



The following questions were emailed to candidates on February 10. Responses received by the deadline of February 20 are included in our evaluation. No edits were made to any responses.

John Rutledge (District 200)

Do you believe your school's current Health Education curriculum should include age-appropriate sex education? What do you see as the strengths and/or areas needing improvement in this curriculum?

I have much to learn about current sex education efforts. Unless things have changed in recent decades, students have many opportunities to learn, whether factually or not. Older children, the internet, and other sources offer information that curious young minds seek and absorb. It is my understanding that our schools attempt to provide accurate sex education consistent with the age at which the kids are exposed to "street" information outside the school. This is difficult. As I have observed, there are kids who at 14 are going on 30 and 18-year-olds going on 11. Parents can opt their children out if they choose, just as they can block their children from checking particular books out of the library. There is always room for improvement, but often the proposed or demanded "improvement" is in conflict with improvement ideas held by others. I disagree with those who want to impose their principles on others by limiting or requiring certain teaching. I strongly believe that the role of the board is one of governance and oversight, not administration and management. The board hires the superintendent and must give that individual the responsibility and commensurate authority for running the district. If I were an educator or librarian, I would be teaching or running a library. Those are not duties of a healthy board. I served on the Wheaton City Council for ten years. I am not an engineer, but I could ask questions until I understood enough to vote on stormwater issues. We must hire good administrators who select good teachers and then trust them until they prove untrustworthy.

What is your position on the renewal of the Invest in Kids Scholarship Tax Credit Program? Do you favor state tax credits or vouchers for use by families to send children to private schools? If so, how do you feel this will affect public schools?

The question of tax credits and vouchers is outside the authority of the School Board. I want our public schools to be so good that there is no educational need for anything else. If that does not satisfy the particular requirements of individual families, they must make their own decisions. I realize that many families do not have access to public schools comparable to ours. That may require other solutions. But that is not my focus. As an aside, I also believe that social and community problems outside the schools have a major impact on the educational environment and outcome. There is a limit to the miracles that even the best teachers can pull off when they are up against large societal problems.

What, if any, is the role of the Board in the selection of materials for school libraries and curriculum development?

As I noted earlier, the board's responsibility should be to select highly qualified leaders, which I believe we now have in District 200. It is then the job of those professionals to bring to the board their recommendations, respond to questions, and defend their recommendations. As I implied earlier, I am not a librarian or curriculum expert. But CUSD 200 is well-staffed with those highly qualified experts. I have many years of experience, both in the private sector and in volunteer roles, in evaluating the work of professionals. And I do respect the benefit of having a broader perspective than perhaps a specialist may have. It has not been unusual for me to ask questions that send the expert back to do more research and to be better prepared.