

# **School Board Candidate Responses to Questionnaire**

**Answers have not been edited in any way (even for grammar or spelling). The answers were copied and pasted directly from the spreadsheet of responses or the way in which the candidate was able to respond.**

**Answers are in the order they were received.**

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## **Question 1: How do you plan on increasing support for teachers as their requirements and duties grow in the current educational setting?**

### **Tim Green**

To be a teacher today is a difficult thing. Not only are they underpaid, but they are constantly under fire for something. The question of increasing "support" for teachers is a "buy-in" in the community. Are we paying them enough? Do they have a place to live that is in their budget? Is their health care affordable? Find, hire and retain good teachers by taking care of them.

### **Ralph A. Vinci**

First address the requests and concerns from classroom teachers. Create brain storming sessions/ideas to seek solutions to the increasing demands of their classrooms.

### **Maureen Donohoue Howell**

As the starting point for every answer I would begin by listening. Without input from the people affected by the actions taken by the Board of Education I would violate my own first principle - Listen. I would look at evidence in support of and opposed to a proposal. I would do additional research -Learn I would carefully weigh all points of view. I would accept the responsibility to stand up and speak up as one of seven members of the School Board because that is what leaders do.- Lead.

To address the question raised, I would begin by meeting with teachers to clearly define what the "requirements" and "duties" are that they see growing. I would ask teachers how those requirements and duties relate to the implementation of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) teaching model and how they meet the educational, social, and emotional needs of every student, every day. How do they move this District to being number one in all grades in all areas. I would ask for their proposed solutions. I would ask that teachers help me learn more about the problem by referring me to any research they are aware of that supports their position. I would then ask teachers to prioritize their solutions, most important to least important, and to explain why they order them as they do.

### **Sharon Terhune**

This question is revisited several times in the next 19 questions, so read on. I was an elementary school teacher for 37 years. I get it. It's getting harder and harder to be a teacher and you feel less and less supported. I lived the struggle, but I also made sure to be an advocate for myself and my team, and I worked hard to live as healthy a life as I could to stay alive, productive, and valued. What is it that you want in the realm of support? Can the board of education provide that? Does it just come down to money? Do you feel that the board can change the way that more and more families are failing their kids but expecting the schools to make up for them? I can't respond to this question without asking some questions myself.

### Jennifer Butler

COVID and Standards Based Grading both increased the workload for teachers over the past few years. I appreciate the teachers for stepping up and facing the challenges COVID presented our district, and I am hopeful that COVID based workloads are diminishing as our country is stabilizing after COVID. Standards Based Grading does require much work for teachers, and as Professional Learning Communities continue to work together the goal is for this collaborative effort to decrease the overall workload for individual teachers. Building administrators have the responsibility to help resolve teacher concerns that need to be addressed.

### Jared Kail

To predict how the district should support teachers as requirements and duties change over time would require a crystal ball to determine what those requirements and duties are. I do believe that dynamics over the last several years have increased the load that teachers are expected to carry. One issue I see come up over and over is the impact Standards Based Grading (SBG) has on educators. While I appreciate the goals of SBG, I worry that it places a lot of pressure on teachers, particularly toward the end of a term, to catch up kids that have abused the relaxed nature of the program by procrastinating on homework and failing to prepare for tests. I can imagine trying to bounce from lesson to lesson, from one part of the semester/trimester to another, must be exhausting. I feel strongly that we need to inject the concepts of student accountability, reliability and preparedness back into the system to try and reduce the sheer number of tasks teachers must address at the end of the term.

However, to build in proper supports the Board and admin need to fully understand the *needs* of teachers. To that end, I believe we need to get a much more formal and complete picture of the climate among our employees. I encourage the district to conduct more frequent climate surveys and act upon those as appropriate. Please see my response to Question #8 for more information on this topic.

One thing the Board always needs to keep in mind, however, is the balance between setting policy and micromanaging. The Board needs to be prepared to ask administration to make suggestions about how to better support teachers, and in turn to support the suggestions admin develops. However, we need to be careful about getting into the weeds. We hire good administrators, so we need to trust them to find good solutions.

### Mike McConnell

The school is a team of players, coaches, and managers that with trust, respect, and understanding can accomplish great things. Realizing that a school's culture and climate directly impact the organization's ability to change gives the school leader insights as to how positive, productive change can be implemented and sustained.

Be it normative or adaptive change, school leaders today must understand that having a common focus on student achievement and measurable outcomes is expected. A school's culture needs to formatively nurture a climate that is entrenched in high expectation for all stakeholders.

### Aileen Brew

Teachers need to have adequate, unstructured time during the day for planning and prep. Staff and school leadership should decide together which requirements and tasks are appropriate and necessary and avoid overburdening individuals. And, if we can't achieve that balance, can we hire more staff?

### Karen Harms

Staff need to feel more appreciated and heard. Staff at FCSD#1 work extremely hard and always go above and beyond for their students. Gratitude needs to be shown as much as possible as well as creating more opportunities for staff wellness activities. More dialogue between teachers, administration, and the board needs to occur to know what specific support teachers need and how to get/give that support.

### Todd Sutton

I would encourage a team approach in the management of the teachers. It is important for individuals to know that they are part of a great organization that is dedicated to helping them succeed in the same direction that they, themselves, are focused on. Top down, genuine relationship-building is a key to help this out. I think that the grading system is adding unnecessary duties on the teachers as well and will look into exploring ways to either correct what we have or to discard it for a better solution.

## **Question 2: Do you feel that the concealed weapon policy (that staff or teachers have) is necessary and beneficial? please explain your answer**

### Tim Green

Totally agree with the policy. Have been through a lockdown with a school shooter. Had teachers had a weapon, it would have been taken care of quickly.

### Ralph A. Vinci

Yes, due to the dangerous nature of an armed intruder who's desire to kill innocent people. It is a matter of "just seconds" in deciding life and death of students and staff as first responders could be delayed, as the situation unfolds.

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

No. There is no evidence showing that arming teachers or other staff prevents gun violence in schools. In analyzing the data collected in simulated "active shooter" situations real concerns have been raised about the safety of staff and students from other armed staff due to their misidentification of the active shooter. The current policy fails to address the coordination of the armed teacher/staff response with the actions of non-armed teachers/staff, other law enforcement and emergency personnel. Confusion about response puts students and staff at higher risk of being harmed by the "active shooter".

We should be sure we're not just using our emotions to propose untested and potentially lethal solutions to a problem that is not solved by our action.

There is evidence that identifying behavioral, mental health and emotional issues for young students and intervening with mental health and other supports reduces all types of violence in schools.

### Sharon Terhune

I would have voted against the staff concealed carry policy. I believe that it allows the supporting constituents and board members some emotional security knowing that we have that policy on the books. In reality, it's not going to solve the problem. It might, in fact, worsen a live shooter situation.

### Jennifer Butler

The concealed weapon policy is an additional measure to minimize the casualties and fatalities in the event of an active shooter among our students and staff. According to the Alice Training Institute, the average police response time for an active shooting is 15 minutes, and an active shooter fires every 4-15 seconds with a 50-70% hit rate. In 14 minutes, it is predicted that 56 shots will be fired, with 14 individuals wounded and 14 fatalities. The Alice Training Fact sheet states, "Seconds count during a violent event and the actions taken in between when the event begins, and law enforcement arrives, are significant and can increase survivability." Our district conceal and carry policy is an additional protection for our district in the event of an active shooter. The policy will be implemented this year, and it will be imperative that the district and school board oversee this action very carefully.

### Jared Kail

On July 23rd, 2019, I voted in favor of the staff concealed carry policy, or CKA. Nothing I've heard of since that time has changed my position on CKA. In fact, since its passing we've seen more devastating violence in our schools. According to Education Week (<https://www.edweek.org/leadership/school-shootings-this-year-how-many-and-where/2021/03>) there were 34 school shootings in the 21/22 school year, leaving 15 dead and 53 injured. Just two weeks ago, on October 7th, a student at NCHS in Casper was apprehended with a weapon on campus. Thankfully that student was stopped short of a disaster. While schools are statistically very safe

places to be, we know they are targets of disturbed individuals. We cannot afford to put our employee and student safety solely in hopes and prayers. We need options.

To be clear, CKA is a final measure - a last resort. The first line of our defense *must be* the mental health and wellbeing of our kids, from the first day of kindergarten through the day they walk out of highschool for the last time. Ultimately, ensuring every child is treated with decency and respect, by the system as well as peers, taking their mental wellbeing into account, is our most effective line of defense against school shootings. However, Parkland showed us that, no matter how good we think our system is, exceptions can happen.

When a child falls through the cracks and becomes so mentally disturbed that they attempt to bring a weapon to school, we hope our other non-lethal efforts will succeed. Enhanced security cameras, Safe2Tell, vigilance, hardened facilities and SROs are all the next layers of defense. And if all of those fail us, our staff is trained in ALICE. We can only hope that, when a shooter is at a classroom door, the "Counter" in ALICE is enough to eliminate the threat.

Yet, there is another option. For those that are willing to undergo mental evaluations, background tests, drug testing and significant training, our District has chosen to entrust them with lethal response. ALICE is great, but we've seen gunmen take out entire classrooms in minutes - faster than police can respond in the best of scenarios. If a school staff member is trained and willing, our District is much safer having them as the final response to a shooter hell-bent on destroying our children.

Rather than go through the counterpoints in this response, I refer you to a paper I wrote about this topic when the policy was passed:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Y7\\_UVk19ot5k9jhj7bLay4BKTD1Ysl627e1GcCbhl8Y/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Y7_UVk19ot5k9jhj7bLay4BKTD1Ysl627e1GcCbhl8Y/edit?usp=sharing).

### Mike McConnell

I support the policy. I believe that we must protect our students.

### Aileen Brew

I personally believe guns in schools belong in the hands of trained law enforcement professionals. It is a huge responsibility to bring a weapon into a school. I am not convinced that the average civilian firearms user is up to the task of potentially using lethal force in a public school filled with our children. FCSD #1 has adopted a policy allowing for concealed carry by staff in schools. I will uphold that policy if elected to the school board, but work to insure the policy is rigorously and accurately implemented.

### Karen Harms

I do not think we need to pile more responsibilities on staff that already carry a large bulk of responsibilities. The implementation of this policy was done far too quickly with very little consideration of public or staff concerns. This is not a gun issue, it is a safety issue. A committee/focus group comprised of board members, parents, staff, and current or retired law enforcement/military personnel could research best practices to bring to the public prior to a vote. Campus security who carry concealed could help screen visitors at the front offices as well as vigilantly monitor the school campuses for concerning activity. These staff members would be in constant contact with the SROs and local law enforcement. Currently, there is a lot of federal funding for campus safety and as a community we could come up with solutions where all parties feel safer.

Todd Sutton

I am in support of allowing responsible and trained individuals to have the freedom to protect themselves in all venues. I do not support coercion that forces an individual to carry a weapon if they choose not to. Nor am I for taking the opportunity away from a capable individual who wants to protect themselves and other from danger. We are a country of responsible freedom and the current system supports that concept.

### **Question 3: What will you do to strengthen PUBLIC SCHOOL education?**

#### Tim Green

Without public schools, which educate the "middle class", you don't have a democracy. An educated, tax-paying middle class is what keeps this country going. How do you strengthen it? Keep politics out of school, hire good teachers and support staff, and (God forbid) educate students to be independent, self-supporting, tax paying citizens.

#### Ralph A. Vinci

Create a vision for FCSD #1 to set and maintain measurable goals in academics, statewide testing, and emotional development.

#### Maureen Donohoue Howell

I am running for the School Board because I believe in Public Education and believe it is strengthened when citizens participate in shaping public education. I can offer no greater support than to use my professional and personal experience to serve. I am committed to listening to all interest groups both as they define problems and propose solutions. Every problem and solution must answer my questions: "How does this serve students? Are you willing to look at evidence that does not support your argument(s)? Are you willing to look for common ground to solve problems that affect our pledge to serve "every student, every day?""

#### Sharon Terhune

I am supportive of public education. It provides an amazing opportunity for Americans. I will engage with and educate constituents around the work that happens in our schools in the face of so many societal ills. I will continue to be a face in the schools, getting to know our administrators and staff from this new perspective as a board member, and visiting with those that provide the day-to-day workings to hear, first hand, from them about their joys and concerns.

#### Jennifer Butler

There are two things I believe we can discuss as a district to strengthen public school education. First we can create a Path Back to School Plan for students who opt to homeschool for a portion of their educational journey and then desire to return to public school without having to repeat a grade level. This could include our district adopting an online school program (similar to Cowboy State Virtual Academy out of Sheridan or Wyoming Virtual Academy out of Niobrara) that is available to students to enroll in our district while they opt to home school. Attendance, coursework, and grades can all coincide with our district standards and policies for a smooth transition back to public school when the students and family choose to do so.

Second, we can evaluate, revise, or create district policies that focus on helping parents through addressing concerns and conflict resolutions within the district. It would be great to have a district policy parents can refer to during these times, and building protocols that are age appropriate so parents and administrators can work through these situations. Establishing predictable conflict resolution steps for parents to follow will empower them to advocate for their students effectively and help them understand how the district operates with transparency while also maintaining confidentiality.

#### Jared Kail

This is an interesting question in that it emphasizes "PUBLIC" school education. The implication is that the Board focuses too much on private school education, which honestly confuses me. I don't believe

over the course of the last year we've spent any time discussing private education, nor have we, to my knowledge, pursued any policies that would support or prioritize private over public education.

That said, I believe that the Board of Trustees play an important role in public education in setting tone, vision, strategy and high standards. These critical functions are effectuated through hiring good administrative staff, in particular the superintendent, and holding them responsible and accountable for implementing those factors. In addition, the Board helps ensure adherence to those factors via good policy setting activities and proper disposition of our funding streams.

Right now, I believe the Board must play a role in reinjecting student accountability, reliability and preparedness back into an otherwise strong system. It is crucial to set direction and strategy via the district report card and the Profile of a Graduate. It must be proactive in determining staff morale and ways to improve it so that we retain great teachers. It must set high standards for administration, staff, parents and, most importantly, for our kids. It must be vigilant and proactive about supporting administration in its efforts to dampen the threats that high potency THC, other substances, and the drug of social media pose to our children. And it needs to be prepared to adjust to the realities of budget fluctuations in the State of Wyoming.

### Mike McConnell

To be immersed in the happening of a school system will take a concerted effort on my part. Discipline, communications, student problems, teacher issues, allocation of resources and all the other aspects of the day must be managed accordingly to meet the goals of the district.

### Aileen Brew

A great public school experience maximizes professional development opportunities for teachers and staff, provides a rigorous and useful academic experience for students and creates an open, safe, welcoming school environment for students, staff and families. I will work towards this ideal to the best of my abilities.

### Karen Harms

I believe doing a few things really well is the key to success. Often in the school setting with many programs, we get bogged down and wind up doing things "kind of well" and not really well. The focus should be on programs with the most impact on student behavior and academics. When those programs are mastered, more can then be added.

Allowing staff more time to prepare for implementation of new programs as well as creating a timeline would be very beneficial.

### Todd Sutton

Higher requirements and more strict deadlines for attaining those requirements for all students is crucial in strengthening the results of a student's education. Education is meaningless to an individual if it cannot improve their lives in the long-term, in the real world. Training a young individual only to be good in an "ivory tower" world of academics(preparing only for success in college instead of employment and job creation) is myopic. Increasing the education of the trades, financial management, as well as real college preparation can be parts of this. Also, teaching the students that there are real consequences to their actions that will affect not only their life but the lives of those around them is necessary.

## Question 4: Should the policy that protects LGBTQ+, pregnant, disabled, and veteran status in the school district be re-addressed and changed back to the original wording?

Tim Green

No

Ralph A. Vinci

No, as zero protections or rights were lost due to the change in wording. Those classes are already protected by the United States constitution and the Wyoming State constitution as well. Everyone deserves the same equal rights!

Maureen Donohoue Howell

The policy will have to be addressed again as the Student Handbook is reviewed on an annual basis by the Board. The Student Handbook currently contains the language removed from the June, 2021 Policy BBF-E that more completely defines protected classes.

I believe the definition of the protected class that falls under the broad category of discrimination “on the basis of sex” as defined by a series of United States Supreme Court decisions over the last 50+ years should be included in the Board’s and the School District’s discrimination policy . As a Board we want students, district staff and the Lander Community to know we are aligned with what the highest court in this land defines as discrimination. I have posted my position on my public page at [facebook.com/Maureen Donohoue 4 School Board](https://www.facebook.com/MaureenDonohoue4SchoolBoard) and at [facebook.com/Lander School Board Candidates 2022](https://www.facebook.com/LanderSchoolBoardCandidates2022). Please read my post and let me know what you think.

Sharon Terhune

Yes.

Jennifer Butler

I am comfortable with the wording in the discrimination policy as it currently stands. Non-Discrimination policy AC states, “Fremont County School District #1 does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability. This policy should prevail in all matters concerning staff, students, education programs and services and individuals with whom the school district does business. FCSD#1 operates in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.” All rights and protections for LGBTQ+, pregnant, disabled, and veteran status individuals are specifically covered under these acts.

Jared Kail

In the Spring of 2022 the School Board removed several redundant phrases from policy AC (and related). It is crucial for everyone to understand that these phrases are already legally covered under the existing policy. **No rights were removed with the changes that were made.** Not one.

The revised policy states, “Fremont County School District #1 does not discriminate on the basis of **age, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability.**” This closely mirrors the Wyoming Department of Education’s non-discrimination Policy, which states, “The Wyoming Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of **race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.**” (<https://edu.wyoming.gov/home/disclaimer/>) The United States Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights’ anti-discrimination policy states, “Discrimination on the basis of **race, color, national origin** is prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; **sex** discrimination is prohibited by Title

IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; discrimination on the basis of **disability** is prohibited by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and **age** discrimination is prohibited by the Age Discrimination Act of 1975.” (<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/aboutocr.html>).

In other words, our policy was amended to mirror, nearly identically, both our state and federal education counterparts.

Beyond complying with the standard anti-discrimination policies in education, why did we remove the clauses of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy and veteran status? Those changes have been controversial and warrant some explanation. To set the stage, let me pose a few questions: Are members of the Catholic Church covered under the “religion” clause? How about atheists? Are Native Americans covered under the “race” clause? Are individuals with intellectual disabilities covered under the disability section?

Of course the answer to all is “yes,” yet you won’t find the words Catholic, atheist, Native American or intellectual disability mentioned in most anti-discrimination policies. People who belong to these groups are covered by law because they are all either definitionally, or through case law and Supreme Court rulings, part of broader protected classes. The actions taken by the FCSD#1 Board of Trustees simply applied this same logic to sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, marital status and pregnancy.

Bostock vs. Clayton County recently informed us that gender identity rights are part and parcel to sexual discrimination. Long-standing precedence tells us the same for sexual orientation, marital status and pregnancy. Because they are legally part of their respective protected classes, they need not be explicitly mentioned in statute nor policy for those protections to remain in place. In addition, veterans’ rights are clearly covered under other federal and state statutes to which the district must adhere.

Put another way, the action taken by FCSD#1 merely cleaned up the language of our anti-discrimination policy while leaving all existing protections for members of those groups intact.

FCSD#1 took our cue from other political bodies that have wrestled with this same topic. The United States Department of Education’s anti-discrimination policy, the State of Wyoming’s anti-discrimination statute and the Wyoming Department of Education’s anti-discrimination policy all decline to include the phrases we removed. Members of Congress and the Wyoming State Legislature are responsible for creating legislation. Voters elect them to make decisions on topics like anti-discrimination. School board members are elected to focus on educational priorities. What FCSD#1 did on May 17 was nothing more than recognize that political separation. I believe we should let our senators and representatives take the lead on anti-discrimination laws, and allow the school board to focus on the critical role of setting policy for education.

Mike McConnell

No

Aileen Brew

If possible, I would like to re-visit this policy in the future. I think the original wording, though different and more specific than language found in other Wyoming state documents, reflects a greater awareness of diversity and a pro-active mindset about protected classes. I would like our district to be a leader in using clarifying language that supports and protects our staff and students.

### Karen Harms

This policy was only put into effect 3 years ago. In the recent past, policies, procedures, and even laws were discriminatory against these populations. Many of these have been changed to add further protections. It is imperative that we have a policy that is implicit in its protection of these classes. In a recent GLSEN study, LGBTQ+ students (78.8) reported avoiding school functions or extracurricular activities because they felt unsafe or made to feel uncomfortable. 68% felt unsafe at school during class time. These statistics are unacceptable and we must do better for all the students in our care.

### Todd Sutton

I believe that all people and individuals are important and should have access to the same rights, opportunities, and protections. It is a societal danger to jump back into discrimination of others by setting up groups as having more rights and protections than others. Those who are not included in the special treatment would then be second class citizens according to the law and would be legally discriminated against. I think that we have made great strides in our country with the anti-discrimination laws. All justice and laws should be blind and work toward bringing society together instead of driving them apart through increased and unwise discrimination no matter how well intended. The law is already clear on this where no discrimination of any kind can be tolerated so revisiting this is a step back and not a progressive step forward in society.

## **Question 5: What issue facing FCSD#1, or public schools in general, made you want to be on the FCSD#1 school board?**

### Tim Green

(1) The finding, hiring, supporting and retaining of "quality" personnel. (2) Direct reading instruction (as needed) at ALL grade levels. (3) An increase in vocational education (as all kids in Lander aren't going to college).

### Ralph A. Vinci

The potential for a COVID-19 mask/vaccine mandate for all FCSD#1 students and employees. I believe that any mask usage/vaccine requests should be left up to the students and families alone. No school district interference, as this is a family choice.

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

The issue I am focused on is how, as a small district, we achieve the goal of having 85% of all students reading at or above grade level by the end of 3rd grade. This is a requirement found at Wyoming Statutes, Section 21-3-401 (a) through (e). The same standard needs to be applied to math and communication skills. While we should be proud that 55% of non-disabled students at Gannett Peak Elementary School are proficient in reading and 54% are proficient in math, it is just part of the story. Yes, those percentages exceed the State average of 50% of 3rd grade children meeting that standard. However, the data also shows that 45% of our students are not proficient in reading or math by the end of 3rd grade. We have work to do. It is the most important problem I see. We must measure our success against the highest standard of proficiency, not the State average that shows, on the average, half of the children at the end of third grade do not read or perform math operations proficiently at grade level. In the 2022 Budget Session the Legislature amended Wyoming Statute, Section 21-3-401(a) through (c), (d) and created a new subsection (e) with multiple new requirements to ensure that 85% of students are reading at grade level by the end of third grade. While the legislation provides some funding for teacher training it does nothing to assess the cost of additional staff, materials and technology that may be needed to achieve the target number. Our local District#1 has the talent and the commitment to meet this goal. I will advocate for all the resources needed to support this effort.

### Sharon Terhune

This will gain or lose me votes right here, but I need to be transparent: There is a national movement afoot by the far right (politically) to elect people to local, state, and national positions for the sole purpose of gaining ground with their ultra conservative ideology. One of the main reasons I want a seat on the board is to push back (with civility) on this. Our recent revisiting of the discrimination policy is an example of this effort. You can feel that book banning is right around the corner as are issues around the rights and protection of ALL humans. We need diverse opinions and backgrounds on this board.

### Jennifer Butler

As a parent, I found it difficult to learn how to navigate the educational system. I would like to work with our administrators and board to help mentor parents and guardians to be actively involved in the district decisions, and district operations especially in matters surrounding conflict resolution. I am grateful for all the opportunities the district has provided my family over the years and I want to serve our community through my active participation in our district.

### Jared Kail

There was no specific issue facing FCSD#1 that made me want to run for the School Board, either four years ago or this year. I would be hesitant to elect candidates, in fact, that run on single issues. Instead, I ran because I believe in kids. I believe in public education. I believe that FCSD#1 is a great school district that offers its "customers" - our kids - an incredible launchpad for the future. I have always been a proud graduate of FCSD#1. The education I received here was quite simply top notch, and allowed me to compete with peers from any institution across the country. I ran, and am running, because I want to see the same excellent educational system I benefited from grow and thrive, just like the kids it educates do.

### Mike McConnell

I believe that we have great schools. I would like our school district to continue to improve.

### Aileen Brew

I want to maintain a centered, balanced focus on all students, staff and families in FCSD #1. I believe awareness and acknowledgement of social and political issues surrounding public education is needed, however, we must be able to triage the critical issues and keep the focus on the kids, the classrooms and the work of education.

### Karen Harms

There is not just one issue that led me to want to be on the FCSD#1 board. I love this district, the staff, and the students, and want to be of service to all. I'd like to be a part of creating an environment where staff and students will thrive.

### Todd Sutton

As an employer and business man in the community, the quality of employee is becoming a concern. Due to the current grading system, it is getting more difficult to find employees who are determined to get it right the first time. In school they have many chances to "become proficient" in a concept and seem not to understand the need in the real world to do the work necessary and to do it right the first time.

## **Question 6: What do you hope to accomplish during your term on the FCSD#1 school board?**

### Tim Green

Look to the answer on Question #5.

### Ralph A. Vinci

Continue to see student academic and social growth, as they look past graduation for life goals.

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

I will use and share my experience and skills as a passionate advocate for the education of every child. For every issue that comes before the Board for discussion or action, I will be that advocate. I would like to increase the public's access to reports made to the Board and evidence presented to the Board in support or in opposition to actions the Board is urged to take. Where actions are controversial, such as the school personnel conceal carry gun policy, I would like to see the Board hold a formal public hearing. The formality of the proceeding should allow the expression of differences of opinion while maintaining civility. It would also give the Board the opportunity to gather additional evidence from non-partisan sources. It should allow the Board and the community to find common ground and reach a compromise or compromises that meet the objective of protecting the safety of children.

### Sharon Terhune

During my term as a board member I hope to create an atmosphere among board members, staff, students, and our community that WE ARE EXEMPLARY in what we provide our community, because we work at it and we pay for it.

### Jennifer Butler

I hope to establish policies throughout our district, and appropriate protocols for each building that help mentor parents through conflict resolution with the district so conflict resolution is felt by all parties and relationships of trust will be reestablished to the benefit of academic success for the students involved in the conflict.

### Jared Kail

I am proud of the things the School Board accomplished over the last four years, including increasing the safety of our schools by developing a more layered approach to security; enhancing our capacities for addressing student wellbeing and behavioral issues; building a strong, independent, successful approach to Covid 19 that emphasized parent choice, childrens' mental wellbeing and keeping students in school; strengthening our policies that help administrators keep political dogmas and indoctrination out of the classroom; and eliminating language in policies that amount to nothing more than political posturing and do not have appreciable positive impact on our students.

Over the next four years I think we will continue to see the polarization of our political parties pull society in opposite directions, and I hope that as a district we can recognize that the 95% that we have in common is much more important than the 5% that divides us. The School Board can set the tone there - to disagree agreeably when we must, and find common ground when we can. I would like to build better morale among staff and build retention rates by understanding better the difficulties that face the district. And I would like to build a more open communication channel between staff, admin and the Board characterized by the kind of continuous improvement we have so successfully implemented in the PLC model.

### Mike McConnell

Improve recruitment and retention.

### Aileen Brew

I would like to see improvements in feedback mechanisms between the board and all layers of the school district and community. I hope to be a reasonable, open-minded voice for staff, students, administration and families and help facilitate changes that improve communication in our school system.

### Karen Harms

During my first term, I would feel that the board was successful, if we, as a unit, were able to increase staff retention, have all staff feel appreciated, and create a safer environment for all students and staff.

### Todd Sutton

I would like to protect effective and open communication and make sure that all views on an issue are given voice. Too often in our world today, people choose to live in their own "echo chambers" where all they choose to hear are the things that they agree with. I think refusing to listen to different view points makes learning impossible. I enjoy listening to all sides of an argument which includes the Left, Right, Moderate, and even from those way out there because it makes me think and make better decisions. My hope, then, is to facilitate in opening up those echo chambers so that people can once again listen to each other and see the value in those around them. It is still OK to agree to disagree on points of opinion because we all still have so much more in common that can make us a strong community.

**Question 7: If you could change any ONE thing about FCSD#1 what would it be? Second part: What is the ONE thing you would absolutely keep the same?**

Tim Green

Thing to change: Keep politics and political questions off of the board agenda.

Thing to keep: Keep hiring good employees and support them.

Ralph A. Vinci

The first thing that must be addressed is the current FCSD#1 bullying policy. I have received complaints from parents about the ineffectiveness of this policy, as changes must be made.

The ability for all district students to have certain choices in the academic learning should stay the same.

Maureen Donohoue Howell

One thing I would change is to eliminate the “we” vs “them” mentality that encourages conflict not resolution of problems. The emotional divide and hostility engendered often leaves what best serves our children out of the equation.

One thing I would absolutely keep is the commitment and pride that the Board, Administration, Staff and Lander Community have to the success of our children, throughout their school careers.

Sharon Terhune

I would change the discrimination policy back to include those categories that were recently removed. That just wasn't necessary, and as a result has many people feeling vulnerable and uncared for. One thing I'd keep the same if the way our buildings are cared for and kept up by our custodial and maintenance staff. It's exemplary.

Jennifer Butler

I would like to see our district mentor parents and guardians to navigate and understand the education system.

I would absolutely keep our district values to raise Respectful, Responsible, and Safe Individuals, and I would focus my policy decisions to support every student developing these attributes while enrolled in our district.

Jared Kail

The biggest issue I would like to see the district address is the lack of accountability and discipline in our Standards Based Grading approach. As I've said ad nauseum, I truly appreciate the standards-based approach and how it has improved our kids' content knowledge as they emerge from LVHS and PHS. I do not want to lose that. However, I have yet to speak with a single parent or employer that appreciates the system. Honestly - not one. Why? Because, while kids have very strong content knowledge, they lack the skills that really set them apart from their millennial peers. These are things like doing a task right away, and having only been asked once to do it. The knowledge of how to prepare - to study - for an upcoming test or event. The understanding that most collegiate or career tasks must be done correctly the first time, and that second, third or fourth tries just don't cut it in the real world. And that timeliness and just “showing up” really do impact your future in material ways. These are all elements that employers and college professors demand and expect, and where FCSD#1 is failing to prepare our students for the future.

If there is a single element I would never want to see eroded in our district it is the value we place on a strong education and high standards. I believe over time FCSD#1 has proven to be one of the stand-out districts in Wyoming in terms of how important we believe a solid education is for all of our kids. I'm certainly not saying we cannot improve here. I would love to see us, for example, have the same kind of exciting signing events for academic scholarships we do for sports, and I'd like to push the message of academic importance to some of our parents that don't seem to share that vision. That said, we have a significant number of NTSB-certified staff and constantly serve as pace setters for districts across the region for our PLC model. Our schools get fantastic marks from accreditors, and our teachers are constantly receiving statewide and national awards and recognitions. I want to see us build on that value of education to truly become one of, if not the, top districts in the state in terms of our ability to turn out smart, well-prepared kids.

### Mike McConnell

Change-Hiring pool. The hiring pool needs to be larger so there are more applicants. We want to recruit the best people for our schools.  
Keep-our community

### Aileen Brew

I would like to see dynamic, engaging leadership from the superintendent's office. Ideas, projects, and a passion for education can flow from that position into our schools, and I think we need more of that energy.

I would keep the current mission and vision statements, and the other goal statements used in our school environments: Every student, every day. Respectful, responsible and safe. These goals resonate with me and provide simple guidelines for everyone in our schools.

### OUR MISSION

In partnership with families and community, we educate students to become responsible citizens who respect one another and have the motivation, skills, and knowledge to succeed.

### OUR VISION

By setting high expectations and providing diverse learning opportunities, we will empower students to succeed in careers, college, and life.

### Karen Harms

If I could change one thing about FCSD#1, it would be to have a larger budget in order to provide a more competitive wage for staff and to be able to purchase all supplies needed to create a safe learning environment for all students to thrive.

The one thing that I would keep the same would be to retain the dedicated staff that we currently have.

### Todd Sutton

I would work to getting a more effective grading system. The one thing I would keep the same is the manner that the school board conducts meetings. I have been on other boards and this one is managed very well.

## **Question 8: What is something that you, as a school board member, would do to increase morale among FCSD#1 Staff?**

### Tim Green

Pay them a "livable" wage! Pat them on the back! Send them a card! Cook them dinner! That's a dumbass question!!!!

### Ralph A. Vinci

Look for ALL FCSD#1 employees and staff to be recognized for the work they do. Allow for them to be appreciated as the quality employees that they are!

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

To address the morale issue I would arrange to visit each school in the District at least monthly to observe children and staff for ½ of a school day, to include recess, lunch and the before and after school programs available to students such as "Lights On". I will continue to maintain both my public Facebook page and a dedicated private email address for staff to share what they think is important that the Board address to help them help each student succeed. As one member of a seven member Board I will share the insights I gain with Administration and other members of the Board.

### Sharon Terhune

First of all, I would work very hard to create relationships among the sitting board members. Sometimes the current board seems to sit in their own grumpy bubbles. It's important that those seven people give the impression that they like, respect, and value each other and the work they need to do as a team. I'm struggling to find the best response, here. Is morale low? If it is, do we know why? I would want the answers to those questions before I talk about how I might address it.

### Jennifer Butler

I would like to see the data regarding our staff and their job satisfaction, and then the district can address the concerns the data reflects. It would be incumbent upon the administrators to resolve these issues, and as a board member I would follow up with the administrators implementations through follow-up surveys to measure changes in morale.

### Jared Kail

The first step in addressing any problem is first understanding it. At this point I am not sure the School Board has a good pulse on the morale - good, bad or indifferent - of the district and its employees. As such, I believe one important task that the School Board should tackle is a comprehensive and frequent climate survey of all staff. This survey should be district-wide and administered by Dr. Barker or his direct report at the Central Office. It should be anonymous to solicit honest feedback. It should be brief to avoid adding an additional burden to staff. It should be continually improved as issues emerge to ferret out more information and determine possible resolutions. And it should be shared with the School Board. In short, we need a feedback loop we don't currently have.

In FCSD#25 staff receive a very short, weekly feedback survey. The frequency seems a bit overkill to me, but the point is very well taken: we need more information about the climate and culture of FCSD#1 to make better, informed decisions.

Finally, I believe we need to survey *every* employee that leaves the district, with the exception of those that are dismissed for cause. We need to understand why they are leaving. Our exit interview rate is dismal, and there is little excuse for our district to fail to follow up on this basic element of governance.

Mike McConnell

I am openminded and willing to listen.

Aileen Brew

I would push for more personal engagement. We need to ask the staff how they feel about their daily work and their chosen profession, and not via survey monkey. We can provide opportunities for staff to engage more casually and openly with school board members and school leadership. We need a better mechanism for feedback loops between staff, school leadership and administration. I also believe the board itself could be more visible in the individual schools through the liaison programs. Maybe school board members need to start working as subs on occasion in the district!

Karen Harms

Again, staff need to feel appreciated as much as possible and their mental and physical wellness be a focal point of the board.

Todd Sutton

As I mentioned before, top-down appreciation, consistency in expectation, and team building is what I think would be the first step.

**Question 9: Lander is the highest for cost of living in Fremont County; yet is 2nd lowest for paid salaries for school district employees. Many staff are leaving FCSD#1 to go to higher paying districts, in and out of Fremont County. What are your thoughts on this issue beyond the fact that reservation schools get more federal funding? Would you advocate for higher base pay for staff as a form of retention? What other ideas do you have regarding retaining teachers and staff?**

Tim Green

That is why I am running for the board. See Question # 5.

Ralph A. Vinci

I believe there is more than just salary in keeping employees retained. The ability to be part of a strong, productive educational environment and professional growth opportunities also are part of the retention equation. I do feel the current salary structure must be re-evaluated, with staff suggestions and comments reflected.

Maureen Donohoue Howell

The Wyoming State Legislature is the body that must act to adequately fund education. It has not done so. I am referencing two documents that extensively look at the issues of staff retention, including but not limited to the issues of pay and the retention and recruitment of teachers. Those documents and their associated links are: "Current Status of Cost Pressures on Teacher Salaries in Wyoming", prepared by Dr. Christiana Stoddard, September, 2022 found at [https://wyoleg.gov/InterimCommittee/2022/02202210100202\\_20220926\\_StoddardIndicators2022.pdf](https://wyoleg.gov/InterimCommittee/2022/02202210100202_20220926_StoddardIndicators2022.pdf). This is an updated report commissioned by the Wyoming State Legislature on the issue of teacher salaries in Wyoming. The other document is a copy of the Complaint filed on August 18, 2022 in State District Court in Cheyenne, Wyoming by the Wyoming Education Association against the State of Wyoming. It argues that the Legislature has failed to meet the requirements for "equal and quality education for all Wyoming students" as required by the Wyoming State Constitution and found in previous Wyoming Supreme Court decisions. It may be found as an attachment to the September 20, 2022 Board Agenda, Discussion Item D. WEA Lawsuit found at: <https://www.landerschools.org/Governing-Board>. As a Board member part of my job will be, with your help, to ensure the State Legislature has facts that support increased funding to Schools so that the District can address the problems related to adequately funding salary and benefits for the teachers and staff of our School District.

Sharon Terhune

I want to know why this is. For years staff rumor had it that the board was reluctant to give raises because they thought that living in Lander was enough for people to want to stay. Is that sentiment still alive? I know that salaries use up 80% of our budget. I do like the idea of raising the base every year. What would we cut to pay staff more? I don't know. We seem to want it all. At the same time, money isn't everything. We are each responsible for creating a life that works well for us and for our families. Sometimes difficult choices have to be made by each of us.

Jennifer Butler

I do agree that cost of living in Lander is high, but it is important to note that according to the 2021 State CRERW Report, there were several district who had lower wages than FCSD#1 for every staff

category in the annual salary analysis. Our district is currently paying wages above the state funding model guidelines, and I feel the board can discuss how our district will distribute wages in relation to the funding model as well as how all adjustments will affect the overall funding for the district. I would advocate for higher base pay for staff if it is determined that this decision is what is best for the overall benefit of our students and their education.

In regards to teacher and staff retention, I would like to see how our district is doing in comparison to a national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center that stated the top three reasons employees left their jobs in 2021 were low pay, lack of advancement opportunities, and disrespect in the workplace. Data collected through exit surveys and exit interviews can help our district better understand why employees are leaving the district, and then the school board, in conjunction with the Superintendent and building administrators, can work collaboratively to help keep great teachers teaching in our district.

### Jared Kail

School finance is a balancing act. Unlike the federal government, FCSD#1 has no ability to pull money out of thin air. We are apportioned a set amount of money from the State that we have little influence over. As a School Board member I would love to promise huge pay hikes but the reality is complex. Do you rob Peter to pay Paul? And if so, will Peter leave the district when you do?

Roughly 80% of the district's budget goes towards salaries and benefits. Thus, to increase some salaries without impacting others you need to find somewhere in that remaining 20% to cut, or find additional creative funding streams.

There is a point where direct, fixed costs of running six schools, an administrative building, a pool, a field house, several sports fields, and other miscellaneous facilities cannot get stretched any further before facilities begin to degrade. Add to that other non-salary expenses, like buses, fuel, power, gas, cleaning supplies, computer supplies, curriculum costs, etc. and we arrive at our 20% of non-salary expenses. If we want to divert some of that 20% into salaries, we will need to consider what reductions we can agree upon. Should we close the pool? That's something around \$500k we could push into salaries or benefits. Reduce extra-curricular activities to save on fuel and bus maintenance? Reduce out-of-area travel and professional training costs? Look at canceling some of our non-core programs that require a lot of maintenance dollars? If none of these sound palatable, then we need to turn to creative funding.

We have managed to build some positions directly from grants, and those are very valuable funding sources, albeit ones that usually require a lot of red tape. Yet usually those types of funding mechanisms are reserved for a specific position or program - like an additional behaviorist - and not monies that can be spread out among all staff. With some exceptions, like federal streams that fund some SPED programs, we must rely on fixed, State-based funding. Creative funding is usually too small, and too time intensive, to make a big impact on the district. Bake sales don't pay the bills.

Thus, we are back to our 80% and the great balancing act. When we ask the question of "would you advocate for higher base pay for staff as a form of retention" I have to ask, "what positions are you willing to cut to rebalance finances into higher base salaries?" Question #10 of this document asks about helping "overworked, under-paid" paraprofessionals. Do we cut those positions to increase certified salaries? Question #1 asks how we intend to support teachers as the teaching environment gets more burdensome and complex. Cutting paraprofessionals would help raise base rates, but would simultaneously degrade teacher support (not to mention causing a bit of alarm among the paras!)

We can ask the same of nearly any position in the district. I've heard some argue that we are "administration heavy.". That may be a fair point, but in grad school I learned an important lesson: you can eliminate a position but you cannot eliminate the function. So if we reduce our administration staff, those duties will fall onto others at the district - including teachers. Some of the questions in this instrument ask about support, student behavior and morale: would eliminating administrators help or hurt teacher support, student behavior and staff morale, especially if those administrative tasks have to be performed by teachers themselves?

Benefits are another area this survey asks about and is part of the 80% we are discussing. We have recently rebalanced by increasing base salaries while simultaneously having staff contribute more to retirement. Is that a good balance? At the time the negotiating teams seemed to think so, and it appeared a good trade off. As time marches forward, we'll need to determine if we have that balance right. Benefits are a crucial part of a professional's total compensation package, so finding a mutually acceptable mix between salary and benefits is an extremely important part of the negotiations that happen each year.

This is a long way of saying if we didn't have a cap from the State, I would absolutely advocate for higher base pay for staff, particularly those that are exceptional performers. But until the legislature acts on retroactive cost-basis budget increases, or Wyoming's minerals return to their once fabulous heights, we will be stuck with working to balance the needs of the district across a fixed budget.

All that said, I'm certainly open to ideas! If you have other ways to tackle this one, please let me know.

### Mike McConnell

Land values and everything else has increased in cost over the last two years, I cannot fix that. Pay and benefits will certainly need to be evaluated. Outside of that what we can do is respect, help, mentor all our staff and work to make FCSD#1 the best people place around- climate and culture.

### Aileen Brew

In reflecting on recent unprecedented inflation (data shows an 8.2% increase in the consumer price index over the last 12 months), and data from previous years, the need for a formal cost of living adjustment for district employees is overdue. If we can, budget-wise, a raise of the base pay level would be a great tool for attracting and retaining staff.

### Karen Harms

I will be advocating for higher pay, coverage for family health insurance, as well as compensation for extra duties; such as mentor teachers.

### Todd Sutton

I run a business where my employees have always been in the top pay bracket for the county. Investing in people makes better people. I am always for extending the highest pay possible. In this setting, high pay is always balanced against a budget which cannot be exceeded. The debate then is not really higher pay because we all agree on that. The debate will be what are we willing to give up in the budget in order provide that higher pay.

## **Question 10: How are you going to help our paraprofessionals when they feel overworked, and underpaid? How are you going to help them with benefits?**

### Tim Green

This is the initial reason I decided to run for the board. The money is in the budget. We just need to adjust the numbers and find it for "excellent" employees.

### Ralph A. Vinci

Stream line their classroom duties for efficiency, and ease of use. However, a pay-rate change is necessary to retain qualified staff. Concerning their benefit plan; give them the option to make differnt choices in the coverage they choose.

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

The 2022-2023 budget has been approved by the Board. I do not know what issues have been brought to building principals, the superintendent, representatives of the LEA or paraprofessionals themselves about this specific question or other issues. If elected I will seek that information from those listed above. I believe particularly in K-5 the role of the paraprofessional is critical. The mix of certified staff, paraprofessionals, specialty teachers and other support staff is critical to meeting the goal of grade level or above grade level competence in reading, math, science, and communication for every student.

### Sharon Terhune

Paraprofessionals at the buildings I have worked at are simply the most giving people I know. I have always made every effort to make them feel as equally valued in my classrooms as was I. That's what keeps great people; letting them consistently know that their work matters, that we couldn't do it without them, and that if there is an opportunity to raise their pay we'd do it. So, yea, let's help them with pay and benefits,

### Jennifer Butler

The 2021 State CRERW report shows that the board has addressed the paraprofessional wages. Our paraprofessional wages have increased to 162% above the funding model, and wages are average for Fremont County specifically. Administrators can work with employees who feel overworked to see how to resolve this concern specifically.

### Jared Kail

Much like with other questions here, I think the best way we can help paraprofessionals with improving conditions is to support admins and the solutions they develop. Building support systems is, generally speaking, much too far into the weeds for the School Board. Most of us simply aren't experts in public administration. Instead, we hire good admins and must allow them to do a good job (and be ready to hold them accountable when they don't.)

That said, as I've indicated earlier, I do believe that a strong communications system for staff to use to contact admins and the School Board that is free from fears of administrative retaliation is crucial to understanding the needs of staff so they can be addressed. That system needs to be reexamined and redesigned.

### Mike McConnell

Personal days, and I agree that we need to look at benefits.

Aileen Brew

As I stated above in question 9, increases to base pay levels, cost of living adjustments and careful scrutiny of the job duties are important parts to evaluate (see question 1).

Karen Harms

Again, staff appreciation needs to be significantly increased; monetarily and benefit packages with increased opportunities for staff wellness. Paraprofessionals get the bulk of extra duties, however, issues may be different depending on buildings.

Todd Sutton

This answer is the same as the one above.

## **Question 11: Are you planning on looking into better benefits for workers? Please explain**

### Tim Green

I think we have good benefits for employees now. The cost of insurance could certainly come down, but that is not an easy task.

### Ralph A. Vinci

I feel that FCSD #1 should provide different alternatives and choices for the employee benefit program.

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

Some of the issues of benefits, particularly for family health coverage, retirement benefits, teacher leave, compensation for continuing educational credit, are addressed in the reports referenced in the earlier links. Any changes will impact the budget of FCSD#1. The sooner paraprofessionals identify the benefits that are most important to them to the Administration and the Board the better. If elected I would ask that the issue be directly addressed.

### Sharon Terhune

As a teacher who never raised a family while teaching and who was always married to teachers I never ran into the pressure of paying for the family health plan, but I get it. Of course I would look into how we can best support the health of our school community. Let's not forget where we live, though. Wyoming won't even expand medicaid. This is a tough state to live in given the "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" mentality that rules here. It could also be one of the reasons it's difficult to retain teachers. Wyoming is unique in so many wonderful ways, but it can work against us, too.

### Jennifer Butler

As a district we can evaluate retirement, insurance and benefit packages available through state and local agencies to understand the multiple options available to our district. After analyzing our options the district can implement changes in these areas based on what is best for the district.

### Jared Kail

I do not believe it is the role of the School Board to design benefits systems for workers. Building a benefits package is the role of our Superintendent, Business Manager and various staff that they appoint. Where this intersects with the School Board, primarily, is at the budget approval level. If the Board feels the balance of benefits to salaries is off, we have an obligation to direct the Business Manager to adjust that balance.

That said, I do believe that the School Board should be open to new and interesting types of benefits for employees as they are developed and presented, particularly those that are recommended by admin.

### Mike McConnell

Yes, we need to have a comparative study of other districts. After doing that we should aim to be competitive in the marketplace.

Aileen Brew

At this point, I have limited knowledge of the district budget details. Health insurance, WY retirement, workers compensation and unemployment benefits are currently included for Full Time Equivalent employees. I hope that benefits are assessed regularly to improve coverage and reduce costs.

Karen Harms

Yes, better benefits for workers is very important, specifically by adding benefits, increasing the amount the district contributes to family insurance and decreasing the monthly cost to staff members.

Todd Sutton

As a businessman, benefits are an important part of gaining and keeping employees. I am very in favor of exploring benefit packages and then looking at what we can do within the budget as stated before.

## Question 12: What is your definition of equity?

### Tim Green

A free, public school education is open to all American citizens.

### Ralph A. Vinci

That each child receives what they need to develop in their full academic and social potential, by creating a positive school environment for everyone.

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

My definition of equity is guided by my knowledge of the laws, rules, regulations, and Constitution of the State of Wyoming and of the United States. It is context driven. Equity of educational funding is different than equitable of treatment of people. If you are talking about a definition of equity as something in addition to what the law requires or prohibits I ask that for you define equity and how that relates actions you would ask the Board to take.

### Sharon Terhune

Equity is a complex issue in educational situations, but the basics are that equity is the knowing and awareness that each of us brings different advantages and disadvantages to life. We have varied economic backgrounds, various ways we prefer to learn, different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, etc. It's not enough to come into educational situations where we feel we're providing "equal" resources. We need to understand, accept, welcome, and serve the diverse of needs of students and staff.

### Jennifer Butler

I agree with Western Governor's University's definition that equity is creating a learning environment that helps all children succeed through access to the support and resources they need to reach their academic goals.

### Jared Kail

I believe very strongly in the equality of opportunity. Every child at FCSD#1 should get the same opportunities to grow and flourish as their peers. Every child should have a place where they can be safe in their learning environment. They need a full stomach to concentrate and focus. They need a system that treats them as the individuals they are - with unique needs, qualities, learning styles, backgrounds, mindsets, personalities, quirks, etc. Every child must receive an equal shot at success. It is up to the district to provide each student a launchpad they can use to reach for greatness. Ultimately, whether or not they grasp that opportunity is up to them.

I do NOT believe in equity of outcome. Equity of outcome is not focused on an individual, but on a group. Once you lump kids with similar attributes into a group you lose the detail of the individual. The unique texture of their personal makeup is obfuscated. They all blend together into a collective defined only by abstract traits. Yet some would say we should take the average of this group and compare it to a different collection of students defined by yet another set of abstract traits, and make ostensibly meaningful decisions based on the comparison. To me that kind of analysis does a tremendous disservice to the individual. While couched in supportive language, it nonetheless provides a child with an inescapable and insidious message: you are only as good as the group we associate you with. And if that group is deemed to be disadvantaged or, in the popular parlance of today, oppressed, then the message is even worse: you are a victim. How can you expect an individual to achieve greatness when you implicitly tell them they are societal victims whose ability to

accomplish greatness is artificially capped? Who are we, as educators, to suppress the hope and self-confidence of an individual learner, even if we are doing so with the best of intentions?

I believe in equality of opportunity, not equity of outcome. I believe in the individual, not the collective.

### Mike McConnell

Not equal but fair opportunities to achieve a desired outcome.

### Aileen Brew

Equity goes beyond the meaning of "equal". Equity means using all available supports and resources to address imbalances that exist between individuals. In educational systems, this means using all resources, human and otherwise, to create an educational system that supports each child's learning - regardless of their background, gender, race, learning style, ethnicity, learning disability, language barrier or socio-economic status.

### Karen Harms

Equity is making sure every student has the same access to learning in the classroom. This means that as a district, we must overcome individual roadblocks that some students may have. First, all students must be ready to learn and then be provided opportunities that meet their individual learning needs. Lessons should have elements of visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic learning styles. This helps all students learn in the way that their brains process information.

One of the biggest inequities currently in the Lander community is Pre-School. Lander has a very limited number of opportunities for Preschool students, therefore, we have students entering kindergarten on many different levels and with many missing skills. These inequities can sometimes take all of kindergarten and beyond to overcome. I would like to see FCSD#1 partner with Child Development Services and Head Start programs to try and expand their preschool programs and provide more preschool opportunities in Lander.

### Todd Sutton

To me, part of equity is realizing that we are all family and therefore not inherently better than anyone else. We not only see all others as our friends and family but strive to treat them that way as well. As mentioned before, all should be the same before the law without singling some out to be "more equal." Because I also believe that each individual is born with a free will to choose the effort and direction their life goes, I am a firm believer in meritocracy, that those who work hard for results should have the opportunity to experience the benefits those labors bring. Thus, I do not believe that "participation ribbons" should be utilized in education and job training because there is a risk that it may damage an individual's drive to take responsibility to do the necessary work to achieve that desired result. Equality in opportunity is what society can provide. The benefit the individual will get out of that opportunity is wholly dependent on the individual. Equality in earned reward is damaging to society and individuals.

## **Question 13: What goals do you have around equity and inclusion in Fremont #1?**

### Tim Green

I have no specific goals in this area.

### Ralph A. Vinci

Continue to seek equal opportunities for all FCSD #1 students and staff.

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

My goal is maximum transparency. Research suggests that the safety of children and the quality of instruction are parents' greatest concerns. We want our children to be critical thinkers, to be respectful, kind, and responsible for their choices. The best way for children to gain those skills is for the adults around them to model those skills. To do this we must ensure that every part of our community has an opportunity to articulate its major concerns. We must keep our focus on children. We must understand how they learn; what helps them ask questions; how they can find evidence that helps them; and how they can evaluate opinions supported by facts and evidence. We must give them time to be children and pursue their curiosity and develop relationships with others. Equity and inclusiveness requires being open, willing to listen and willing to change. Chaos is a match to the dry tinder of intolerance.

### Sharon Terhune

My goal around this is to increase our community's understanding of equity and inclusion.

### Jennifer Butler

The Wyoming Constitution requires all children are afforded a complete and uniform system of instruction. The school board holds our district accountable for meeting quality education standards set in our community. My goal as a school board member is to work with our Superintendent and Administrators to ensure all students are given the opportunities needed to succeed in our district, and follow through on providing additional resources in accordance to established policies and regulations.

### Jared Kail

When someone asks about "equity and inclusion", or more formally "diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)", I often worry that the question is being asked to check off some type of administrative box or, worse, to engage in an act of virtue signaling. To be frank, I'm not interested in either. I am focused on educating kids, not the political movement du jour. Thus, if this question is intended to validate some type of DEI litmus test being pushed by national politics, feel free to mark me down as failed.

If, however, this question is targeted toward education, I have a few things I'd like to see happen around Native American education. First, years ago the district would initiate new staff with a tour of the Wind River Indian Reservation, complete with a discussion of the difficulties native kids have interfacing with non-native systems and peers, what life is like on the reservation, and powerful information from elders. I would like to see us restart those trips, and open them up to existing staff as well. Second, I would like the district to explore if it would be possible to teach Eastern Shoshone and/or Northern Arapaho languages in high school, and possibly add a native history/sociology course into the curriculum. I know there are barriers to those ideas, from staffing to cultural appropriateness to funding, but I believe Lander could be a leader in helping to keep the history and traditions of our valued tribal members alive through meaningful educational experiences that would be well aligned with the academic goals of the district and State of Wyoming.

Mike McConnell

Opportunity for all to succeed.

Aileen Brew

DEI training opportunities for all employees and school board members would be a good starting point, so everyone can share a common understanding and language for discussions.

Karen Harms

All students deserve the opportunity to learn and should have access to regular education as much as possible. Please refer to question 12 for one of my main goals in regard to equity.

Todd Sutton

All people should be treated with respect and dignity, regardless.

**Question 14: There is an increase in vaping and drug use among middle school and high school students. Right now the policy is “suspension for the remainder of the semester” which is not equitable. A student gets caught Sept 15th and gets to come back January 3rd vs a student that gets caught December 15th and also comes back January 3rd. What are your thoughts on this? How would you make this more equitable?**

Tim Green

Loaded question because in the question you state, "is not equitable". You put your opinion into the question. Just the thing a school board member should not be considering.

Ralph A. Vinci

If there is a "fixed" suspension model in place, that suspension should be a specific number of days not for the remainder of the semester. Equal suspension days for an equal offense, regardless of when the crime was committed.

Maureen Donohoue Howell

I question the effectiveness of the approach you describe. However, I cannot find a Board Policy that matches this description of the consequence for violation of either the drug or the tobacco policies. Policy J requires the administration to refer the student violating the smoking policy to a program designed to “help them quit tobacco”. The administration has a great deal of discretion when dealing with these problems. Research suggests that suspension is neither a deterrent nor cure for use of tobacco, nicotine in any form, or drugs. It is also ineffective in preventing offenders from encouraging others in its use. As with every policy adopted by FCSD#1 the policy must define its purpose. Our goal is to educate children. I would be willing to request that the Board look at the policy or policies in question including assessing the effectiveness and impact of the policy or policies on all students and their education.

Sharon Terhune

I honestly do not know what to do about the increase in vaping and drug use. The stated response is not an equitable response, though. It needs work. The way to go might be to do some research and find districts who have had success with these kinds of issues and do what they do.

Jennifer Butler

I agree that a suspension policy built around the semester may not be the best solution to helping our students return to school. This policy could be revised to include appropriate suspension intervals with measurable behavioral changes that would help the student be prepared to return to campus, while also maintaining campus safety. I feel the goal should focus on helping students demonstrate appropriate behaviors that will allow them to return to school.

Jared Kail

High potency THC use is one of the topics that worries me the most right now. The old ditch weed of the past, where marijuana contained 5% or less of THC, is gone. Today it is difficult to find leaf-based marijuana of less than 20%. Worse, once you get into the formulations that kids are using to vape or dab we are talking as much as 98% PURE THC. Laura Strong, who recently spoke at Lander Middle School, cites study after study about how addiction to this high potency, manufactured, non-natural drug is causing dangerous health issues, depression, psychosis and suicides. It is an epidemic in

Colorado, and given we have had more THC-related incidents at FCSD#1 in one month this year than we saw all of last it is pretty clear we aren't far behind.

As presented in the question, no, I do NOT feel that the punishment system described is an equitable or effective implementation of policy. However, as I have reviewed and signed dozens of stipulated agreements, I do not believe that is how the system currently works, at least relative to what parents sign. Loosely speaking, we operate on the following basis. The first major behavioral offense results in a 60-day-expulsion, with the possibility of a stipulated agreement that allows a student back into school in 30 days if they follow very strict guidelines set forth in the agreement. A second offense results in a year long expulsion, with the stipulated agreement resulting in a return in 60 days. Beyond that I'm not sure what the penalties are as I've never encountered one.

Expulsions are carried out at our day reporting location. We've recently set up an on-site location and hired Melinda Cox to staff that position, which gives us more flexibility in how day reporting is carried out, and provides for more capacity as often the Riverton location is full. I think most kids will attest that attending school in day-reporting is not something to look forward to, and one hopes serves as a good deterrent to reduce recidivism.

I say "loosely" above because we need to adjust the timing of the returns relative to the realities of a calendar. The punitive periods are in calendar days, not school days, and thus may need to be adjusted based on when a return date falls. For example, having someone return on a weekend or a holiday makes no sense, so admin bumps those dates to the most reasonable substitution. This may be where the confusion is coming from - if a return day falls within the winter break, we bump that return date out to the start of the next semester, and if two end dates fall within winter break it will appear as if one student received less of a sentence than his peer, even though both will have "served" the same amount of punitive time.

If this dynamic is causing concern among parents, staff or admin, we could consider moving to a school-day vs. calendar-day punitive practice. That might alleviate the concern and make the system seem more equitable. However, this also has difficulties with optics. Using school days instead of calendar days would result in one student, who commits an offense right before winter break, staying in "timeout" for far more calendar days than a peer that commits the same offense the day after she returns from break. Depending on your perspective, this also lacks equity. Given the difficulties and contradictory approaches, it appears to me we need to let admin wrestle with the technicalities of implementation and trust they are doing what is right for both the perpetrator and the district.

### Mike McConnell

Not sure at this time, that needs fixed.

### Aileen Brew

I need to learn more about the policy. In reviewing both the middle school and high school student handbooks, I don't find a clear description of "suspension for the remainder of the semester" in regard to vaping/drug use offenses. There are references to periods for ISS/OSS at the discretion of the school administrator. It seems that suspension periods should be based upon the administrators making a decision with the input of school guidance counselors and teachers/staff to figure out a consequence that is appropriate and timely.

### Karen Harms

This policy has actually already been changed. It is currently 10 days of Out of School Suspension and then 20 days at an alternative placement. The alternative placement was previously the Day Reporting program (DRC) with the County. Very recently the district has started its own DRC program

and students will now be staying in the district. This will be a huge benefit to students and their families.

### Todd Sutton

As a healthcare worker, I am not a fan of vaping, smoking, chewing tobacco, alcohol use, excessive fat intake, etc. All are deleterious to health and unwise. To be honest, I am of the opinion that more education is needed in these cases than not. Suspension seems the exact opposite of what is really needed. I am sure there are many ideas and the debate should occur to come up with an appropriate solution. Off the top of my head, I think that if an individual is found indulging in unwise health practices, then the solution would be to teach more about positive health practices. This could not be didactic learning, as one is reclining and sitting while being forced to hear academics on health care. Instead it could be real-world. Once they have been caught, they should have to start training for a marathon or a tri-athlon so that they can gain the wisdom necessary to realize how damaging the habit is for them over a lifetime. Of course, this is off the top of my head and slightly flippant, but the direction for teaching is more in line with the results desired than removing someone from more opportunities to learn.

**Question 15: What are your thoughts on the idea of having an alternative placement classroom/building for students who take away the teacher's ability to educate all students? (e.g. those who are habitual offenders of violence, drugs, and/or extreme insubordination)**

Tim Green

Been advocating that for the 23 years I was in the district.

Ralph A. Vinci

I know there are many benefits in having alternative placement for certain students concerning academic and behavioral issues. Opportunities for all students to excel!

Maureen Donohoue Howell

I am not in favor of "alternative placement classroom/buildings". Drug-seeking behavior, physical aggression, verbal defiance, and "extreme insubordination" do not appear suddenly one day. These are behaviors that escalate over time and are often accompanied by other behaviors like absenteeism, chronic tardiness, sleeping in class, extreme risk taking, and/or having chronic medical conditions, that includes psychiatric issues. Underlying causes affect a person's educational performance long before they become the terror of the classroom. I would advocate for the Administration to focus on discovering and intervening with children with issues around loss, grief, trauma, behavioral, and/or medical issues at the earliest point in time. Referrals by teachers for such children should be taken seriously. Parents and caretakers should be involved in the solution before the problem escalates to suspension or expulsion.

Sharon Terhune

It seems to me there needs to be a well thought out building-wide plan in place that includes preventative measures, how best to respond, counseling, behavior management, and family inclusion. Asking a teacher and other students to deal with this randomly helps no one and interferes with most.

Jennifer Butler

According to Hacking School Discipline by Nathan Maynard and Brad Weinstein, it is recommended that schools track behaviors that disrupt the learning environment. My recommendation would be to first see if there is a need in our district to provide an alternative placement classroom before implementing this idea. This would be something to work closely with building administrators and teachers to understand the situations and how to proceed forward in a meaningful way to help students. Our district has an alternative high school, and it may be an option to have high school students who fit the above assessments to be moved to the alternative high school while they work to make personal changes, and have a plan established to help the student return back to the regular High School.

Jared Kail

We have already taken initial steps toward a separate, dedicated space for day reporting for expelled students. The current implementation will be staffed by an FCSD#1 employee with a wealth of experience dealing with troubled youth. It is already in place and is a step in the right direction.

Without overstepping bounds in terms of admin support, and assuming that we could find a funding stream that would not impact existing staff salaries, I would be interested in learning more about ideas surrounding this concept.

### Mike McConnell

No student should ever take away from another's opportunity to learn. Those who are habitual offenders of violence, drugs, and/or extreme insubordination might need to be in an alternative learning environment.

### Aileen Brew

I think these programs are valid, viable options for students who can't participate in regular classroom activities. I'm not very familiar with the details of these programs but many schools and districts (including ours) have a continuum of alternative placements depending on the student needs and challenges.

### Karen Harms

An alternative placement classroom/building is much more productive for students than Out of School Suspension. Some student needs could be better addressed in this setting in order to put them back on the path of success. However, overall, more prevention could take place in order to circumvent students developing unhealthy coping skills that lead to their extreme behavior and/or drug use. At the elementary level behavior expectations and self-regulation need to be taught with as much fidelity as academic standards. This allows for behavior learning to be equitable for all students. Students come to school with different behavior skill sets. This means that we need to provide more opportunities for them to learn the skills they need to be successful in the school setting. Third, fourth and fifth grades would be an opportune time to teach problem-solving skills, conflict resolution, healthy relationships, and coping skills. This would better prepare students for the challenges of middle and early high school where the majority of these habitual behaviors occur.

### Todd Sutton

This is a complex idea for it involves discussions in individual rights, definitions for degrees offences, building management, budgetary appropriations, staffing and liabilities for those staff, the age of the offender, etc...there is no simple answer to this and I would not want to throw out an opinion that cannot take all of these parts of the solution in this setting.

## **Question 16: What do you think about the idea of having a 4 day school week as an incentive to retain/recruit teachers?**

### Tim Green

Have no idea how that would help recruit or retain teachers.

### Ralph A. Vinci

I do not believe the 4 day school week is an effective tool to retain/recruit teachers. I would be against that idea.

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

At the present time, in accordance with Wyoming law, the Wyoming Department of Education sets the number of days of school that must be offered by the School District. Fair and equitable education for all does not allow FCSD#1 to establish or offer a four day school week. Like the legislature, I would ask how reducing education services to four days a week helps us meet the educational needs of children, how it impacts families, and what evidence supports this solution to the retention and recruitment of teachers.

### Sharon Terhune

I'm not sure it's clear that having a 4 day school week would be an incentive to retain/recruit teachers. Is this idea to ease the burden on them? It feels like one of those ideas that teachers dream about (I know I did), but in reality it's never something that would work for the community. Also, I don't think it's an idea that would be beneficial to our students. Of course we have to consider that stresses and strains on our staff, but we have to also remember that we're here to provide the best education we can to our children. It would be difficult to convince me that we could do this in 4 days. There's already not enough time to get through all of our standards.

### Jennifer Butler

The School Board Member Ethics Found in Policy BBF-E states, "Board members will remember that always, the first and greatest concern of the school district and Board must be the educational welfare of the students attending our public school, and the pursuit of educational programs..." The determining factor for me would be if a 4 day school week is what is best for our kids in our district. My initial concern is for our young students and their well-being (mentally, emotionally, physically, and educationally) should our district decided to implement a 4 day school week

### Jared Kail

A four-day school week is a topic we've discussed several times at the Board level. In spite of what seems to be some encouraging evidence that it can improve educational outcomes, it hasn't seemed to be a topic that has received much attention from administration. Particularly given that early-out Wednesdays effectively reduce instructional time to four-and-a-half days already, a four-day school week seems like an attractive proposition to me. I would certainly be open to looking at it in more detail, particularly if admin were to support it as an option.

That said, the one issue that concerns me is the need for families, already feeling the pinch of out-of-control inflation and dropping, inflation-adjusted wages, to find daycare for one (in some cases, one extra) day per week. I am not sure how that would factor into a decision on a four-day school week, but it is an issue that we must consider. I also know that some have expressed some reservations about how a four-day school week might change extra-curricular activities - another issue that would need to be fleshed out well before entertaining such a system.

### Mike McConnell

I don't think that would work as an incentive.

### Aileen Brew

All options should be on the table. I know the 4 day school week was proposed several years ago and explored in a parent/teacher survey. I don't think it was popular, due to the numerous challenges for working families, but if it has merit as a way to attract and retain high-quality staff, let's explore it.

### Karen Harms

A four-day school week could be a great benefit to students and staff. It would decrease the loss of academic time for student-athletes and save money that is currently being spent to pay substitutes to cover for coaches. Fridays could also be utilized in numerous ways that would benefit staff and students; staff training, PLC/Staff meetings, intervention time for students who need extra support, etc. There are a lot of schools that utilize this and have created very effective programs. FCDS#1 could review these programs to create one that fits the needs of our district.

### Todd Sutton

There is a lot to this question as well and cannot be quickly answered. Who doesn't want a 4 day school week in theory? But my questions would simply be: The purpose of the teacher, is to prepare students to learn the material necessary to help them succeed in life. How is the preparation of the student for a life of work and employment affected by less class time? How is the necessary mastery of academic concepts affected by this reduced time? If the time is still needed, how do we still maintain the hours of instruction with the elimination of Friday work? IF there is no change in the schedule, and the employees simply work 8 less hours a week, do they get paid less since they are producing less? What about the need for daycare for working families on the Fridays that school is out? The idea is, again, one that could be explored.

## **Question 17: What do you believe is the number one reason teachers are leaving the profession?**

### Tim Green

Cultural shifts, poor parenting, poor administrative support, salaries, stress, (shall I go on??)

### Ralph A. Vinci

It appears that many school districts have created unrealistic expectations, ever-changing initiatives, limited opportunity for growth, and lack of support. This is especially difficult for new college graduates, as they enter the education profession.

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

I believe the number one reason teachers are leaving the profession is the increasing threats in person and in the media to their professional judgement and autonomy, to their physical safety, and the burden of a workload that threatens their personal security and mental health. There are many causes for teachers reaching the conclusion that to protect themselves they must leave the District and sometimes the profession itself. This is a tremendous loss to our District and, as a member of the Board, I will raise these concerns.

### Sharon Terhune

I believe that the number one reason teachers leave the profession is because it can feel impossible to serve all of the needs that show up day after day in every classroom. Academic needs, social needs, behavior needs, emotional support needs. It's getting harder and harder for teachers to feel like you've given all kids what they need, so you end your day feeling wiped-out only to know that the struggle will begin again the next day. The job is super draining, and more and more teachers are wondering why they put themselves and their families through it.

### Jennifer Butler

As I stated above in question 9, I would like to see how our district is doing in comparison to a national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center that stated the top three reasons employees left their jobs in 2021 were low pay, lack of advancement opportunities, and disrespect in the workplace. Data collected through exit surveys and exit interviews can help our district better understand why employees are leaving the district, and then the school board, in conjunction with the Superintendent and building administrators, can work collaboratively to help keep great teachers teaching in our district.

### Jared Kail

I have no idea. And that's a major problem. Please see my response to #8 for more information.

### Mike McConnell

Stress

### Aileen Brew

The amount of daily work involved in teaching is huge, to the point of being frequently overwhelming. I believe it is a stressful and demanding profession - physically, emotionally and mentally. I think many teachers feel their work is under appreciated and invisible. We often fail to treat teachers as the community collaborators and professional educators they are.

### Karen Harms

The number one reason for teachers leaving our profession is burnout. There have been many changes brought on by COVID and people are still reacting. This inhibits many crucial communications between families and teachers. Some students have returned exhibiting anger, anxiety, and often a lack of empathy toward others. The impact of COVID has been significant to us all. Much focus has been on the loss of academics, but we rarely speak about the loss of social skills and connections made with in-person experiences.

Teachers have been tasked with “fixing” it all while their ethics, morality, and motivation are in constant question by our current society. Education is one of the hardest professions. School staff are required to give so much of themselves.

### Todd Sutton

I do not think there is one main reason. When one makes a decision of this magnitude, they go through many considerations and then base the decision on a conglomeration of all those small issues that effect it. The balance of all those positive and negative determine the final decision of that individual. So, I guess, the number one reason teachers are leaving is simply the negatives are now outweighing the positives.

**Question 18: The district has put several programs in place to help with students' well-being. If elected, what would you do to ensure that the teachers and staff at all schools are receiving mental and emotional care?**

Tim Green

Wyoming?is dead last in mental health care in the US. How are you going to ensure kids and staff get help with mental and emotional care? If you have an idea, I would love to know what it is and try to implement it as a school board member.

Ralph A. Vinci

Continue to support the current mental health programs already in place.

Maureen Donohoue Howell

I support making mental and emotional care available to teachers and staff. I will work, as a Board member, to encourage the development of an environment at every school where teachers and staff feel safe to seek help when they are struggling and/or overwhelmed. I do not know how affordable and accessible mental health services and support are for teachers presently. I will encourage the District to look at online resources, support group models, as well as continuing or developing a close relationship with local counseling agencies, and investigating the limits and restrictions in the District's present health insurance coverage in meeting this need.

Sharon Terhune

Listen, everyone working in a school needs emotional support. A school is really a mini community and every issue outside the building is also alive and well inside that building. There are many times in my recent years of teaching that I found myself popping into the offices of our school counselors for a quick nod of emotional support. We can't lay the burden of staff support onto the shoulders of counselors who are already seeing more students with more difficult needs than they ever have. This question is a good one, though. I used to cherish the Wellness Wednesdays that were on the calendar. I hope that is still happening. Teachers and support staff have a responsibility to themselves, though, too. Are people living lives outside their jobs that support well-being? Are the basic building blocks of health built into their lives? It begins there.

Jennifer Butler

The first step is to determine the district's role in this area and establish policies surrounding that role. Once the roles and policies are determined, then it is the responsibility of the Board to ensure those policies are being followed. My hope is that building administrators are mindful of their employees, and if mental health is a concern in our district then help and support are offered to teachers and staff. I do not know if mental health services are part of our employee insurance policies, and it is something I feel would be beneficial to research and address with the Board.

Jared Kail

I believe that mental health needs to be considered as a part of physical health - to be a healthy human we need to be both physically and mentally well. As such, any insurance package the district employs should include adequate mental health and wellbeing coverage. In addition, sick time should be available for both physical and emotional needs.

I also believe not all mental health improvement comes at the hands of practitioners. Happiness in your position, a feeling of appreciation, and a path of future growth all play into your state of mind. If

these factors, and others, are not present in a teacher's workplace it will be difficult for them to achieve a good level of mental wellbeing. However, as I've said elsewhere, before we get the cart before the horse and make changes we assume will impact morale, we need to first evaluate what is causing anxiety and then work with admin to tackle those issues directly.

### Mike McConnell

Healthy organizations tend to support their people and again this is a climate and culture concern.

### Aileen Brew

Affordable and convenient access to mental health services and partnerships with local community agencies to provide free or reduced cost counseling services are places to start. Development of school-based programs that provide teachers with opportunities to meet and discuss the challenges of their work can be helpful, and pairing these with wellness activities on a monthly basis might be helpful as well. Educator Wellness is listed as a "next step" in the SAMHSA grant roll-out document dated 12/21. I do not know if this element has been addressed.

### Karen Harms

Being a mental health professional myself, I do not think there is anything more important than the mental and emotional care of staff. Staff have to be taken care of and able to function as their best selves so that they can help our students do the same.

### Todd Sutton

There is not a single job or career out in the community that is not a constant challenge to those doing it. All have hard days and easy days, depressing days and rewarding days. Teaching is part of the community of employment. If any business wants to keep employees, they must be responsive to the needs of the valued employees and do all they can, within reason, to make the workplace employee-friendly. A lot is being asked of teachers today just like law enforcement, healthcare workers, electricians, plumbers, and lawyers, to name a few. As business owner, I know the value of happy and supported employees and do all that I can to make sure that my staff can do the work necessary for our patients. As a school board member, I would have a responsibility to do all I can to make sure that our teachers have all the care and support that they need to continue to provide the great care that they give to our children.

## **Question 19: Do you support the idea of not having cell phones in any classroom in FCSD#1?**

### Tim Green

Absolutely! But, enforcement will always be problem.

### Ralph A. Vinci

Yes, as they are a distraction to students!

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

Yes. I believe cell phones should not be available to students in the classroom. If parents need to contact their children or children need to contact their parents, I believe those messages can be routed through the school office. It is my understanding that every student has a Chromebook and internet access to allow them to do the research and other activities that require an online connection. They don't need their phones to distract them in the classroom.

### Sharon Terhune

Cell phone are wreaking havoc in secondary schools. There is simply no mystery there. School board members are not in a role of micromanaging the running of the schools it serves, but I would 100% support any effort to lessen the use of cell phones in classrooms-by students AND staff. I'd also ask the same at staff meetings ;)

### Jennifer Butler

Yes. Classroom time is designated for instruction. The 2022-2023 student handbooks for LVHS, LMS, Baldwin Creek Elementary, Gannett Peak Elementary, and Jeffrey City School all have cell phone guidelines that limit cell phone use during school hours as deemed appropriate by the building administrators.

### Jared Kail

Personally I would love to see the district eliminate cell phones in the classroom entirely. While there may be some very limited cases where cell phones are used for legitimate educational purposes, the vast majority of their use has nothing to do with academia. I am extremely concerned with the negative impacts of social media on kids, and at least limiting access until after-school hours would be one step in the right direction. In addition, the simple distractions they pose would seem to make classroom management that much more difficult. Finally, though we can have some control over what resources kids access on Chromebooks, no such controls exist on personal cell phones.

In other words, I don't think cell phones in class add positively to our mission.

That said, this kind of decision must be made in conjunction with administration. If our administrators are behind the idea, I believe we could likely utilize money from our deferred maintenance reserve account to construct cell phone lock boxes students could utilize during the day to store devices.

I know eliminating cell phones in the classroom would receive some pushback from parents, and a whole lot from kids, but with a decent public education campaign I think we could explain the need.

This is an idea worth considering.

### Mike McConnell

I do.

Aileen Brew

Yes, I would support cell phone-free classroom spaces. It's an intriguing idea and as a parent of a LVHS Junior, I see the value of having cell free zones in schools.

Karen Harms

Cell phones do not have a place in the school setting. Technology has taken over many aspects of our children's lives and we need to provide more space away from it. Cell phones create a large distraction from learning and cause more social problems than anything else. We need to start teaching healthy boundaries with technology so that their brains can develop in the way they are meant to.

Staff also need to minimize the use of their phones/social media during the school day and lead by example.

Todd Sutton

Yes

## **Question 20: What are your thoughts about an early retirement plan for older, higher paid teachers as a way to free up money that could be used as a cost of living raise for younger teachers or as a raise to the base pay?**

### Tim Green

I taught 35 years and now you come up with this plan?? LOL Young teachers today need older teachers to help them through "the swamp". I understand the idea of getting rid of old guys like me, but what "is in the best interests" of the students? New, younger teachers who get paid less balance the budget, but is that best for kids? Quit being bean counters and start being educators!!

### Ralph A. Vinci

The early retirement option should NOT be used as a mechanism to wash-out older, experienced teachers. Different funding sources need to become available as a way to financially assist newer teachers.

### Maureen Donohoue Howell

Like every other question that has profound consequences for students and teachers I would ask for a specific proposal with supporting evidence for both the efficacy and the costs associated with any plan like the one suggested by this question. We have lost teachers in the High School who were dually qualified to offer AP classes to students that allowed students to get college credit. Encouraging their "retirement" in favor of a "young teacher" who enters at lower pay with less experience or advanced education is typically not qualified to teach those classes does not seem wise. Any approach that would apply a single criterion (ie. you're older, you get paid more than an inexperienced teacher) instead of looking at the performance of a teacher is not something I would support.

### Sharon Terhune

I was a much better teacher near the end of my career than I was at the beginning. I was older, wiser, more experienced, and I paced myself better. When younger I had more energy, but when older I was seasoned. We need to think about retaining staff that are the most productive in providing the best education for our kids. I love the idea of raising the base pay every chance we get. It's never been entirely clear to me whether this district has the ability to raise it and doesn't (for whatever reason), or if there truly isn't the money to do it given all of the other facets of the district that require funding. I'd love to get down to the nitty gritty on that.

### Jennifer Butler

This has happened in the past, it has worked well, and can become a viable option for the district if needed. Some things for me to consider during this decision process would include whether the experienced teacher is a better option for our student's education or whether introducing a new teacher to the district is best for our students. Financially it will cost the district more for early retirement and higher wages for new teachers, and that can affect how the budget is distributed throughout other programs that affect our students. In the end, the decision will be based on what is best for the students in our district.

### Jared Kail

The early retirement program has been used effectively in the past when reducing headcount due to budgeting, ADM reductions or future planning made it advantageous. However, the program itself comes with some costs, both fiscal and educational. Any assessment of the program needs to take into account both of these.

I worry about overusing this program because we lose seasoned teachers with tremendous institutional knowledge. While not always the case, many of these instructors serve as a bedrock of our system, and we need to be careful not to take that wealth of history and experience for granted. If and when we implement it, we need to use it in a phased manner to help ensure we don't lose too much experience at one time.

I also question how effective the program is at raising base rates. If you take the marginal difference between a new and retiring teacher and then spread that difference out among all of our staff it doesn't go very far. Even if you limited that spread to certified staff only I'm not sure that the marginal difference would make a material impact on salaries. It is certainly something that we can look at, but I don't pin much hope on such a program making significant pay increases.

### Mike McConnell

It's called a buy-out and it could be an option.

I am more than happy to meet and discuss the issues any time.

### Aileen Brew

I see senior teachers as very important in schools: for their skill with students, their knowledge, mentorship, role-modeling and professional achievements. They surely give newer teachers the sense that this can be a rewarding, life-long career. I can only imagine meeting someone who has been in a school for 20+ years and thinking "wow, this worked for them, maybe it will be a good fit for me". On the other hand, a district will always have a flow of teachers in and out of the schools, and some years might need to offer early retirement to those interested teachers to achieve better financial balance and stability.

### Karen Harms

Early retirement could benefit a lot of people and I would not be opposed to offering early retirement packages to increase the base salary. I would not, however, agree to early retirement as a way of forcing out our higher paid teachers.

### Todd Sutton

From a simple academic and theoretical point of view, the idea has merit. I think it would be worth exploring and discussing.