

# Chandler USD Governing Board Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in the Chandler Education Association candidate interview process. This is one way the employees of the Chandler Unified School District can get to know you.

## Directions

1. Please complete the candidate information and respond to the questions below. Please limit your responses to 250 words or less.
2. Return the completed candidate information and questionnaire to Maria Hase at [REDACTED] [vppoliticalaction@chandlerrea.org](mailto:vppoliticalaction@chandlerrea.org) by **Monday, July 27**.
3. If you have any questions regarding the candidate interview process, contact Katie Nash at [REDACTED] [president@chandlerrea.org](mailto:president@chandlerrea.org).

## Candidate Information

Candidate Name Sharon Tuttle

Home Address [REDACTED]

Phone [REDACTED] ☒ Cell ☐ Home

Email [REDACTED]

How long have you lived in CUSD boundaries? 7 years

Education Summary Bachelors in Business Accounting, Masters in Management, Masters in Educational Leadership

Current Employment Casa Grande Elementary School District 7th Grade ELA teacher

Civic Engagement Active in AEA, AEU, advocate for educator and youth mental health programs

Additional Information

## Questions

1. What unique qualifications do you bring to the Chandler Unified School District (CUSD) Governing Board?

Throughout my career, I have been passionate in my commitment to students and educators through amplifying individual voice, developing students' interest, and instilling a sense of dignity and worth among all. I have dedicated my career to each of these pursuits. I hold my certification in K-8 Education with SEI and English endorsements. I attained a master's degree in Educational Leadership and earned K-12 Principal certification. I taught in Chandler for three years, was on the executive board for the CEA, and all four of my children are enrolled in CUSD. Our children are at 4 different campuses because they all have differing needs. At the moment, we have chosen online education for them. I have a vested interest in this district since my youngest is just now entering kindergarden.

I am a Latina woman, who was brought up by my parents who struggled to make ends meet. My father was an immigrant from Mexico and my siblings and I were always pushed to follow our dreams and accept nothing less than success in our fields. My parents did everything they could to remove any barriers that existed, while still allowing us to personally fight for ourselves. I can relate with many of our students and staff who struggle with cultural and systemic challenges and hope to lift their voices and show there are people out there that will fight for their voices to be heard as well.

I am a strong advocate for Collaborative and Proactive Solutions in and out of the classroom to help students solve problems, instead of relying on disciplinary measures that typically fail in helping our kids succeed in any environment. I believe we need a cultural shift away from suspensions and reactive disciplinary models that have hurt our students more than helped.

I have taught ELL students, gifted students, high-achieving students, students with PTSD, students with social-emotional issues, and students who fall everywhere in-between. I want to see Chandler give every student, not only an equitable education, but one that thrives and beats the odds. I will work tirelessly to inspire and advocate for the CUSD community, so we can build a culture of collaboration, reinvention, and seeking to put kid's needs first.

2. In your opinion, what is the greatest challenge facing CUSD, and how would you address it?

I believe CUSD's greatest challenge right now is effective collaboration and communication with all stakeholders. There is a culture of delaying decisions or making single-handed decisions that impact the school system and families, which creates confusion and frustration on all sides. Better collaboration and communication of the pandemic plan, equity programs, special education programs, and the Human Growth and Development program could have brought the community together and given parents a chance to learn more about the district and staff, instead of building walls and barriers to building productive relationships.

3. What role do you feel CEA should have in CUSD? How would you engage with CEA?

The CEA should be represented in all rooms where decisions are made that affect students and educators. The board members and district administration should be seeking advice from those that are in the trenches and doing the daily grind. I would love to see consistent meetings with board members and administration where district policy and strategy are discussed and collaboration is used to discover the best solution or path forward.

4. Describe your decision-making process and how you would utilize it working with CUSD, with CEA, and with surrounding City/Town Councils.

When I make decisions I look for those who are experts in the field, examine who will be impacted, and what are the intended and unintended consequences of any decision. I value pulling from the wisdom of those who have walked the path before and exploring research to make informed decisions. With that said, there will be times when decisions have to be made unilaterally because of time limitations or privacy concerns. Because of this reason, it is important to have continuous and consistent conversations with all community stakeholders and to continually educate myself on issues affecting schools to ensure myself and the board would be informed at any time to make wise decisions.

5. How would you help the district attract and retain talented education professionals?

Chandler has always been a sought-out district by educators because of the reputation and ability to provide resources and programs that families desire. Educator retention is difficult in our state due to the shortage, therefore employees have a lot of choices when it comes to seeking employment. I fully believe that mentorship within the first 5 years, not only in the profession, but new to the district, is vital to ensure the employee can successfully integrate into the culture, as well as feel confident in their professional abilities. I would like to expand the mentorship program and incentivize mentors to participate in the program and take on the additional responsibilities of mentoring the new employees.

Additionally, maintaining high standards of ethical behavior and practices, as well as professional development, for district administration to ensure we have courageous, quality, and experienced leaders in the district is imperative. The district should not tolerate sub-par educational craftsmanship. Each individual should be providing invaluable service and talent so our staff can realize their potential, which will benefit all students.

6. 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.)?

Working alongside Super Q and a committee of representatives from each department we need to discuss how we can creatively make cuts that will not impact classroom size, equitable resources, or the quality of certified educators. Through my experience in accounting and education, I have found that we are an incredibly creative and innovative group of people. I truly believe we can find ways to make cuts and ensure it does not impact educator's ability to teach or student's ability to learn in the best environment possible if we work together to find solutions.

7. Over 400,000 voters signed petitions to place the Invest in Education Act on the November ballot. If passed, this proposition would provide almost \$1 billion in additional funding to Arizona public schools using an income tax surcharge on incomes over \$250,000 (\$500,000 for married couples). Do you support the Invest in Education Act? Why or why not?

Of course! I absolutely believe that Arizonans need to invest in their communities more because underfunded schools affect all of us whether or not you have children in the public school system. The state government has failed school systems and has not lived up to their constitutional responsibility of quality free education for all. If they had, this would not be necessary. When we lift up one, we lift up the whole community.

8. Do you support CUSD's equity and inclusion program? Why or why not?

Throughout my life and educational career, I have experienced first-hand the inequities that people can face. I fully support the equity and inclusion program and honestly wish more was happening with it in the district. Simply treating people "fairly" is not enough when at risk, disadvantaged, or minority groups are already struggling with barriers and access to learning and success. I was working in the district when the program was rolled out and it started off well by asking educators and staff to start understanding people's stories. But soon after, the program sort of became an afterthought in many people's views. I would like to see the district push employees hard to identify their biases and create metrics and goals around educating themselves on that topic and making steps to ensure positive growth. Providing an equitable environment ensures our students and staff are treated with dignity and respect. This equity program should be a staple in every conversation and as a district we should be courageous enough to stand by this code and not sway every time there is push back.

9. CUSD has removed the former sex education curriculum from its elementary schools. Do you agree or disagree with CUSD's decision to do so? In your opinion, what should sex education look like in elementary, middle, and high school? Why?

I did not agree with the decision to remove the curriculum from the elementary school setting. While there are some parents who will take an active role in educating their children about human growth and development, many won't do it at an age that is appropriate or in the depth that it needs to be covered. This issue goes back to communication break down in the district. If the district had communicated what was included in the current curriculum, how to opt out/in if necessary, I truly believe parents would not have fought the program. As a former 4th grade teacher, I can attest to the fact that many of my students did not understand what was happening to their bodies until it was too late and I, or the nurse, had to explain it. On the other end of the spectrum, there were always a handful of students who knew way too much too soon and spread that information like wildfire. I was left to explain to parents what they had been saying to their peers. In my opinion, fourth grade is a better time to convey this information so they can begin the conversation with their parents and then take that responsibility and burden off of educators and staff and place it back in the hands of parents.



10. CUSD has a long history of bargaining with educators in a process called Super Q. The members of the bargaining team include: CEA members, Administration, Education Support Personnel, and Governing Board Members. Do you think the Super Q process should only address issues related to funding, or do you think it should address all issues (professional development, technology, etc.) that impact educator working conditions? Do you support a professional agreement? Do you support a governing board policy regarding bargaining? Explain.

This is a complex question because when we are discussing funding as a whole, everything comes into question. The district funds provide professional development, technology, determine class size, programs, etc. so that pulls money from other areas that could potentially be used more effectively. Super Q does need to discuss effectiveness of programs, costs, and how funds are used in all areas. There were too many instances while I was in the district that I took part in a training or heard of trainings that were ineffective or too costly. We need to be acutely aware of how funds are used and determine if the cost is worth the intended outcome. If the students or educators in our district are not reaping rewards from programs or resources that are purchased, Super Q needs to know and help reallocate that funding to a different pot or program.

I am in complete support of creating and maintaining professional agreements between the board and association to facilitate communication and cooperation between all parties involved in creating safe, inclusive, and mutually responsible decisions and conditions for working. Likewise, I support the creation and implementation of a governing board policy regarding collective bargaining.

11. We are currently in the midst of the COVID pandemic. Do you believe CUSD schools can safely open on August 17th? What do you believe is necessary for schools to open and resume in-person instruction?

I do not think it is safe to return in any capacity August 17th. Last spring we closed schools when there were only a handful of cases in AZ, now people are debating returning when there have been hundreds of deaths just in June alone. Experts really have no idea how this virus affects students because children have been sheltered from public spaces since March. I do not believe the schools should be the beta test environment, nor should we be the sole provider of mental health services. School staff, as a whole, do not have the proper training or resources to deal with a pandemic or the amount of trauma our students will be dealing with from shutting down, and opening up, probably repeating this trend over the course of next year. Although I understand the argument that students need social skills and their mental health may be suffering, we have to also understand Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Safety comes first. I really do believe that consistency and predictability for students does more for their mental health than in-person interactions with peers and teachers. If we allow students and families to plan on being at home long-term, they can make decisions that are best for their families and educators can get busy creating effective virtual lessons. If we continue to be vague and make decisions based off the loudest voice or trend of the day, we will continue to harm their mental health and the relationship and trust with our community. Let's make wise decisions with scientific facts, instead of emotion and knee jerk reactions.