

Freedom Watch

School Board Candidate Survey Issue

October 2003

Academy School District 20 Questions:

1. Why are you running for school board?
2. What are the most pressing issues the school board should address in the next two years?
3. Colorado state law created a pilot "vouchers" program beginning next school year (2004-05). Eligible students will receive tax-funded vouchers to pay tuition at a private (including religious) school of their choosing. Academy District 20 is not one of eleven districts mandated to offer vouchers.
 - A. Do you support subsidizing private school tuition with tax dollars?
 - B. Do you support your district opting into the voucher program? Why or why not?
4. Should the following issues be discussed in the health curriculum?
 - A. Birth Control
 - B. AIDS & STDs
 - C. Drug and alcohol awareness
 - D. Homosexuality
5. Would you support the inclusion of creationism (including creation science and "intelligent design") in the science curriculum?
6. What role should the school board play in curriculum development and textbook selection?
7. In your opinion, what do your district's CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program) test scores reveal about student achievement in your district?
8. Is there an "achievement gap" between minority and white students in your district? If so, what is the role of the school board in addressing this?
9. What are appropriate expressions of religion in schools by teachers and students?
10. What ideas do you have for ensuring a safe school environment for the diversity of students and teachers in your district?
11. Are teacher salaries in your district
 - A. too high
 - B. appropriate
 - C. too low?
12. How will you ensure that your district has adequate state and local property tax funding?

Candidate responses are listed in ballot order

Candidate Response: Vicki Taylor (District 20)

Occupation: Stay-at-home mom

Education: BS in Computer Science, University of California, Riverside

1.

As a parent of three children in the district, my involvement in District 20 has been motivated by a keen interest in improving education in our country. We have an excellent school district and I want to ensure the continuation and growth of that excellence.

2.

- a. The continuation of competitive salary increases for our teachers.
- b. Find a compromise solution to school start/end times.
- c. Policy that is generated from the No Child Left Behind Act.
- d. Improved communication with all stakeholders.
- e. Continued fiscal responsibility and accountability.

3.a)

NO. I think there are other many other choices that the State of Colorado allows parents to make in their child's education. One example: Charter Schools

b)

No, we offer our parents and students an excellent school choice program. This way each family can make the right choice for their child. As new schools are currently being built, we need to expand the choices offered.

4.

- a) YES
- b) YES
- c) YES
- d) NO

A few years ago, D- 20 redesigned their health curriculum. I am satisfied with that curriculum. Birth Control, AIDS, STDs, Drug and Alcohol awareness require parental permission for the student to participate. If a student inquires directly about homosexuality, teachers are to direct that student to seek information from their parents.

5.

No. I firmly believe in separation of church and state.

6.

The school board is ultimately responsible for the decision making, but District 20 has an excellent administration that researches any new curriculum and new textbook choices. This research and input from a stakeholder panel is given to the school board for review and approval.

7.

CSAP scores are just one form of assessment strategy that is used to help students excel. Assessment tests are a necessary tool, but I do not believe in teaching to

assessment tests. District 20's CSAP scores show that our schools are performing well in all areas of study.

8.

The district reports a relatively small gap. Because our numbers are so small, special board-mandated programs are probably not in order. Rather, with a site-based school system, each school should evaluate its needs separately.

9.

Religion should only be discussed in school as a product of a world religion class or as historical facts in a social studies class. I firmly believe in separation of church and state.

10.

The district is currently in the process of researching and adopting a character education program. In addition, the district's mission statement states "...taught in a safe and nurturing environment. We challenge students to pursue dreams, succeed with integrity, and contribute meaningfully to a diverse society."

11.

TOO LOW. Offering competitive salaries and increasing current teaching staff salaries should remain a top priority of the District 20 Board of Education. By achieving this we can retain and attract high quality teachers to our classrooms.

12.

By continuing to speak out to our state legislature that public school education funding should always be a top priority in Colorado. D- 20 is fortunate that it is a high achieving district, businesses are attracted to the district because their employees find it a desirable place in which to live.

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Candidate Response: Dr. Cliff Kelly (District 20)

Occupation: Director of Academics for the Focus on the Family Institute

Education: Ph.D. Communication Studies, Bowling Green University; MA Speech Communication, California State University at Long Beach; BA Speech Communication, California State University at Long Beach

1.

As a professional educator with more than 30 years experience, I love young people; I sense a "calling," to this office, based on many encouragements. I am committed to academic excellence and integrity, and wish to make a contribution to this community on behalf of those important values, including character education.

2.

(1) finding the best teachers for our classrooms; (2) using the very best texts that

are available to our students; (3) fielding the best budget that we can realistically construct; (4) construct and maintain the best buildings (physical plant, technology, hardware of all sorts); (5) employ the finest leaders available.

3. a)

YES! Absolutely, most especially for economically disadvantaged students and/or schools who cannot receive the same quality education as economically privileged students and/or schools.

b)

Yes, for the reasons stated above, and because I firmly believe that competition is good for the entire educational enterprise. Freedom of choice is based on our entire system of offering alternatives to the consumer or, in this case, learners. However, District 20 is already a "choice school" district.

4.

a) YES

b) YES

c) YES

d) YES

Depending on (a) the age of student; (b) the freedom of parents to opt out of their treatment in the classroom; and most importantly, the guarantee that each subject will be presented objectively, with no hint of an ideological "agenda" to persuade students to a certain point of view.

5.

Absolutely, right alongside Darwinian macroevolution. This is based on presenting students with the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills, and the freedom to choose which view to accept. As a holder of the Ph.D. in social science and social theory, I am familiar with the tenets of good and bad scientific enterprise.

6.

It should operate most essentially in a cooperative posture in relation to the individual schools. That is, site-based management is very useful for the development of autonomous decision-making, but oftentimes the board members are in the best position to study, research and propose the best curricula available.

7.

I believe that District 20 is doing an overall excellent job of meeting CSAP standards with variations, of course, between individual schools and faculty. My desire, of course is to do all possible to improve upon this record, and establish a "benchmark" district for the state.

8.

Not really. Fortunately, or unfortunately, we live in a district where the population is relatively homogeneous, based on economic standing. This tends to cross "color" lines and create a relatively even playing field for all of our students.

9.

These should be made by state and district standards. No teacher or administrator is to advance any particular religious perspective, but students are free to express their religious values in assignments and conversation, so long as they don't proselytize

other students. Freedom of expression is protected under our Constitution; coercion is not.

10.

I believe that D20 has taken effective measures to increase the improbability that a Columbine event will ever take place. This includes cameras and police on campus. In a "free and open society," there are always risks to our safety; but D20 is doing a good job with this important issue.

11.

TOO LOW Once again, I must contextualize my remarks by saying that while our salaries could be and should be higher, compared to other states and districts, we offer an exemplary and generous retirement package. This offsets or balances out the low salary structure, in my view.

12.

State allocations and local support ought to be based to a large extent not only on "need," but also upon "merit." Success breeds success, and this is no less true for educational efforts than for other professional endeavors. Also, working closely with the state officials is vital to cooperative strategy.

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Candidate Response: Mike O'Rear (District 20)

Occupation: President and CEO of Global Mapping International

Education: BA in Pastoral Studies, Big Sky Bible College; MA in Communications, Wheaton College Graduate School (IL)

1.

I want to help D20 build on its recent success, ensuring the highest possible academic achievement for ALL students. I want to see the district's new planning process implemented, further developing its top-quality staff, curriculum, choice, assessments, and financial stability.

2.

D20 has been building positive momentum the past few years and is poised to move to the next level of excellence. Implementing the board's "Vision and Target Statements" will further improve student performance, leadership, management and community relationships. Further attention needs to be given to bus transportation within the district.

3. a)

If students cannot succeed in the public school system, then parents need other viable options. However, my commitment is to ensure that the excellent choices within D20 public schools make it possible for all students to excel.

b)

I am yet unaware of the process and ramifications of opting into Colorado's new voucher program; as far as I know, D20 cannot opt in, as the program is only for students in unsatisfactory schools. D20 should observe and learn from how vouchers are implemented in D11 and D2.

4.
a) YES
b) YES
c) YES
d) NO

5.
Science (characterized by replicable results, falsifiable theories, and observable objective evidence) rather than philosophy or religion should be taught in the science curriculum. We should not be afraid to expose students to a diversity of rigorous scientific theories and evidence, including those seemingly consistent with intelligent design.

6.
The D20 board has established excellent program evaluation and textbook selection policies, which are available on the D20 website. The board should continue to hold the district administration and schools accountable for complying with these policies.

7.
District 20 student achievement ranks as one of the best in the state, but it's not good enough. The district's longitudinal study helps ensure every student is progressing each year; CSAP data is disaggregated to ensure all student groups are progressing, and each building has set student academic improvement goals.

8.
Yes, there are "achievement gaps" with some minority student populations in District 20. The school board needs to ensure that academic achievement is improving for all students, regardless of ethnicity. Focused attention must be directed to meet the needs of any underachieving subgroups.

9.
The board must be rigorous in ensuring that district policies and actions regarding expressions of religion fall within federal and state law, which includes forbidding any school sponsorship of religious expression. Freedom of speech, including legally protected personal religious expression, should be allowed unless dangerous or disruptive to learning.

10.
D20 should continue its current programs of security, surveillance, and supervision, its newly adopted character education policy, and its bully prevention policy. Offenders should be subject to school discipline procedures and/or legal prosecution.

11.
APPROPRIATE. D20 teacher salaries have been improving in recent years, and they need to continue to support the attraction and retention of top-quality educators.

12.
D20 patrons have consistently supported the district, including the major bond issue that voters approved two years ago. As the district makes financially responsible decisions, and schools continue growing in excellence, I believe D20 patrons will continue to provide adequate funding.

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Candidate Response: Ivo Fronzaglia (District 20)

Occupation: Configuration Data Management Analyst, SRS Technologies

Education: BA Secondary Education, Duquesne University, Pittsburg

1.

I believe that the current school board values consensus over principal and is afraid to make decisions that might offend the public. Consequently, the board has adopted many faddish educational innovations and expended precious tax dollars on unnecessary projects and programs. If elected, I will work to change that.

2.

1) Improvement of CSAP scores in mathematics and science.

2) Adoption of an enhanced teacher pay system.

3) A return to "basic" academic curriculum.

3. a)

YES The primary/secondary public education model in America is meant to ensure a literate population and to provide a competent workforce for the country. While this model calls for unrestricted, communal education (free to the individual), nothing mandates that the educational services be provided exclusively by the government.

b)

No. This is a pilot program and the state needs to measure the effectiveness of this methodology before the district opts in. While I am not opposed to the voucher concept, I am not necessarily convinced that this particular process will achieve the goals of improving overall academic achievement.

4. a) YES

b) YES

c) YES

d) YES

I am in favor of a health course (one semester) offered as part of the high school science curriculum. Any discussions of these topics must be confined to their physiological nature and not the moral or ethical questions surrounding them. Also, I would include smoking in the course scope.

5.

Intelligent Design and Creationism-the belief that an omnipotent God created the universe and the processes that formed it-are not sciences; hence, they do not belong in the science curriculum. However, I see nothing wrong with such discussions in the context of coursework on world religions.

6.

The expert administrative staff is (ought to be) charged with the sole responsibility for curriculum development and textbook selection and ought to perform this function without interference from the board. The board's role is to approve the product and ensure compliance with applicable state and federal standards.

7.

1) There is a lot of work to be done to improve scores, particularly in mathematics and science.

2) Not all teachers are making a concerted effort to teach to state standards.
3) The proliferation of choice schools has not significantly improved student achievement.

8.

Out of more than 18,000 students in the district, less than 3,000 are minorities. Of those, more than 700 are historically high-achieving Asians. Consequently, I believe any such gap (if one exists) is insignificant and, therefore, action by the board is not necessary.

9.

Any expression of religion, be it verbal, visual, or physical, is appropriate so long as such expressions are not disruptive to the learning environment and no individual harm occurs to the observers of such expressions.

10.

1) "Close" all campuses. 2) A two-strikes-and-you're-out policy for those to be bullying, taunting or teasing. 3) Automatic expulsion for the initiator of physical confrontations. 4) Rigorously enforced district-wide dress code. 5) District-wide behavior code. 6) Deglamorization of interscholastic sports and renewed emphasis on intramural sports.

11.

NONE OF THE ABOVE. I do not favor the current pay structure. I favor a supply and demand model that compensates for a particular skill set and experience, not for longevity or credentials. Professionals ought to negotiate their salary based on local economic conditions and the need for their talents.

12.

There is no way school board members, individually or collectively, can ensure the existence of or the adequacy of tax funding. Such funding is largely determined by the will of the voters, which is applied in accordance with the laws of our state, and the legislature.

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