

CUSD Governing Board Candidate Questionnaire

Robert Rice

How long have you lived in Chandler USD boundaries?

38 years



Education Summary

BS Computer Science Ohio State University

MBA University of Arizona

Current Employment

Retired

Civic Engagement

Chandler Gilbert YMCA Board (32 years), Valley of the Sun YMCA Board (3 years), School Facilities Board (1 year), Chandler Census Committee, Chandler Rotary Club (16 years), Read On Chandler Treasurer (5 years), CUSD Board (16 years)

Questions

1. What unique qualifications do you bring to the Chandler USD Governing Board?

16 years of service on the CUSD board serving as president twice

Former president of the Arizona School Boards Association

23 years experience managing and leading world class organizations at Intel Corporation

Community service including president of Chandler Rotary, Board Chair at Chandler Gilbert YMCA, Treasurer of Read On Chandler

39 years' experience hiring, supervising and leading highly performing staff members

2. In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge facing our school district, and how would you address it as a board member?

CUSD's greatest challenge is becoming the best school district in America. I will continue helping to set measurable district goals through Journey 2025, challenging, inspiring and working with fellow board members and the superintendent and providing the accountability to ensure the district makes continuous improvement toward the goals. I am not an education expert, I rely on administrators, teachers, and staff members to provide the expertise and advice in identifying and setting appropriate world class goals that define district success. I am an expert at accountability and using the tools of continuous improvement to produce world class results which benefit students, parents, teachers, staff members and the community.

3. What role do you feel CEA should have in the district? How would you engage with CEA in your role as a board member?

CEA should be a strong advocate and voice for the teachers, helping to communicate to the teachers and partner with the district administration and board to achieve our common goals for our students and community. I believe CEA has been a valued partner with the district in the past 16 years. While CEA leadership has supported teachers they also have understood the goals of the district and worked to support those goals as well as their own. I will engage with CEA leadership in any productive capacity. I will continue to be respectful and honest in my positions and beliefs, value the views of teachers and expect the same from CEA. While we may not always agree on tactics I believe we share common goals with respect to district performance and continuing to make CUSD a great place to work.

4. Describe your decision-making process and how you would utilize it as a board member regarding district policies such as contracts, working conditions, evaluations, etc.

I support the current district interest-based negotiation process as a way to achieve our common goals. I support providing open and honest discussion of available resources and determining policies, contracts, working conditions and evaluations based on the interests and needs of teachers, support staff, students, parents and community members.

5. As a board member, how would you help the district attract and retain talented education professionals?

I will continue to advocate for a positive work environment, using individual feedback, the annual survey and Journey 2025 indicators such as staff turnover to help set goals and move toward them. I believe an organization's success is built around the staff members. Hiring the best staff members, providing them adequate resources to be successful is the only path to a world class organization and outcomes. Our staff must feel valued, challenged, adequately compensated and know that innovation is encouraged even when the results are not as expected. This is the only way an individual or organization can improve.

6. As a board member, how would you prioritize funding in the face of severe budget cuts (e.g., loss of federal funds, legislative cuts, reduction in student population/per-pupil funding, etc.)?

I have supported the district practice of maintaining a 24 to 1 student to teacher ratio. I also have supported providing our teachers with a total compensation package (including salary, healthcare and other benefits) that is in the top 20% in the state. I voted to allocate the full increase to teachers' salaries that was recently adopted by the state. I also support use of the district contingency funds to provide a buffer for unexpected and deep cuts to funding.

7. What is your position regarding due process rights for school employees? Explain.

I believe all school employees should have some form of due process rights whether in contract, statute or policy. Maintaining a fair and productive work environment and culture is critical to achieving a high performing and successful organization. Reasonable rights, protections and an appeal process should be the fundamental basis for a sound work environment.

8. What is your position on Proposition 305, and will you sign the invest in ed pledge as a candidate and/or a voter? Explain.

I oppose Prop 305. ESA's reduce funding available for public schools. Studies have shown ESA's are primarily subsidizing higher income parents and allowing private schools to charge even more based on the extra state funding. If ESA's are open to all students we could see over \$364 million drained from the Arizona budget since each of the 65,000 private school students will be eligible for the \$5,600 subsidy. This will not save the state money because the vast majority of the private school parents are already paying the entire tuition for their students. It is extremely poor public policy.

I support the first portion of the Invest In Ed statement. There are three specific areas in the bullet points however that I have difficulty supporting. First, as a board member I have no control over the amount the legislature provides for schools. Pledging to immediately restore education funding to 2008 levels is making a pledge I cannot keep. I also am unable to pledge to no new tax cuts as I am not in the legislature. Finally, while the board does have the ability to create a district wide salary structure which includes annual raises, future district funding is not guaranteed. Severe external economic swings could force the district toward insolvency and these policy restrictions could take away the needed options from future boards, administrators and staff members to maintain a viable education system.