

NASB State Board Candidate Questionnaire 2026



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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?

Many people do not understand the unique governance structure of our public school system. For legislators, this is problematic because they are often involved in decisions that are best left to the State School Board or Local School Boards. The legislature's main involvement in public schools should be around funding, and they should stick to that as much as possible. They should also be involved when laws need to be implemented to ensure that all children are receiving quality education. I would call this work social justice for students. The State Board of Education, which is a constitutionally created body, is essentially the executive branch for schools. They are charged with providing guidance around state and federal education law. Essentially, they interpret laws and spell out how Local Education Agencies (LEAs) can meet regulations. Oftentimes, both the legislature and the state school board overstep their authority and trample upon local control. This is problematic because school districts are funded and controlled locally. The state and federal level may get to direct a district on what they must do, but the local school board gets to decide how to do it. The local school board's most important duties are to create policies that dictate how the district will be run and to hire a superintendent. The superintendent and their staff have some autonomy in the "how" of the work, as long as they follow policy and legal requirements. The whole system is complex and makes running schools difficult. As much as possible, decisions should be left to local school boards because they are the closest to the situation and understand the community and the district they serve the best. I appreciate the training that NASB provides to local school boards because having a board that understands its lane of control and stays in that lane is an effective board.

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?

I have heard from several superintendents about how challenging this lack of predictability is for planning out funding. In some cases, the lack of predictability ends

up costing the district more money because they cannot adequately plan out needed improvements. The legislature should at least be able to set funding for each biennium since the state budgets in this manner. It would be better if the legislature could do this on a three-year basis.

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 essential to the future success of the state and local communities. Further, education should be considered a right to which everyone is entitled. Anything that denies education to a group or individual threatens their future. I worry that poor homeschool or private school models that some parents expose their children to are actually a denial of that student's educational rights. The lack of governance of homeschool and private schools in the state of NE is concerning. Even though public schools' autonomy has been under fire from some groups, public schools remain the strongest bulwark against threats to our democratic republic.

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?

A first step is to push back against the demonization of public schools. Some of our current politicians repeatedly scapegoat public schools as the cause of many problems. We need leaders who stand up and refute these accusations. Nebraska has one of the best PK-12 educational systems in the country, and we should loudly proclaim our success to push back against our detractors. Our education workforce needs to feel supported by state leaders. I would encourage districts to adopt models seen in some places where districts are growing their own workforce and starting those programs in elementary school. This is especially important for individuals who are typically underrepresented in the educational workforce. Beyond this, I think we need to consider offering tuition assistance or similar incentives for high-need areas.

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 think legislative bodies really need to consider funding when adopting new legislation with mandates. There are times when a mandate is an extension of what is already happening within a school, and in this case, it is okay not to allocate additional funds. But this is the exception and not the rule. Too often, new mandates add significant costs to public districts and districts are forced to raise local taxes or make other cuts that impact their effectiveness in other areas. If an issue is important enough to

warrant new legislation from the state or federal government, then they should allocate funds to cover the cost.

Final Thoughts

Nebraska's education system is one of the best in the country, and much of its strength is due to our high-quality educators. One of the great things about those educators is that they are never satisfied and are serious about continuous improvement. I am proud to be a Nebraskan educator, and I think we need more educators in the legislature.

How can voters contact you?

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