

**Candidate Questionnaire  
Delta County Joint School District 50 Board of Directors  
September, 2023**

**Dan Burke**

1. Describe the qualities, qualifications and experience you have that can give voters confidence that you should be a member of the Delta County School Board? Please be specific.

Being raised in an educational family I have always sensed the need to help people. Trying to make a difference in students lives have driven me to continue my educational career. Having someone to listen to and understand the challenges that students encounter caused me to become appreciative of people that are kind and accepting, even though they may not agree.

As stated above I was raised in an educational family. My father was a high school principal and later became superintendent of schools in a small southeast Kansas community for over thirty plus years in his life. My mother was the elementary school secretary. I have three brothers and one sister who are retired teachers. I received my BSED in Biology from Pittsburg State University and Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Wichita State University and received my Colorado Administration Endorsement from Denver University. My educational career started in 1975 in a rural community south of Wichita KS teaching and coaching at the high school/middle school level. My wife, Bev and I moved out to Hotchkiss in 1982. I felt fortunate to have held several positions in my educational career. I started as a science teacher, football coach, and girls and boys basketball and track at the middle and high school levels. Also I served as a guidance counselor, assistant principal and principal at Hotchkiss High School and then became the District Testing & Assessment Director when state assessments were introduced. I retired from Delta County School District in 2010 with thirty-five years of service. My wife Bev also retired in 2011 as a teacher/coach for thirty-one years at Hotchkiss Middle School where she taught Social Studies and Physical Education and coached volleyball, basketball and track. We have a son and daughter who both graduated from Hotchkiss High School and Colorado State University in Fort Collins. I have been on the Board of Directors for the Colorado School Board Association (CASB) and Colorado High School Activities Association (CHSAA). I serve as a Board member for the Kidz Clinic for Delta Schools and currently the President of Delta County School District School Board. I am a national and state certified EMT and work as an On-Call EMT for the North Fork Ambulance Association.

2. Have you had any prior experience as a member of a group dealing with a controversial issue? How did you deal with it?

Being a high school administrator and school board member I have dealt with several controversial issues. The quality that stands out for me in dealing with these issues is being an active listener; not automatically shutting out opinions that you may not agree with, and truly understanding each other concerns and outcomes that may result in a decision that is not popular. Also it is important to have accurate and factual information and not relying on hearsay information to make a sound and rational decision. Having a “face to face” conversation with parties involved is vital. Emails and text messages are not method of coming up with a plausible solution to the issue. Nothing is more important than having someone look you in the eye to get their point across. Being courteous and civil is of utmost importance. Nothing can get accomplished when emotions overrule good judgement. You are not going to make everyone happy but hopefully they understand they were given the time and courtesy to state their concern.

3. Historically, school board elections have been politically non-partisan. Recently some political parties have endorsed school board candidates.

a. Do you feel political parties should be involved in endorsing school board candidates? Why or why not?

I personally believe political parties should not be involved in endorsing school board candidates. The central reason being local school boards were not formed to be influenced by political agendas which could interfere with a child’s education. This keeps local school boards “local” and not at the beckon call of a political party.

b. What role, if any, should partisan politics play in the make-up of the school board?

Partisan Politics should not have any role or make-up of a school board. By being partisan you are strongly committed to a central belief or structure which creates an inflexible way of independent reasoning. Having a school board member that takes that role can lead to outcomes that are not in the best interest of our school district.

c. Do you feel that political extremism constitutes a threat to public education in the District? Why or why not?

Extremism in any form can become a threat to any public education system. Throw in politics, it becomes even more dangerous, especially to school districts. Many times this extremism is centered around political issues which leads to radical outcomes which are not well thought out decisions.

d. How would you feel about being endorsed by a political party? Would you accept the endorsement?

I would **not** want to be endorsed by any political party. You could become a puppet for this party and have agendas that are not in the best interest that represent our school district in a meaningful manner. That is why when you go to vote for the school board member position in Colorado you do not see any party affiliation listed next to your name. Colorado is one of few states that still have “local control” of their respective schools. Local control means that decisions on curriculum, personnel, school calendars, graduation requirements and classroom policies are made by the school districts and school boards.

4. Describe your understanding of the role of the board and the superintendent.

I view this role similar to being a member of a team. The superintendent would be the “captain” and board members as part of the team. By being a team member you would rely on the “captain” or superintendent for guidance and direction. To properly function as a team we all must work together for a common purpose, free from negativity and unproductive outcomes. Also the “captain” should allow team members to speak freely and openly without ridicule. Additionally, the “captain” should not hesitate to “call out” team members that are not being supportive and looking at ways to disrupt the balance of a productive environment. In short, as a member of the team we need constant and consistent reminders that we all share in the common mission of supporting our students and staff in a positive and productive manner.

5. Describe the standards of conduct you would expect to prevail at a school board meeting.

The central theme for standards of conduct would be we ALL are in this together to support our students and staff in a positive and productive manner. Appreciate and encourage different opinions which would lead to constructive dialogue. Be courteous and respectful with an open mind which leads to trusting one another. Exhibit traits of being a supportive team member while honoring each others viewpoints.

6. Our form of government is a representative democracy.

a. In serving as a school board member, how would you vote where, in your judgment, the right thing is different from popular public opinion?

Sometimes the public opinion is not fully informed of all the information school board members have at their disposal. Bits and pieces of vital information is lost in translation from the general public. The superintendent and leadership team can shed more light on an opinion which you helps you bring together a rational and sometimes unpopular decision.

b. What does a representative democracy mean to you?

As a registered voter you elect your representative which in turn vote on policies that govern your form of government. Naturally, you take great stock on choosing this representative which you trust to follow through on their promises. This is very similar on how school boards are elected. Having this form of democracy ensures proper representation and following through with selected policies that govern school board decisions.

- c. To whom should a school board member be most accountable?  
Voters?

Students and teachers?

To get elected you need registered voters to select you as outlined in the Colorado State Statutes. But ultimately you are most accountable to your students and teachers. In other words that is where the rubber meets the road. Students and teachers need the school board support to properly provide an effective education. Voters will decide if this accountability exist.

7. Decisions of the Delta County School Board may affect the interests of individual communities in Delta County, requiring balancing the interests of those communities against the overall interests of the entire school district.

- a. How could you balance the interests of individual communities against the overall interests of the entire school district?

Definitely, I represent the entire Delta County School District with the unique balance of having the interests for my individual community I reside in. Each community in Delta County have their “wants and needs” list. Balancing that becomes very challenging at times. Several years ago the district assessed with an outside agency the school facilities of each community and put them in sequential order of anticipated start and finish dates. Not all projects are started or completed with the dates originally projected due to funding or last minute emergency requests. In short, a Herculean or monumental task to say the least. With the guidance of our facilities staff, and supply demands, decisions are set in motion for big projects such as classroom remodels, outside field improvements, parking lots, etc. What the general public does not really know is that a lot of pre-planning, takes place several years in advance to get these projects going in a timely fashion. I know for one, I keep a close eye on these projects and try my best to make sure our students and community are getting the best consideration of getting them started and completed in the most cost and efficient way possible.

- b. What can you, as a school board member, do to ensure all students are prepared for their future?

By providing all the necessary resources available to our district schools, in other words funding. Funding from the state has improved but specifically lacks in rural school districts. Having effective teachers with competitive salaries is important. Supporting our staff with data driven effective instruction will enhance our student learning from year to year. We would also rely on our superintendent for guidance and with the help of the district leadership team in providing you with updated curriculum, assessment data,

various surveys from staff, students and general public. One particular group that knows first hand is our guidance counselors and the contacts they have with students when they have graduated.

8. Do you see any need for change in any existing policy for PreK-12 education? An example would be the influence of social media.

I do have some suggestions regarding social media. I would like to see some form of media literacy in our schools. Students and staff and for that matter all of us are bombarded with information at our finger tips. Some believe "if it's on the internet it must be true". As most of us know that is further than the truth. But clever search engines, web page designers etc. have masked the validity of their sources. Students with the aid of teachers need to develop an array of techniques of validating factual and accurate information to make proper conclusions about events that have happened or are in the moment of occurring. It has been well documented that certain social media sources can and does has the ability to produce harmful and hurtful information that can effect students mental health. We need to keep on top of this as a school district and continue to help students make good choices. Additionally, we need to continue to look at our assessment data to provide us with student growth outcomes especially in the Math and Reading areas.

9. After reading and considering the seven principles RTB feels should guide political conduct in Western Colorado, if there is one or more principles you do not endorse, please identify them and explain.

RTB is long overdue and in good I faith support these values. I appreciate the questions and hopefully look forward in continuing serving as a Delta County School Board member.

Sincerely,

Dan Burke