

NASB State Board Candidate Questionnaire 2026



Cindy Chatt – LD 16

1. **Local Control** - With so many decisions from the legislature impacting local boards, NASB is interested in your view of local control. Regarding education, what decisions do you feel are best made at the school board level vs. the State level?

I strongly believe in local control. School boards are elected by their communities because they understand the unique needs, priorities, and values of the students and families they serve. Decisions regarding curriculum implementation, staffing, budgeting priorities, school culture, extracurricular activities, and day-to-day operations are generally best made at the local level by elected school boards and administrators. The state's role should be to establish high academic expectations, ensure accountability, provide equitable funding, and create policies that give every student access to a quality education regardless of where they live. I also believe the state has a responsibility to increase its share of public education funding so local districts are less reliant on property taxes while maintaining strong schools. The best outcomes occur when the state sets clear goals and provides the resources communities need, while trusting locally elected school boards to determine the best way to meet those goals in their own districts.

2. **School Funding** - Every year the legislature makes decisions about the way schools are funded, making predictability of funding a challenge. What changes and/or adjustments, if any, do you think the Legislature should address?

Nebraska's current school funding system places too much responsibility on local property taxpayers, creating challenges for both school districts and the families who support them. I believe the Legislature should work toward a funding system that is more predictable, transparent, and sustainable so school districts can plan for the future with greater confidence. Increasing the state's share of K–12 funding must be part of that conversation. At the same time, we need to recognize that simply shifting costs from one tax source to another is not a long-term solution. Nebraska must continue growing its economy, supporting entrepreneurship, and expanding our tax base so we can make meaningful investments in education while providing lasting property tax relief. Strong public schools are essential to strong communities. Every student, whether they live in Omaha or rural Nebraska, deserves access to a high-

quality education, and every community deserves a funding system that allows schools to succeed without placing an unsustainable burden on local property taxpayers.

3. **Role of Education in the State** - What role do you think PK-12 Education plays in the future success of the State and your community?

PK-12 education is one of the most important investments Nebraska can make in its future. Strong schools prepare students not only for college and careers, but also for engaged citizenship, lifelong learning, and meaningful participation in their communities. As someone who works in economic development, I see education as a key part of attracting families, supporting local businesses, and helping communities grow. Quality schools are one of the first things people consider when deciding where to live or where to start a business. They are essential to the long-term success of both rural and urban Nebraska. I also believe our schools should help students see opportunities here at home. Whether graduates choose college, technical training, military service, or enter the workforce directly, they should leave our schools prepared for success and know that Nebraska offers opportunities to build rewarding careers and strong communities. Strong schools help create strong communities, and investing in both is one of the best ways we can secure Nebraska's future.

4. **Educational Workforce** - Educational workforce continues to be a challenge across the State from teachers to bus drivers. What would be your plan to address this challenge?

Nebraska's educational workforce challenges reflect the broader workforce issues facing our state. Recruiting and retaining teachers, paraeducators, bus drivers, and other school staff requires more than one solution. It requires competitive compensation, supportive working environments, and strong communities where people want to build their lives. I believe the Legislature should continue increasing its investment in public education so school districts have the resources to offer competitive salaries and benefits. I also support exploring loan forgiveness, scholarships, and other incentives that encourage educators to teach in Nebraska, particularly in rural communities and high-demand subject areas. Beyond school funding, we must continue addressing the factors that influence workforce recruitment and retention across all professions, including housing, childcare, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Strong schools and strong communities go hand in hand. When we invest in both, we are better positioned to attract and retain the talented educators our students deserve. Ultimately, we should view educators as professionals and ensure they have the support, resources, and respect necessary to build long and rewarding careers in Nebraska.

5. **Mandates** - School districts continue to be challenged by the increasing unfunded mandates put upon them by the State and Federal government. What is your response to mandates and the State's role in them?

I believe the Legislature should be thoughtful and disciplined when considering new mandates for school districts. While there are times when statewide standards are necessary to ensure student safety, educational quality, and accountability, every new requirement carries financial and administrative costs that are often borne by local districts. Whenever possible, decisions should be made at the local level by locally elected school boards that understand the needs of their students and communities. If the state determines that a new mandate is necessary, it should also carefully consider the financial impact and provide the resources needed to implement it successfully whenever feasible. Before adopting additional requirements, I believe the Legislature should ask three questions: Is this necessary? Will it improve student outcomes? Can our schools realistically implement it with the resources available? If the answer to those questions is no, we should reconsider whether that mandate belongs in state law. I believe our goal should be to give school districts the flexibility to meet high expectations while avoiding unnecessary burdens that divert time and resources away from educating students.

Final Thoughts

Education is one of the greatest investments we can make in Nebraska's future. Our schools are not only preparing students for the next stage of life, but also shaping the future workforce, community leaders, entrepreneurs, and engaged citizens who will determine the success of our state. As someone who works in economic development, I believe we have an opportunity to strengthen partnerships between schools, local businesses, higher education, community organizations, and employers. By exposing students to the many career paths available in Nebraska—including skilled trades, agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, entrepreneurship, and professional careers—we can help them see that they don't have to leave the state to build meaningful and successful lives. I want every student to graduate with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to pursue their goals, while also understanding the incredible opportunities that exist right here in Nebraska. Investing in our students today is one of the best ways we can ensure strong communities and a strong Nebraska for generations to come.

How can voters contact you?

My cell phone number is 904.327.8479.