believe that our focus should be on fostering an environment where all students, regardless of their background or identity, feel valued and supported.

9. In your view, what is the role of the Natrona County Education Association in this district? What about other stakeholder groups? In my view, the Natrona County Education Association (NCEA) plays a role in our district by representing the interests of some of the educators. The NCEA helps teachers have resources, support, and professional development. They have input in shaping policies that affect teaching and learning.

Other stakeholder groups, including parents, community organizations, and local businesses, also play crucial roles. Parents are essential partners in their children's education, providing support and advocacy for their needs. Community organizations can offer additional resources and programs that enhance student learning and well-being. Local businesses contribute by providing internships and real-world opportunities for students.

Together, these groups create a collaborative environment that can support development of students. As a Trustee, I believe it is important to engage with all stakeholders to ensure that we are working together toward a common goal: the success and well-being of every student in Natrona County.