

# 2008 LHUSD School Board Candidate Forum.

## Additional Questions – All Respondents.

### Mike Riddle

1. What qualities do you possess that will make you a competent and sensitive Board member for our district?

My background in Psychology and Anthropology, experience as a classroom teacher, years in management and leadership, ability as a speaker and facilitator. I am a good judge of people.

2. What will you do to keep yourself informed with what is going on in the classrooms?

I will create and maintain trust and open communication with Administrators, Teachers, Parents, and Students through a variety of methods. PTA, K-12, etc.,

3. Are you familiar with 21st Century skills? If so, which skills do you feel are necessary to include in K-12 education?

First, Computer skills: I was a programmer and have seen the evolution of the computer. It is vital students from K-12 and as well teachers all learn, evaluate, and use information available through the computer.

In addition, life skills, cultural literacy, judgment and evaluation of consequences.

4. How important is it to fund athletics?

Athletics are extracurricular activities. There is value to all athletic programs, but funding from the District's budget must be supplemented by, other methods, tax credits, Booster Clubs and support from parents and local businesses.

5. What problems or issues do you consider to be the most serious facing our school district. What proposals do you have to address or solve them?

Funding: The Arizona State Legislatures failure to fund education in Arizona.

Determine ways to communicate to Phoenix and Washington that our schools are being left behind and we will no longer tolerate it.

AIMS Test: Is a political creation detrimental to complete education.

Create methods outside regular school time for test prep by volunteer trainers and retired teachers.

Bring pressure to bear on both Legislature and State School Superintendent to fix the test.

## **Jo Navaretta**

What qualities do you possess that will make you a competent and sensitive Board member for our district?

As a veteran board member, I believe that one of my strongest skills is active listening and really comprehending what people are attempting to get across. While I may not always agree, I always respect the opinions of others. My background in business management and finance, along with some good old common sense, has also served as needed assets to our District Governing Board.

What will you do to keep yourself informed with what is going on in the classrooms?

Keeping lines of communication open with our teachers, staff, and school administration, along with always remaining approachable is extremely important in order to remain effective in the role of board member. Whenever major issues arise, we have been sure to get input from all those who would be affected at the building level as well as from the administration and the community. The people in the trenches are key contributors in our decision-making process. Of course, student performance is also closely studied by the board; however, these results do not always tell the whole story, which is where open discussion and problem solving is essential.

Are you familiar with 21st Century skills? If so, which skills do you feel are necessary to include in K-12 education?

Yes. It is essential for our schools to prepare students to become effective and productive citizens within our global economy. Some of the skills I feel are crucial for our students to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century include creativity and innovation skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills, communication and collaboration skills, information, media and technology skills, and life and career skills. All of these competencies should be integrated within our core curriculum.

How important is it to fund athletics?

Athletics along with all of our extra-curricular activities is important in the education of the entire student. Collaboration, teamwork, and creativity are only a few of the valuable life skills taught when students are able to participate in extra-curricular activities. We have been very fortunate that (although full funding through our M&O budget is not feasible at this time primarily because the state does not fund these programs at all) we have an extremely supportive community who has consistently supported our tax-credit program which funds a large portion of our extra-curricular programs.

What problems or issues do you consider to be the most serious facing our school district. What proposals do you have to address or solve them?

Our main challenge is now and always will be continuous improvement in student achievement. We need to expand our focus on curriculum development and methods of instruction and assessment to ensure student success in this area. We have no program targeted for middle school students who are not being successful in the current middle school environment, which is something we must change. I plan to work on expansion of the Round Table program to include middle school students, continue our focus on parent and community involvement in our schools, work on developing a greater offering of career paths and supporting classes for our secondary students, and work to ensure the expansion of dual enrollment classes taught at the high school in partnership with MCC. Budget shortfalls have always been an issue and continue to be so. I plan to continue to keep a tight rein on spending, minimizing waste and directing the continuation of programs funded by override dollars.

**Becky Goldberg**

**What qualities do you possess that will make you a competent and sensitive Board Member for our District?**

I have always been level headed and had the ability to look at all sides of issues prior to making a decision. I ask questions when I am unclear and I seek to educate myself on the issues that require a decision. I am fully aware that I will not make everyone happy with my choices but I know when I make a decision I have been fully educated and am making the best choice possible for the district. As for being competent I believe that continuing to educate myself and ask the questions in regards to the issues will always make me a better board member. I will continue to educate our community on the education values we need in this district.

**What will you do to keep yourself informed with what is going on in the classrooms?**

I have always tried to maintain an ability to speak with staff, parents and the community about what is going on in the classrooms. Given my work schedule I have not been able to that to the extent that I would like however I do make every effort to ask questions of administration, teachers, classified staff, parents and community members about what is good and bad in our classrooms. I also continue to be an involved parent in the district.

**Are you familiar with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills? If so, which do you feel are necessary to include in K-12 Education?**

Yes, the skills that will be needed in our K-12 education must contain technology based attributes and the ability for our students to have a comprehensive education that will allow them to compete in global economy we have today. We need to teach our students to be the whole package not just one portion of it.

**How important is it to fund athletics?**

This is a time old question that many community members believe that board members arbitrarily and automatically choose to not fund or remove as means to help our budget. I firmly believe that athletics are very necessary for our students. I personally have seen what a difference a sport can do for a child my own. After having said that, the state of Arizona places expectations on our public schools without funding and tells us to figure out the rest. Unfortunately the State of Arizona does not give extra or any money to us to fund athletics so we must use our Tax Credit which is the one way they have given us and also other means outside the box to ensure that our students can have athletics and all other extra curricular activities so they can be the complete person they need to be in our society.

**What problems or issues do you consider to be the most serious facing our district? What proposals do you have to address or solve them?**

To look at the district as a whole we are doing very well given what funding we do have. Over the past few years we have implemented several programs that have addressed many of the needs here. The most serious issue we have and this will always be the same answer and that is funding. We need to protect the programs we have and find ways to sustain them for students and staff. We have and override coming up and that always causes concern. As for fixing those problems we need to have our community

members help us push our state elected officials to pass funding that is fair and equitable for all districts. As for the override we need to continue to educate our community that we are not asking for more just to keep what we have so that we can maintain the high level of education we are providing our students *their students*.

## **Nancy lanonne**

1. What qualities do you possess that will make you a competent and sensitive Board member for our district?

First and foremost, I listen. People want to be heard, whether they are students, teachers, administration or community members. I am open minded and try to evaluate all perspectives in making decisions. I also am a strong advocate when there is opportunity for change, but honest when conflicting priorities or regulations mean the answer must be “no”.

I am a team builder and use my facilitation skills to work toward solutions. As board members must work together with the administration to accomplish the district's goals, I feel that skill will be particularly useful.

I am a person of integrity and strong commitment to my community. I am also passionate about education and am dedicated to helping assure a quality education for all students in the Lake Havasu Unified School District #1.

2. What will you do to keep yourself informed with what is going on in the classrooms?

Since my youngest child graduated nearly 5 years ago, I have already taken the opportunity to tour two district schools, talk with the principals and start getting a feel for what is happening in our schools now. If elected, I would like to spend time on the school campuses, attend events as possible, and learn about the common issues and individual cultures of our schools. Celebrating the accomplishments of our children and the dedication of our teachers and principals is one of the rewards of school board service.

Realistically, board members can't know what happens in the classrooms on an everyday level, nor is that the board's role. Having an understanding of the overall issue, though, is very helpful in making policy level decisions or doing planning at a district level.

3. Are you familiar with 21st Century skills? If so, which skills do you feel are necessary to include in K-12 education?

I believe when most of us think about 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills we think in terms of technology use. Computer skills at all job levels; multi-media familiarity, global networking and communication become more crucial every year. The challenge I see for our schools is continuing to keep up with the changes in technology so that Lake Havasu City students remain competitive.

21<sup>st</sup> Century skills go beyond technology though. Communication skills, both written and oral, will be very important as more work is done through remote locations. A continued emphasis on writing and presentation skills will be important at the K-12 level.

Foreign language will be an important part of the education needed to compete, as businesses become more global. One of the exciting things about Havasu Online is the opportunity to offer additional foreign language opportunities to high school students.

From personal experience as an employer in the healthcare field, I see that creativity and critical thinking skills are becoming increasingly important. The pace of change, increased expectations for productivity and an increasingly complex work environment require those intangible but vital skills.

4. How important is it to fund athletics?

The ability to fund athletics, as well as all other extracurricular activities, is important for development of well rounded students. Extracurricular activities give students an opportunity to learn teamwork, enhance their creativity and develop a variety of skills including leadership, technology use and the critical thinking skills we discussed in the previous question.

The struggle I see for the Lake Havasu Unified School District #1 is the same one districts across the United States face. When money is tight, difficult decisions must be made based on state and federal mandates and the use of funds for programs that provide the best value for all students. Fees have been raised to help share the responsibility. Promotion of the tax credit to help raise additional funding and assist families continues to be important.

5. What problems or issues do you consider to be the most serious facing our school district? What proposals do you have to address or solve them?

Some of the key issues I have become aware of since attending school board meetings are:

1. Facilities that need repair or replacement and plans for additional schools
2. Recruitment and retention of teachers
3. Striving to not only meet state and federal mandates for student performance but to excel.
4. Tight funding for schools which is not likely to improve in coming years

Recommendations were recently made at a work session on facilities and this issue needs to remain a high priority due to the length of time required to effect change. I support continuing efforts to create a positive teaching environment through mentoring and improved professional development opportunities. A plan is already in place in to reach the required performance standards however I would support efforts to help our students excel. As we discussed at the forum, it is vital to get the override renewed, continue to advocate at a state level for equitable funding formulas and use creativity to find additional funding through opportunities like Havasu Online.

As a board candidate, I know I have much to learn about the challenges and opportunities facing the district. I hope to have the opportunity as a school board member to work with students, parents, teachers, administration and community toward solving them.