

First State Educate's 2026 School Board Candidate Survey

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School board members play an important role in guiding the direction of public school districts. The questions below are designed to help voters understand how candidates think about governance, decision-making, and student success. While candidates may express their ideas in different ways, strong responses often reflect several core principles of effective school board leadership.

Public school boards are responsible for setting direction, overseeing district leadership, and stewarding public resources on behalf of the community. **Why do you want to serve on your local school board?**

I want to serve on my local school board because I've dedicated my career to public education and want to contribute at a broader level. Through my work in human resources and collaboration with school leadership, I understand the importance of strong governance, thoughtful decision-making, and supporting both staff and students.

I'm motivated to help set a clear direction for the district while ensuring accountability, transparency, and responsible use of resources. I value listening, building relationships, and making fair, student-centered decisions. Serving on the board would allow me to use my experience to support the success of the entire school community.

School board members make decisions that affect thousands of students and millions of public dollars. **What principles will guide how you make those decisions?**

The principles that help guide my decision-making as a school board member are integrity, transparency, fairness, and a consistent focus on what is best for students.

Integrity will guide every decision I make. School board members are entrusted with public dollars and public trust, and I believe decisions must be made honestly, ethically, and for the right reasons—not based on pressure, politics, or personal interests.

Transparency and communication are critical. The community deserves to understand why decisions are made, even when they are difficult decisions. I believe in being open, listening to stakeholders, and making sure people feel heard and respected.

Fairness and consistency will guide how I approach policies, staffing, budgeting, and student matters. Decisions should be based on facts, policy, and what is equitable for the entire district, not just what benefits one group or one school.

Most importantly, I always come back to one core question: “Is this decision in the best interest of students and the long-term success of the district?” If that remains the focus, the board will stay on the right path.

School boards are ultimately responsible for ensuring districts improve outcomes for students. **What student outcomes should your district improve over the next four years?**

Over the next four years, I believe the district should focus on improving three key student outcomes: academic achievement, career and college readiness, and student well-being and engagement.

We should continue to improve academic achievement, especially in reading and math at the elementary and middle school levels. Early literacy and numeracy are the foundation for everything else students do in school, and if we get that right early, we set students up for long-term success.

We need to strengthen career and college readiness. Not every student is taking the same path after graduation, so success should not be defined by only one measure. We should continue expanding career pathways, technical education, internships, and partnerships with local businesses and colleges so students graduate with real opportunities and a clear plan for their future.

Student well-being and engagement must be a priority. Students learn best when they feel safe, supported, and connected to their school. Attendance, behavior, and school climate are all directly connected to academic success, so continuing to invest in mental health supports, positive school culture, and student engagement will improve overall outcomes.

If we focus on strong academic foundations, real-world readiness, and student well-being, we will see meaningful improvement in student outcomes across the district over the next four years.

School boards must work across differences and remain connected to the communities they serve. **How will you work with fellow board members, district leadership, and families to move your district forward?**

I work to move the district forward by focusing on relationships, communication, and keeping students at the center of every conversation.

When working with fellow board members, I believe it's important to be respectful, prepared, and focused on the work. We may not always agree, but we should always be able to work professionally, listen to different perspectives, and find common ground. Good governance requires collaboration, not conflict.

I believe the board and district leadership should operate as a team with clear roles. The board sets direction, objectives, and policy, and the administration builds the plan and handles operations to meet those desired objectives. I will work to maintain that boundary while still asking thoughtful questions, supporting district leadership, and holding the district accountable for results.

Staying connected to families and the community is critical. I make myself accessible, listen to concerns, attend school and community events, and make sure people feel heard, even when the answer isn't always what they want. People may not always agree with decisions, but they should always feel that their voice mattered in the process.

At the end of the day, moving a district forward requires trust, communication, and a shared focus on what is best for students, and that is how I approach my role as a board member.

School boards are making decisions that affect students and district resources. **How should board members use data, research, and community input to guide those decisions?**

Board members should use a combination of data, research, and community input to make informed, balanced decisions. None of these should be used in isolation. Good decisions happen when all three are considered together.

Data should help identify problems, measure progress, and evaluate whether programs and initiatives are working. This includes academic performance, attendance, graduation rates, staffing data, and financial data. Data helps the board focus on facts and trends rather than opinions or isolated situations.

Research and best practices should guide major decisions, especially when it comes to curriculum, programs, budgeting priorities, and student support services. School boards don't have to try to reinvent everything; we can learn from the successes and mistakes of other schools and districts of what has been proven to work and not work, and apply those lessons to our district community.

Community input is extremely important because schools exist to serve the community. Families, staff, students, and taxpayers should have opportunities to share their perspectives and experiences. Community input may not always determine the final decision, but it should always be considered and respected as part of the process.

In the end, board members should ask: What does the data tell us? What does research suggest works? What is our community telling us? When decisions are made using all three of those things together, they are much more likely to be responsible, effective, and in the best interest of students and the district.

School board members communicate decisions to the public. **How will you ensure the community has an honest, clear picture of district conditions and can see how the board is making decisions?**

I believe the community deserves clear, honest communication about how the district is doing and why decisions are being made. As a school board member, I focus on transparency, consistency, and making information understandable to the public.

I believe the board should regularly communicate district goals, progress, and challenges in a way that is easy for the community to understand; not just long reports, but clear summaries of student performance, finances, and major initiatives. People should be able to see where the district is doing well and where we still need to improve.

I make sure that decisions are explained, not just announced. When the board makes a decision about budget, staffing, programs, or policy, the community should understand what the decision was, why it was made, and how it connects to district goals and student outcomes.

I am always accessible and willing to listen. Communication should go both ways. I attend community events, talk with parents and staff, and make sure people feel comfortable asking questions and sharing concerns. Even when people disagree with a decision, I ensure they still feel that the process was open, honest, and respectful.

Overall, my goal is to help build trust between the school board and the community by making sure communication is transparent, decisions are explained clearly, and the community feels informed and heard.

School boards often bring together members with different perspectives. **How would you approach working collaboratively with other board members while keeping the focus on the district's long-term goals for students?**

I approach working with other board members by focusing on respect, professionalism, and keeping students and the district's long-term goals at the center of every decision.

Board members will not always agree, and that's healthy, but disagreement should never become personal or distract from the work. I believe in listening carefully to different perspectives, asking thoughtful questions, and trying to find common ground. Good boards don't require everyone to think the same way, but they do require everyone to work toward the same goals.

I also believe it's important to stay focused on governance rather than day-to-day operations. The board's role is to set direction, establish policy, monitor progress, and ensure accountability. When the board stays focused on long-term goals like student achievement, financial stability, and strong leadership, it helps avoid getting pulled into short-term issues or individual situations.

Most importantly, I always come back to a simple question when making decisions: Is this in the best interest of students and the long-term success of the district? As long as the board keeps that as the focus, it becomes much easier to work collaboratively and move the district forward together.


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Dr. Keenan Dorse...

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