

Candidate Name: Kyle Bateman
District #: 13



To help candidates provide information to potential constituents and to help voters make educated decisions, Utahns for Public Schools has created this survey about issues facing members of the Utah State Board of Education. We encourage candidates for positions on that board to complete this questionnaire and return it by September 15th. The survey responses will be published in their entirety on our website at www.utahnsforpublicschools.org. (If a candidate chooses not to return the survey, that will be noted on the website as well.)

Return survey to: lisa@utahnsforpublicschools.org.

2008 UTPS Candidate Questionnaire Utah State School Board

- 1) How do you feel about public tax dollars being used to support private schools, whether religious or secular, through funding mechanisms such as vouchers and tuition tax credits?

Government is not the end producer of any of the services it supplies. Rather, we pay taxes to the government and then the government uses those taxes to purchase the things it needs on the private market in order to provide the necessary services.

When roads are built, they are typically built by private contractors. When welfare recipients receive assistance in purchasing food, they go to private grocery stores to buy their food.

Even when government does run the administration of a particular function (such as the post office, or a public school), the employees (who are private individuals) are paid for the provision of their time and effort. Additionally public schools purchase text books, school lunches and practically everything else they use on the private market.

Some people oppose vouchers on the grounds that public tax dollars can not ethically be spent in the private market. However, this is not true. Virtually all tax dollars are ultimately spent in the private market.

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- 2) How do you feel about the role charter schools play in the public school system? What are your views about the Utah State Board of Education's role in regulating and/or establishing accountability standards or requirements for charter schools? How do you feel about the current system for funding charter schools?

Diversity is a critical element in any healthy and vibrant social system. For example, we like to see our classrooms filled with children from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Academic institutions work best when teachers come from a diverse range of backgrounds and have diverse opinions and viewpoints.

Likewise, our education system itself should be diverse. We want strong and healthy public schools. We should also want our charter schools, our private schools and our home schools to be strong and healthy.

Not all children are alike. And children do not all learn in the same way. So an education system consisting of only one type of educational option can not effectively serve every child--particularly certain children with exceptional needs. So the State Board of Education should do all it can to encourage, foster and support a diverse range of quality educational options.

If all educational settings were to be regulated from a single centralized body (whether the State Board of Education or otherwise), some of the diversity we now enjoy would be lost. This is one reason many State Boards do not favor increasing regulation by the Federal Government. Likewise, the State can sometimes interfere too much in a regulatory process that may be handled better at the district or even the local level.

That government which is closest to the people is generally the most effective.

- 3) The Utah Foundation recently released a report comparing Utah's public education funding and services to those of several "peer states." The research shows that Utah's current funding effort has led to larger classes, lower teacher salaries, and lower levels of pupil and staff support than what is found in states with similar demographics. How do you feel about the state's current investment in public schools and the services that school districts currently provide to Utah students?

Based on Utah's unique demographics, we spend more on education per tax payer than most states and yet, we spend less per student than most states. This is an unfortunate result of the large number of school children we have compared to the economy generally

and the amount of money available for taxation.

In recent years much more money has been made available for education. Yet many people feel that too little of it has made its way to the classroom where it can do the most good.

Utah should do better in funding education. But as an even higher priority, Utah should do better at getting education dollars focused in the places where they can do the most good.

- 4) In the 2008 legislative session, a bill was passed directing school districts to provide “differentiated” or higher pay for certain math and science teachers. How do you feel about this program and about “differentiated pay” in general?

I favor teachers being paid according to how good they are at what they do. This is done in virtually every other professional setting in our economy (engineers, doctors, attorneys, etc.)

That said, however, I do not favor the legislature mandating how teachers are paid. Ideally, each teacher's pay would be determined by his/her boss (i.e. the school administrator)

- 5) As a condition of receiving a share of the \$20 million appropriated for “performance pay” incentives, school districts have developed plans for the distribution of this one-time money. What is your opinion of this program, and how do you feel about “performance pay” (or “merit pay”) in general?

Teachers who work harder and are best at what they do should earn more money (and other recognition) than teachers who do not perform as well. The judgement about how this general principle should be implemented into specific pay rates should be made by school administrators.

A district administrator should determine the quality of judgement of individual school administrators and should make appropriate staffing changes when and where necessary.

And a district board should determine how well the district administrator is performing, also making changes where appropriate.

- 6) Please comment on Utah's "achievement gap" and what the Utah State Board of Education can do to provide access to educational opportunities to all of the state's diverse populations.

It is tragic that while we have some schools performing admirably, some others are failing miserably. When families have no more than one school to choose from, they can become trapped in a destructive and demoralizing cycle.

We should have a "zero tolerance" policy for failing districts, failing schools and/or failing classrooms regardless of any demographic or other challenge we may face. Every child in the state deserves an opportunity to receive a quality education. And we should deploy whatever resources are necessary and adopt whatever methods will work best to foster a quality education for each Utah school child.

- 7) The legislature recently changed the nominating process for State School Board candidates from a more "regional" approach to one which utilizes a single, central committee. Additionally, some in the legislature have proposed legislation which would increase the number of school board members while at the same time changing the seats from non-partisan to partisan. How do you feel about the current process and the proposed changes?

My reasons for running have nothing to do with the electoral process nor other political concerns. I will leave that to others.

I think school board members and candidates should focus their attention on only one thing: the quality of education available to each Utah school student.

- 8) Recent legislation has led to the splitting of the Jordan School District. How do you feel about the current law, and about the splitting of school districts in general?

While the legislature certainly has the power to make such decisions, I think they are more effective when made administratively rather than legislatively.

A district should be split for one reason only--because it will result in an improvement in the educational experience for the students in that district.

- 9) In the 2008 legislative session, most of the new funding for our public schools was contained in SB 2, the so-called, "Omnibus Bill," that also contained numerous other education bills, including some that had failed to pass on their own. How do you feel about this particular bill, and about omnibus bills in general?

Where possible, key legislative issues should be voted on individually where they can be fairly and openly debated.

- 10) What do you see as the USBE's role in working with the Utah State Legislature?

The USBE, together with the State Superintendant should do such a great job running Utah's schools that they are performing beyond all normal expectations.

Then, we will be in a much better position to tell the legislature to get out of micro-managing the education process.

- 11) What do you see as the USBE's role in promoting responsible state tax policy? Do you think the board and its members should actively oppose tax breaks for corporate interests that come at the expense of public education funding? Why or why not?

In the same way that the legislature should not micro-manage education, educators should not seek to micromanage tax policy.

The education system should certainly lobby for the budget it needs, but should not be in the business of determining how those taxes are most effectively raised. That is clearly the job of the legislature.

Once funded, the education system needs to focus on the kids and how to most effectively deploy the resources available to achieve the best possible results.

- 12) Utah students study in some of the largest classes in the nation. What are your views about class size and instruction, and how do you think class size should be addressed in Utah?

Class size itself is not an end but rather a means to an end.

The end we need to focus on is academic achievement. And specifically, it is that academic performance which is most relevant to economic success and quality of life throughout the student's life.

Neither the State Board, nor the legislature should micromanage class size. Some teachers may perform well in a large class while others may do better with smaller classes. Some subjects may work better with larger or smaller groups. These types of operational decisions should be made at the school level wherever possible.