

## Strong Public Education Candidates:

- ☑ Know about school reform, college- and career-readiness, and ways to improve public schools.
- ☑ Know education policy: the federal, state, and local laws that govern public education, and the responsibilities of the desired office.
- ☑ Make public education a high priority in their political platform.
- ☑ Solicit opinions and viewpoints from citizens through polling, town meetings, community conversations, and face-to-face discussions.
- ☑ Have prior experience with public education policy.
- ☑ Have a clear message about public education priorities.
- ☑ Have a realistic funding plan to support public education improvements and ensure adequate resources for all schools.
- ☑ Communicate who will be held accountable for student and school performance.

Many candidates and office holders are vocal about their support for public education, but voters can do a great deal to ensure that they stay aware of the wide range of important education issues and that they honor their commitments. This voter guide is designed to help voters recognize critical public education issues and ask informed questions of political candidates and office holders.

*Public Education Network, a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization, does not endorse the election or defeat of any candidate or party.*

## About Public Education Network

Public Education Network (PEN) is a national association of local education funds (LEFs) and individuals working to advance public school reform in low-income communities across our country. PEN seeks to build public demand and mobilize resources for quality public education for all children. PEN believes that community engagement is the missing ingredient in school reform, and that the level of public involvement ultimately determines the quality of education provided by public schools.

### PEN's Vision

Every day, in every community, every child in America benefits from a quality public education

## About Local Education Funds (LEFs)

Local education funds are community-based advocacy organizations uniquely positioned to engage local citizens in public education reform. Independent of their local school districts, LEFs work closely with public school administrators, teachers, and boards, and partner with parents, community leaders, businesses, and students.

To learn more about PEN, LEFs, and public education in America today, visit

[www.PublicEducation.org](http://www.PublicEducation.org).

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Public involvement. Public education. Public benefit.

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# Choosing Champions of Public Education

## A Voter's Guide

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## Using This Guide

A free public education is one of America's most vital assets. Every member of society has an investment in a quality public school system. Good schools lead to strong economies, better jobs, less crime, and many other positive social outcomes. Public education is an important responsibility for elected officials at all levels, and thus an important area to consider in every election.

Public education is also an important responsibility for YOU, the voter. It is your job to:

- ❖ **Set high expectations** for public education and student achievement in your community.
- ❖ **Allocate resources** by demanding that your tax dollars be spent to improve public education.
- ❖ **Hold officials accountable** for their performance and insist that they fulfill their duty to provide a quality public education for every child.

It is the public that elects school board members, pays taxes to support public schools, votes for school bond referenda, and visits and volunteers in the schools. Public schools, in turn, transmit important values and information that help young people participate in our democracy and become responsible citizens.

*Public Education Network does not endorse the election or defeat of any candidate or party. We hope this guide helps you to make informed decisions about which candidates to support.*

## Vote for Public Education!

Since 2011 is an off-year election, voters will only vote in elections for four congressmen and four governors. However, there will be elections for countless state house and senate members, mayors, regents, city council members, board of supervisors, county officials, and school board trustees.

### Where do the Candidates Stand on Key Education Issues?

#### Whom should public schools serve?

A quality public education requires the assurance of quality of basic physical needs: shelter, nutrition, physical: safety, sleep, and exercise. It must include: schools that graduate students who are ready for college and career; setting high expectations for all students; quality preschool programs; standards that determine what students are taught and tested on, and are connected to teacher training; qualified teachers; family involvement; adequate funding; well-maintained buildings; strong school and district leaders, and community support. A candidate who supports education will have a clear position on a wide range of children's issues.

#### Questions for candidates:

- \*What proposals, if any, do you offer for public education programs that support underserved children?
- \*What is your position on the value and importance of public education and college- and career-readiness?
- \*What are your top priorities for improving public education?
- \*Do you support the education of the "whole child"?

#### Who should run the public schools?

The level of achievement students reach is only determined by the students themselves. Schools play an important role, and elected officials have some say in who is held responsible for student achievement. Strong education candidates understand the role their offices play in public education, and should be able to articulate what they will do to improve school quality.

#### Questions for candidates:

- \* Who do you think should be responsible for ensuring that public schools operate effectively and that children are college- and career-ready?
- \* If elected, what responsibility and authority would you have for public education?
- \* What do you believe are the best ways to evaluate school and student performance?
- \* How would you evaluate teacher quality?

#### Who should pay for the public schools?

Most candidates for elected office support quality and improvement in public education, but their proposals for how to pay for public education vary widely. A strong education candidate should have developed a viable plan for school funding.

#### Questions for candidates:

- \*What are your views on how much is currently spent on public education and whether this amount is adequate?
- \*What changes, if any, would you make to the existing education funding structure?
- \*What is your position on current, pending court cases that would affect funding for education in the state?
- \*What programs and areas do you consider most vital and deserving of protection from budget cuts?
- \*How would you fund the program and policy changes you are proposing?
- \*Do you have any tax proposals to offer for public school funding?
- \*Do you support generating funds for public education through taxes on liquor, tobacco, lotteries, casino gambling, slot machines, or any other "sin" taxes or revenues?

#### Other important issues

A number of other issues impact the quality of education that children in your community receive. A qualified candidate should be able to address your specific concerns.

#### Questions for candidates:

- \* What is your position on the No Child Left Behind Act?
- \* Do you believe the amount spent for students classified as "special needs" is adequate?
- \* What is your stance on school choice?
- \* What is your position on the adequacy of our school facilities?