

Erika Brown
Restore the Balance's School Board Candidate Survey

What motivates you to run for school board?

I am motivated to run for school board because I care deeply about ensuring that every student in our community gets the support and resources they need to thrive. I believe that strong public education is the solution to many of the challenges our communities face — from building a skilled workforce to fostering civic responsibility and strengthening our democracy. Our schools work best when we listen to diverse perspectives, use facts and data to guide decisions, and work respectfully together to solve problems.

What qualifications do you bring and how are you preparing to serve if elected?

I bring over 5 years of experience serving on the school board, which has given me a deep understanding of our district, our policies, and how our schools operate. During my service, I have focused on promoting transparency, improving communications, engaging the community in meaningful ways, and pursuing educational equity. This experience has allowed me to build strong relationships with fellow board members, staff, parents, and community partners, which helps get things done efficiently and collaboratively. I am prepared to continue serving by drawing on this knowledge and these relationships, always guided by facts, evidence, and a commitment to putting students first.

Do you agree with the seven principles Restore the Balance feels should guide political conduct in Colorado? If you do not agree with one or more of these principles, please identify and explain why.

Yes, I fully agree with all seven principles Restore the Balance outlines for guiding political conduct in Colorado and throughout the country. I am particularly passionate about the principle that facts, supported by objectively examined evidence, should be the basis for what we believe and how we act. Too many of our conflicts appear to be disputing the basic facts. The result is a monumental waste of precious time and energy for all parties. I believe that if we can agree on the facts, we can have productive, solutions-focused, and civil conversations even when perspectives differ. I work hard to uphold all of these principles in my service on the school board, and I believe that

keeping students at the center of our work can and should bring people together across differences to make decisions that benefit the entire community. I am always open to meeting and talking with anyone in our community who has concerns or questions so long as they can do so in a civil way. We initiated Board coffee chats several years ago specifically to provide a venue for such conversations between community members and the Board.

Durango School District and its board members have been the target of misinformation campaigns and legal threats. How should the school board address controversy, misinformation, and public criticism?

I'm proud to say that throughout some very difficult periods of controversy, we as a Board have stayed focused on our core responsibilities: serving students, families, and staff. Relying on facts and evidence, we have maintained professionalism, modeling good leadership, and communicating as clearly as possible. We prioritize sharing accurate information, engaging the community in a respectful and transparent manner, and addressing concerns without resorting to negativity or personal attacks. By keeping students at the center of our work and relying on facts, we have maintained trust and continue making progress.

What does "common ground" mean to you in the context of board decision-making?

To me, 'common ground' means prioritizing the values we share and using that as a launching point for finding solutions that we can all live with, even if we don't agree on every detail. It involves assuming good intent, deep listening, keeping our assumptions in check, and always keeping students at the center of our decisions. You have to be willing to have difficult conversations. On the school board, we can often identify shared priorities — like student success, safety, and equitable access to resources." There are times, however, when it comes down to a majority vote, and at that point we all have to respect the decision even if we don't agree with it.

If elected, how will you listen to and represent the concerns of constituents who don't agree with you?

If re-elected, I will continue to listen carefully to all constituents, remaining transparent, civil, open, and accessible. I will focus on what is best for students, staff, and families, and I will make sure the concerns I hear are clearly communicated with my fellow board members so we can all better understand different perspectives and take them into

account when making decisions. My goal is to balance differing viewpoints while keeping the needs of our school community at the center of every decision.

What are the top two to three issues facing Colorado and briefly how do you plan to address these issues if elected?

One of the top issues facing Colorado is that public education is critically underfunded, which has long-term effects across nearly every sector of society. During my tenure on the board, I have been a strong advocate for education funding, working to ensure all districts have the resources every student needs to succeed. I created our legislative platform, which prioritizes adequate and equitable funding, and I am spearheading our district's involvement in the Get It Done campaign through Great Education Colorado to advocate for funding based on the adequacy studies commissioned by the legislature.

Closely related to funding is the challenge of workforce development, particularly in rural areas like ours. Our district has worked hard to build effective local partnerships to address these challenges. We now offer 14 high school career paths, many targeting industries with local shortages, including education, healthcare, and the building trades. We are proud partners with the Southwest Education Collaborative, Pueblo Community College, and Fort Lewis College, creatively leveraging resources to maximize local impact. Moving forward, I will continue to focus on developing and maintaining partnerships and creatively accessing resources to expand opportunities and prepare students for meaningful, in-demand careers.

Lastly, affordable housing has become a critical issue, particularly for mountain towns like ours. Long-lasting solutions are critical to ensuring we continue to be a viable community, where workers can live in the communities they serve. The solution will have to be multi-faceted. On the school board I will continue to advocate for better wages for our staff and invest in housing solutions for our workers. I will also continue to help develop the workforce needed to build the many additional units we will need to solve the problem long-term.