



2023 St. Vrain Valley School District School Board Candidate Questionnaire: Responses by Candidate

This questionnaire was distributed to all the School Board candidates in the following districts: Boulder Valley, Poudre, St. Vrain Valley, and Thompson School Districts. Candidates all had until Sept 28, 2023 to submit their responses and were provided several email reminders.

Here we present the St. Vrain Valley School (SVVSD) candidate responses by candidate, sorted by District Seat and alphabetically by first name.

2 of the 4 SVVSD candidates submitted responses and those are provided here.

We received responses from the following candidates:

District Seat A: Jacqueline Weiss

District Seat G: Geno Lechuga

We did not receive responses from the following candidates: James Berthold (District Seat C) or Michelle Sulek (District Seat E)

As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, we cannot endorse any candidate. Rather, we work to understand and share information with our constituents about the candidates and their stances on topics that are important to our community.



2023 SVVSD School Board Candidate Questionnaire: Responses by Candidate

BVSD District A: Jacqueline Weiss

This questionnaire was distributed to all the School Board candidates in the following districts: Boulder Valley, Poudre, St. Vrain Valley, and Thompson School Districts. Here we present the SVVSD candidate responses by candidate, sorted by District Seat and alphabetically by first name.

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1. What motivated you to run for the School Board and what do you hope to accomplish, if elected?

Jacqueline is running for school board due to her passion for providing the best public education to all students and supporting teachers and school employees. As a teacher of 12 years, she has firsthand experience with how policies and school board actions affect learning and school culture. As such, school boards should focus on how to support students and teachers and their growth best. Strong schools help build strong communities and are the foundation of a better future. Jacqueline's expertise as a seasoned and celebrated classroom teacher, her reputation in her community, and her desire to serve her community without ulterior motives make her an excellent candidate for the SVVSD school board.

2. Many historically marginalized students, specifically LGBTQ+, Latine, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), and students with disabilities, experience more limited educational opportunities, disproportionately negative disciplinary decisions, and higher rates of bullying. What do you think is the best way to support these students and address differences in their treatment in schools?



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SVVSD District A: Jacqueline Weiss

SVVSD already requires training around the inclusion and empowerment of historically marginalized student populations for staff, and the district also has strong policies around inclusion. Additional training on how school staff can help students experiencing bullying would be beneficial.

3. Would you oppose any effort or policies to ban books that have LGBTQ+ or Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian, and Middle Eastern characters, authors, or content?

I would oppose any effort to ban any book.

4. Research demonstrates that zero tolerance discipline policies are often disproportionately used to punish BIPOC, Latine, and LGBTQ+ students. Some school districts across the country have moved away from punitive punishment in favor of restorative justice practices, which emphasize repairing the harm caused to victims and the community by offenses and involve working with the participants to foster dialogue to determine a path forward. Restorative justices consider wrongdoings an offense against relationships, rather than the state or school.

a. Do you support restorative justice practices in schools? If so, how would you, as a board member, support restorative justice practices in the district?

I support any practice that benefits students and learning, and I believe restorative justice practices encourage learning. Training on effectively implementing restorative justice practices would be essential, as would education about said practices for our community.

b. What limitations do you see in non-punitive approaches to discipline?

There are situations (although they are seldom) where harm is irreparable. In these situations, punitive discipline are likely necessary.

5. Educational researchers for decades have identified opportunity and achievement gaps between white students and BIPOC students. There is data in CO that supports those findings.

a. What are the achievement gaps in your district and why do they exist?



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SVVSD District A: Jacqueline Weiss

To answer this question with the degree of thoroughness necessary, I would want to study our district's current and historical results with our assessment coordinator to analyze the data and with our curriculum experts to analyze why any disparities exist.

b. What strategies and policies would you support to address these disparities?

I would support any strategy or policy to diminish disparities between different groups of students.

6. As a board member how would you ensure that school administration and staff are correctly implementing bullying prevention policies?

All school staff are required to take training on bullying prevention and are also mandatory reporters. Students have access to resources through school psychologists and counselors as well as safe-to-tell. Administrators and staff take safe-to-tell reports very seriously and also take reports of bullying extremely seriously. Community dialogue and education including both parents and students is an area in which we could improve as a district.

7. Should charter schools be required to follow district nondiscrimination policies? How would that influence your decision about proposed charter schools in your district?

Yes, charter schools should be required to follow district nondiscrimination policies, and if proposed charters or charters looking to renew do not follow nondiscrimination policies then their charter should not be granted.

8. The Colorado State Board of Education recently approved accurate and inclusive Social Studies standards that fully include LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities.

a. Do you believe that charter schools should be required to follow those standards?

Yes, charter schools should be required to follow all Colorado State Board of Education standards.

b. What accountability measures would you support to ensure that schools, including charter schools, follow this policy?



SVVSD District A: Jacqueline Weiss

I would support any accountability measures our district level experts and or state experts create to ensure that all schools follow this policy.

9. Anything else you would like to share?

SVVSD has strong anti-discrimination, open hiring/equal employment opportunities, and equal educational policies and consistently list Out Boulder County as a resource. Read more here: <https://www.svvsd.org/departments/student-services/supporting-lgbtq-students/>



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2023 SVVSD School Board Candidate Questionnaire: Responses by Candidate

SVVSD District G: Geno Lechuga

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As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, we cannot endorse any candidate. Rather, we work to understand and share information with our constituents about the candidates and their stances on topics that are important to our community.

1. What motivated you to run for the School Board and what do you hope to accomplish, if elected?

The short answer is easy; I would like to give back to what has been given to me and my family. My wife (Caitlin) and I both graduated from Lyons High School and are Alumni of St. Vrain Valley School District. The faculty, administration, coaches, and communities of St. Vrain have helped me in so many ways become the person I am today. Had it not been for all those people, I am not sure where I would be. Fast forward to today, both of my children (Dante -15, Ava - 13) are in the St. Vrain district. They too are thriving and benefiting from the same things I benefited from and more. I could not be more honored and humbled to be a part of this School Board.

2. Many historically marginalized students, specifically LGBTQ+, Latine, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), and students with disabilities, experience more limited educational opportunities, disproportionately negative disciplinary decisions, and higher rates of bullying. What do you think is the best



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SVVSD District G: Geno Lechuga

way to support these students and address differences in their treatment in schools?

Looking at the bigger umbrella, it's important for me and my family, and a member of this board that every student feels physically and emotionally safe. Safety is something my family and I pray about daily. St. Vrain takes important measures when it comes to safety such as threat assessments, building security and protocols, bullying, targeted violence, emergency planning, cybersecurity and so on. I know our Superintendent works diligently to meet or exceed state guidelines and create policies for these matters. He also works hard to put counselors, social workers, teachers, SRO's all in place that would ultimately impact the safety of our students, faculty, communities, visitors, and others. As a member of the board, I will do my best to make sure safety will always remain a priority for our district.

3. Would you oppose any effort or policies to ban books that have LGBTQ+ or Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian, and Middle Eastern characters, authors, or content?

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this subject in more detail. I would be in favor of learning more about the issues at hand from both sides of the spectrum in a professional manner. I would ask that both sides communicate with an open mind and with the students best interest.

4. Research demonstrates that zero tolerance discipline policies are often disproportionately used to punish BIPOC, Latine, and LGBTQ+ students. Some school districts across the country have moved away from punitive punishment in favor of restorative justice practices, which emphasize repairing the harm caused to victims and the community by offenses and involve working with the participants to foster dialogue to determine a path forward. Restorative justices consider wrongdoings an offense against relationships, rather than the state or school.

a. Do you support restorative justice practices in schools? If so, how would you, as a board member, support restorative justice practices in the district?

Personally I do not have a lot of background on this subject matter. I do however know that each individual is different in how they feel is a way to report and recover from injustice. Same holds true for individuals seeking help from their wrong doings or



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SVVSD District G: Geno Lechuga

rehabilitation. I would think there are lots of different approaches that could discourage those individuals from causing more harm. Respectfully, I will have to gain more education on this matter before I can fully support or not support this initiative.

b. What limitations do you see in non-punitive approaches to discipline?

Discipline is not a bad thing in my opinion. If someone does something wrong, there should be consequences. With that said, I think there are many ways to show discipline that could impact one's action in a positive manner. The limitations to non-punitive approaches will be dependent on the individual, the situation, and the others involved. I have good reason to believe that I will be in good company when it comes to subject matters like this. I believe I will learn a lot over the next few years and will have an opportunity to help where I am able.

5. Educational researchers for decades have identified opportunity and achievement gaps between white students and BIPOC students. There is data in CO that supports those findings.

a. What are the achievement gaps in your district and why do they exist?

In my opinion, one of the great aspects about Public Schools is the amount of diversity our schools have. The students get to learn about various cultures, languages, societies, economical differences, etc. From my experience, St Vrain is always looking for ways to give every student the same opportunities and is always looking to put students in the best possible situation to succeed. I am personally amazed at how many more opportunities are in our schools today, as opposed to when I was in school. For example, today a student could earn their Associates Degree while they are still in High School, without paying a single dime. There are numerous other examples of programs just like this that every student has access to in St. Vrain. I would encourage all students and their families to talk to their Principals, talk to their Counselors, and talk to their faculty about opportunities that make sense for them and their situations.

b. What strategies and policies would you support to address these disparities?



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Students of today are our leaders of tomorrow. I would be willing to listen to any strategy and/or policy that puts our students first and creates opportunities for them. There is always room for growth so I would encourage any ideas that build up our student body.

6. As a board member how would you ensure that school administration and staff are correctly implementing bullying prevention policies?

As a board member I believe that part of our job is to learn these policies and procedures and to know the story and the "why" behind them. Then, take into consideration the ideas and the struggles that may or may not exist. Lastly, I am confident with the collaboration of the other board members, and our Superintendent, we would come to a conclusion and agreement that would be in the students best interest.

7. Should charter schools be required to follow district nondiscrimination policies? How would that influence your decision about proposed charter schools in your district?

This is a subject matter that I look forward to learning more about. Its a great question and I hope I can be a bridge for any gaps that may exist when it comes to this topic. Public schools are great for me and my family, but that doesn't mean that its great for all families. St. Vrain has equal educational opportunities for all students, and this I am in favor of.

8. The Colorado State Board of Education recently approved accurate and inclusive Social Studies standards that fully include LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities.

a. Do you believe that charter schools should be required to follow those standards?

The sharing of factual and accurate data with our student body is important and crucial to their development and educational careers. With that said, I would welcome a conversation to better understand why this type is data is being denied or disapproved in certain schools and assist in a mutual course of action from there.



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b. What accountability measures would you support to ensure that schools, including charter schools, follow this policy?

Just because I am elected to the board does not mean the decision stops with me. I want to try my best to give everyone a voice when it comes to our youth. First, I would hold myself accountable to having these types of conversations even if they are uncomfortable. Next, I would hold myself accountable to hearing both sides of the argument. Finally, hold myself accountable to try my absolute best to work with everyone involved so come to a conclusion that would ultimately be the best interest of the students.

9. Anything else you would like to share?

I am excited about this opportunity and excited to learn, and eventually help as many students as possible. I have worked with our youth for the past 12 years, mostly as an athletic coach and motivator. This will be a very different experience in terms of tasks involved, but in the end, I am excited that I will still have a helping hand with our students and their futures. Thank you for the great questions.