

SOCIAL STUDIES	B+	A	A-	A	A	A
SCIENCE	A-	A-	A-	B-	A	B+
ART	CV	CV		CV	CV	
MUSIC	CV	CV		CV	CV	
PHYSICAL EDUCATION						
ARITHMETIC	A-	A-	A-	B+	A	A-
Level of instruction						
Understands the meaning of numerals	+	+		+	+	
Knows and uses number facts	+	+		+	+	
Solves problems by reasoning	+	+		+	+	
LANGUAGE						
Level of instruction						
Expresses himself orally	+	+		+	+	
Expresses himself in written work	+	+		+	+	
SPELLING						
Level of instruction						
Learns words from dictionary	+	+		+	+	
Uses good spelling in daily work	+	+		+	+	
WRITING						
Forms letters well	+	+		+	+	
Uses good writing in daily work	+	+		+	+	
READING						
Level in basal program						
Level of instruction is:						
Below grade level						
On grade level	✓	✓				
Above grade level						

School Board

Candidate Questionnaire





The National Chamber Foundation (NCF), a non-profit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, is dedicated to identifying and fostering public debate on emerging critical issues. We provide business and government leaders with insight and resources to address tomorrow's challenges.



The Institute for a Competitive Workforce (ICW) is the non-profit, non-partisan, 501(c)3 affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. ICW promotes the rigorous educational standards and effective job training systems needed to preserve the strength of America's greatest economic resource, its workforce.

Through its events, publications, and policy initiatives—and drawing upon the Chamber's extensive network of 3 million members—ICW connects the best minds in American business with the most innovative thinkers in American education, helping them work together to ensure the nation's continued prosperity.



The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than 3 million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations.

© Institute for a Competitive Workforce, September 2011

© National Chamber Foundation, September 2011

School boards play a unique role in school district governance and provide a venue for communities to have democratic input into local education decisions. To effectively execute their responsibilities, school board members must clearly understand district governance and have a strong commitment to advancing student outcomes. Because the majority of school boards in the United States are elected, it is up to voters to select the most informed and competent individuals to fill these roles. During school board elections, candidates must demonstrate their knowledge of both the conditions that allow boards to be effective and the specific challenges facing their district.

Enclosed is a list of sample nonpartisan questions that voters, editorial boards, or other stakeholders can use to gauge the views and knowledge of school board candidates. These questions, developed in consultation with national education governance and policy experts and school board veterans, can be included in a written questionnaire or asked at public forums. They are designed to be customizable for individual districts and communities, regardless of size or geography.

To make questions specific to a given district, stakeholders may need to supplement them with details about education in their local community. Many online resources offer district-level data: school district and state government websites can provide demographic information, as well as current data about school or district performance on statewide assessments. Some nonprofit organizations and third-party groups also offer information that can add context to the questions. Examples include Great Schools, which provides school- and district-level statistics and ratings (<http://www.greatschools.org/>), and the New America Foundation's Federal

Education Budget Project, which publishes district-level funding, demographics, and achievement data (<http://febp.newamerica.net>). Voters can access these resources to prepare questions specific to their particular district, for example, by referencing local proficiency rates and achievement gaps when asking about student achievement.

When school board candidates answer these questions, strong responses can be distinguished by certain characteristics that reveal a depth of understanding or experience.

Quality responses are thorough and offer details and specificity that demonstrate a deep knowledge of the school district.

Weak responses are vague, noncommittal, or fail to demonstrate a grasp of facts and data relevant to the district and its students.

The questions below are divided into three sections: Governance, Finance, and Operations; Performance, Outcomes, and Equity; and Independence of Thoughts and Actions.

Questions regarding **Governance, Finance, and Operations** are intended to measure a candidate's grasp of the management and operational responsibilities of the school board and his or her perspectives on how to execute that role effectively.

Performance, Outcomes, and Equity questions probe a candidate's familiarity with the performance strengths and weaknesses of the district and their commitment to student-centered outcomes that are ambitious, equitable, and accountable.

Questions in the **Independence of Thoughts and Actions** section are intended to weigh a candidate's clarity of purpose, political independence or alignment with special interests, and views of board and district roles.

By responding clearly and thoughtfully to the questions enclosed, school board candidates will provide voters with valuable information about their views, experiences, and knowledge. Choosing the best available candidates is essential to creating a leadership body that not only holds high expectations for the achievement of all students, but also understands how to strategically set goals and execute policies to reach that vision.

QUESTIONS

Governance, Finance, and Operations

- What experience do you have with complicated budgets? When you are given a 400-page budget for the district, what will be your to process to determine if it is a good budget for the system?
- Because the school board does not have the authority to raise taxes itself, describe how you think the county board/taxing authority should make decisions about revenue and think about results and outcomes from the school system. How will you work/do you think the school board should work with the county board/taxing authority to facilitate this? (*For school boards that are revenue dependent and receive appropriations from a county board/taxing authority*)
- In an era of more limited financial resources, how will you enlist support for bond issues or public school spending from conservative voters or taxpayers with no children in the public schools? How can the school board prove itself accountable to those citizens?
- What are the district's greatest capital needs right now? How do you think those needs should be addressed?
- What are three questions that you would ask a candidate for district superintendent? What would you hope to learn about the candidate from the responses?

- What do you know about charter schools and their mission? What is your experience with charter schools in this district? (*For school boards that act as charter authorizers*)
- Here are performance data from five schools from the local charter sector. What do you see in these data and what do you think the board should do, if anything? (*For school boards that act as charter authorizers*)

Performance, Outcomes, and Equity

- What do you see as the opportunities and challenges in this district?
- In your view, what has the district done well over last five years? What has the district done poorly that you would change?
- Here are the agendas for the past three school board meetings. What do you think about these agendas—are these the right issues for the school board to be focusing on? If not, how would you change them?
- What information do you have about the district, and specifically the area you are running to represent? What does this information tell you about what needs to happen in the district?
- To what degree are students in this district on track for postsecondary readiness? How do you know?
- What is the current per-pupil spending rate in the district? What does that mean?

- Describe the achievement gap in this district. What causes it? What can be done?
- What do you know about current plans to provide an equitable education for students in our district? What has been tried in the past, and was it successful? Why or why not?
- How should teacher performance be measured? What are some of the challenges inherent in evaluating teachers? What training do school leaders need to perform fair teacher evaluations? How should the district balance using evaluations for accountability and using them to help teachers improve?
- What are the outputs that matter most to you? How will you be accountable for them as a school board member?
- In your past professional experience, what criteria do you use to make decisions about hiring people, retaining goods and services, or the effectiveness of a course of action? How will you use these criteria when making decisions as a school board member?
- Against what metrics will you assess district leadership's attainment of key goals? How will you know when a program or decision has been successful?
- If something is described as "research-based," what does that mean to you?

Independence of Thoughts and Actions

- What are the factors on which you will base your decisions as a school board member?
- What are your views on open data and transparency of information? What kinds of school district information should be made public?
- What specific steps would you take as a school board member to improve transparency and make school district information more widely available?
- In your view, what is the role of the teachers' association/ union in this district? What about other stakeholder groups?
- What role has management played in education problems in this district?
- Describe your view of the roles of the school board and the superintendent. What is the ideal relationship between these two offices?
- You represent a specific part of the city—how will you balance the needs of your specific constituents with the needs of the overall school district? (*Applies only to district vs. at-large candidates*)
- If a parent or a principal comes to you regarding, for example, a maintenance issue at a particular campus or a situation involving a particular teacher, how do you see your role as a school board member in resolving that issue?

- How will you communicate your work to your constituents? If you were to send a newsletter, around what three issues sections would you focus your updates?
- As a school board member, from whom will you seek advice or input in weighing key decisions?
- Whose interests should matter in the governance of a school district? In what ways should they matter?
- What civic, business, or advocate groups do you have connections with? What about their agenda appeals to you? What is a specific issue on which you disagree with them?
- How will you build consensus and support in the community around the work of the school district? Who do you bring with you to the table?
- Please describe your past experience with conflict resolution and consensus building.

SOCIAL STUDIES	B+	A	A-	A-	A	A
SCIENCE	A-	A-	A-	B-	A	B+
ART	CU	CU		CU	CU	
MUSIC	CU	CU		CU	CU	
PHYSICAL EDUCATION						
ARITHMETIC	A-	A-	A-	B+	A	A-
Level of instruction						
Understands the meaning of numerals	+	+		+	+	
Knows and uses number facts	+	+		+	+	
Solves problems by reasoning	+	+		+	+	
LANGUAGE	A-	A-	A-	A-	A	A
Level of instruction						
Expresses himself orally	+	+		+	+	
Expresses himself in written work	+	+		+	+	
SPELLING	A-	A-	A-	A	A-	A-
Level of instruction						
Learns words from spelling list	+	+		+	+	
Uses good spelling in daily work	+	+		+	+	
WRITING	B+	B+	B+	B+	B+	B+
Forms letters well	+	+		+	+	
Uses good writing in daily work	+	+		+	+	
READING	B+	B	B	A-	B+	B+
Level in basal program						
Level of instruction is:	4	4		5	5	
Below grade level						
On grade level	✓	✓				
Above grade level				✓	✓	



National Chamber Foundation

Institute for a Competitive Workforce

U.S. Chamber of Commerce

1615 H Street NW | Washington, DC 20062

Phone: 202-463-5525 | www.uschamber.com