

Candidate Name: [Carol A. Murphy](#)
District #: 12



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?

I oppose public tax dollars for private schools. I have not seen a proposal I think would pass the requirements of the Utah Constitution (Article X, Section 9). I respect a parent choice to send their children to private school. I do not feel the state needs to financially support that choice.

- 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?

Charter schools have a growing role in Utah's education system. I believe their standards for financial reporting and student achievement should look no different than other public schools, and clearly the State Board plays an

important role in that supervision. I oppose moves to fund state charter schools to a local district/taxpayer funded model...for a simple reason...charter boards and schools are not accountable to or elected by local taxpayers.

- 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?

The effort needs to be maintained and increased. Utah needs to talk the talk AND walk the walk...if education is critical and important to us as a state (as we so often say it is)...it's a cost we need to find a place for in our state/local budgets.

- 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 never like the "directed district" language....if there is a state pool of available money and the legislature sees a need...direct it to the need...but take plenty of input to make sure you are addressing a real need. I can't think of an area in education where there is not need, or increased salary incentives wouldn't make things better. I would like to see money directed to recruiting and educating well qualified candidates who might find successful careers in education, including financial success.

- 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?

I think the presnet "performance pay" bill was a rushed job and not well

developed. I believe some of the school district plans are better than others. Some of them strike me as not any more well developed than the original bill. I believe there are likely more effective ways to direct money to schools/teachers. I guess I just find it hard to believe that a "bonus" will make a poor teacher better...or an excellent teacher do anything different.

- 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.

I believe the achievement gap is real, and there is no easy answer. Recruiting and training excellent teachers is the starting place for any "fix." I believe new programs in all day K services are showing good signs of success, as is the growing emphasis on math and language skills in the lower grades. I believe as a state we have our work cut out for us at the middle school/high school level where "gap" so often means kids with language or poverty challenges, or special education needs, do not finish high school.

- 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?

I have great confidence that voters in the State of Utah can vote for candidates for the state board of education without the help of any "selection committee" process. Get rid of the selection committees...trust the voters. I oppose any movement to make school board election (local or state) a partisan race.

- 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?

The devil is always in the details. There may be times when voters in a district (and I mean ALL voters) decide that smaller is better. The law currently on the

books outlines a flawed process ..all voters in a district need a say in the outcome...because the entire district lives with the consequences (financial and otherwise).

- 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?

I oppose that type of legislative, and find it especially troubling that failed bills found themselves "passed" as part of the omnibus bill. I welcome attempts to have this clarified in the courts.

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

I see them as partners...both filling their roles as elected officials. I see USBE as a good resource for information on legislative decisions on education. I see USBE as a policy resource and a lead on the vision for education in the state.

- 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?

I do not think USBE needs to take the lead on tax policy, but certainly needs to be in a position to evaluate any and all tax policy proposals for their impact on public education. And yes, if a certain tax policy has negatives impacts on public education funding, oppose it...say why...say it loud and say it proud !!!

- 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?

I believe class size needs to be a priority at both the local level and the state/

legislative level. This almost certainly means more funds need to be directed at the issue, both in terms of physical facilities and number of teachers. I don't know a magic formula. If the state wants smaller class sizes, there is just simply a price tag that goes with that decision.