

**Davis Education Association
2010 Davis School District Board of Education
Candidate Questionnaire**

Name: Michael Sperry
District: 6
Street Address: 3380 S 930 W
City: Syracuse
Zip: 84075
Phone: 801 698 0622
Email: mike4dsd@gmail.com
Website: mike4dsd.blogspot.com

1. Please tell us a little about yourself and why you have filed to run for the Davis School District Board of Education.

I am a 15 year resident of Davis County and have lived at my home in Syracuse for the past 11 years. My wife, Jana, and I are the parents of 5 children, 4 of which attend Bluff Ridge Elementary while the youngest is still too young for school. I was raised in Nephi and graduated from Juab High School. I attended BYU where I received a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering. I work for Northrop Grumman (formerly TRW) for the past 15 years.

I started thinking about the possibility of running for the school board three years ago during the Syracuse High School boundary study. At the time, my children were young and I was not concerned about the high school boundary. I provided my input to the Board of Education regarding the matter and received no feedback from the board member of this district. I knew of others who had the same experience. The part of this experience that really bothered me was the lack of transparency in the process. The board did not require the boundary committee to hold open meetings. The board went to a consultant and removed any transparency when the committee approach became too difficult. After this event, I looked up my board member's election date and learned she had just been reelected (unopposed) months earlier. This is the time I started contemplating running for election to this position this year.

I am a candidate for the Board of Education because I want to ensure that the students of the Davis School District receive a quality education that will allow them to develop the skilled required for a productive adulthood now and in the future. This includes my children. I am a candidate because I believe that the parents of the district need someone to listen to their input, someone willing to communicate with them and someone to provide a representative voice on the board. I am a candidate because I view this as an opportunity to serve the

community. I am a candidate because I believe that I can make a positive impact on the continuing education of all of the students in the district.

2. What kinds of experiences have you had with the schools in the Davis School District? (children in school, volunteering, etc.)

I currently have 4 children attending schools in the Davis School District. My wife serves on the Bluff Ridge Elementary Community Council. I have been an occasional classroom volunteer.

3. What, in your opinion, is the main mission of public education?

Provide a quality education for all students that will allow them to develop the skills required for a productive life.

4. Do you believe that public schools are adequately funded? If you do not believe they are adequately funded, what changes should be made to provide appropriate financial support for quality public schools?

I believe that the state legislature has done an admirable job regarding funding in these difficult economic times. Education funding is received from the public in general and everybody's budgets have been reduced. Education cannot demand or expect continued or increased funding during these situations.

A way needs to be determined that will allow for steadier operations during difficult economic times and that the funding received is used in the best possible way. The establishment of a rainy-day fund at the district level during ample budget years for use during lean times should be investigated. District and school administrations needs to be evaluated and changed where necessary. The past existence of a position or program at the district level does not necessarily merit the continuation of this position. The use of buildings and new construction needs to be examined to determine the best economic use. There are many areas that can be studied to ensure best economic use. Some funding could be found in these areas that can be directed to better classroom funding.

Public support can also be improved through better customer relations. Parents are the customers in the education system and their satisfaction will lead to better support. I believe that when the public feels that their tax dollars have been spent wisely and their input to the educational system has been considered, public support will increase. I do not believe that this process has happened or been communicated effectively. If additional funding is required after this process, a more supportive public and legislature will be more willing to provide this funding.

5. What do you see as the three most critical need/issues facing the Davis School District in the next five years? How would you begin to address these issues?

The three most critical issues facing the Davis School District are 1-budget limitations and their impact on the classroom, 2-continued growth of the student population and 3-continued changes in education with evolving technology.

Budget limitations are a constant for every business and family. I addressed my point of view regarding funding in question 4.

Student population growth will also be a constant and needs attention. I believe the district should have 3-, 5- and 10-year plans that are reviewed regularly and presented to the school board and public. The district should work with the county and state planners and statisticians regarding student growth. School buildings should be adequately planned for so land can be purchased, where necessary, before the demand for and cost of land is high. Older schools need to be evaluated to determine if it should remain open, be remodeled or rebuilt. Investment in older schools should not be automatic but should be provided if it is the best alternative. Alternative schedules need to be studied and implemented where practical. I do not have any emotional connection to any building, program or area of the district but will examine the data objectively and support changes where appropriate.

Evolving technology affects both how education is provided and what education is needed. Careers that were plentiful 30 years ago are now becoming obsolete. New career opportunities are available and the students need the foundation to compete for these jobs. The district needs to ensure that the educational offerings are evaluated and updated. Technology in the classroom also needs to continually be evaluated and implemented where practical.

6. What would you do to retain quality educators in the Davis District?

I would work with the teachers to develop the best possible environment for a career. This includes compensation, opportunities for advancement and growth, respect from co-workers and administrators and providing the required resources in the classroom. I believe that merit pay should be part of this system. I believe that with a focus on the classroom, quality educators will be rewarded for their efforts and be provided the tools they need to succeed.

7. What would you do to attract new teachers in the Davis District, considering the fact that the legislature this year significantly reduced the retirement benefit for future teachers?

I believe that the same focus on the classroom mentioned in question 6 will help attract new teachers to the district.

8. If another voucher or tuition tax credit bill is introduced in the legislature, would you support another such effort, or would you oppose it? Why?

I would not support the effort at this time. However, I believe in parental choice and that parents should be presented with available options.

9. In 2010 Sen. Margaret Dayton sponsored a bill (S.B. 77) that would prevent school districts from providing Association leave (paid substitutes) for teachers who serve during the school day on district committees such as negotiations. It would also prevent the school district from paying 50% of the DEA President's salary. Would you favor the continuation of the current Association leave policy between the school district and the DEA, or would you oppose it?

I support the premise behind Senator Dayton's bill. In an environment where resources are scarce, the resources are best spent in the classroom.

10. In your opinion, is there anything the Davis School Board and District Administration could do better?

I believe that both the Davis School Board and district administration could do a better job with communications. As a parent and member of the public, I often feel that my input is unwanted and unrecognized. This attitude sometimes diffuses to the school administrations and staff. I also believe that the board and district are sometimes too comfortable with the status quo instead of exploring new ideas and technologies. Sometimes a better way to do something can be found when studied.

I believe that the board could do a better job providing the direction and leadership for the district. The board is the elected body representing the people and their leadership is needed. The board should dictate to the district the agenda, calendar and direction of the school district, and not vice versa.

11. Is the Davis School District too large to be responsive to its patrons and the community? Would you support splitting the school district? Why or why not?

I believe that the school district is approaching the size that makes it too difficult to be responsive to the community. The district board of education precincts are slightly larger in size than the districts for the state house of representatives. I believe that the board of education and the district have done an outstanding job of working with all areas of the district despite this large size. I believe that there are pros and cons to a school district split. I would not propose a split as a

member of the school board. However, I would not fight a community-backed division but would support the will of the community. I believe that it is the role of the school board to present the pros and cons to the community and allow them to make an informed choice.