



**Stand for Children Colorado, Denver Chapter
2011 DPS Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire**

Candidate Name: Roger Kilgore

Board of Education – At-Large

Section I

1) What are your qualifications to become a school board member? Please give specific examples.

- As an engineer by training and experience, I am a skilled problem solver adept at collecting and interpreting data.
- I am an attentive listener and skilled collaborator. Two examples are my work as the drainage design manager on the \$1.7 billion TREX project coordinating with CDOT, Denver, several other political jurisdictions, community groups, and adjacent neighbors and as the project leader of the \$2.1 million expansion of a church building working with supporters and doubters of the project, city agencies, the architect, and the contractor.
- I have 30 years of experience in business, consulting, and managing organizations.
- I have taught adults professionally for 20 years, taught at the University level for 5 years and have volunteered at K-12 schools.

2) What are the top three challenges facing public schools in your region? If elected, how would you address them?

The top challenge is graduating our young people ready to live fulfilling lives, engage thoughtfully as citizens, and contribute productively to our society. We need to transform our schools to meet the needs of the 21st century by offering new models of education, applying what works to all schools, and empowering principals and teachers to engage their students as needed. Resources will likely always be limited and some kids may not enter school ready to learn, but these challenges must be overcome. The Denver Plan outlines many strategies for addressing these challenges and, if elected, I will work to implement the Plan and change the Plan when the strategies are not meeting the goals.

- 3) Hypothetically, you have a chronically low-performing school in your region; please identify three strategies you would use to improve the school. What role would the community play in your plan?

Each situation is going to be different meaning the appropriate strategy to address the causes of low performance is going to be unique. Working with my board colleagues, I would recommend that the policy for these cases be to: 1) assess what is causing the low performance including interviews with all stakeholders including the principal, teachers, parents, students, community representatives, and District staff; 2) consult with the stakeholders on their recommendations for school goals and strategies for achieving those goals; 3) develop a plan for achieving the goals; and 4) evaluate the likelihood of the plan attaining the goals.

- 4) At what point do you think a school turnaround plan must be considered? If elected, what criteria will you use to review, approve, and implement a turnaround plan?

If the process identified in question 3 cannot produce the desired outcomes then another approach is needed. The criteria should include the likelihood of success, sustainability of the plan, and compatibility of the plan with the community. The turnaround plan should not be a cookie cutter approach.

- 5) What do you expect the district superintendent to do to increase student achievement across the district and at individual schools? How would you evaluate his/her progress?

This is an interesting question because at this time only principals and teachers are held accountable, even to the point of losing their jobs. The Denver Plan, as adopted by the board, provides the goals for the board, the superintendent, and district employees/contractors. Achievement of that plan (as modified when needed) should be the superintendent's focus and metric for progress.

- 6) The school board has the responsibility of approving the district budget. How would you propose holding the district administration accountable for strategic resource management?

As I understand the budget document for the fiscal year just ended, I do not view the budget as a strategic document because it is not expressed in terms of the district's strategic goals and it does not look beyond one year. Given this, the board should expect and receive regular progress reports on revenues and expenditures to insure the one-year document is being followed as intended.

With respect to the larger issue of strategic resource management, a multi-year financial plan tied to educational outcomes is needed. The board should work with the district to create this plan that both can use for accountability.

- 7) Considering the current fiscal climate, in which three areas of the district's budget would you support substantial reductions or reallocations? What creative alternatives would you propose to minimize direct cuts to classrooms?

I am not in a position at this time to identify specific areas for reductions/reallocations. Until I have reason to believe otherwise, I will assume that the superintendent and his staff, as well as the current board, have allocated resources appropriately using their best judgment. It is important to minimize cuts that affect the classroom, but our budgeting should reflect an emphasis on the whole child.

- 8) Would you support a bond and mill levy increase in 2012? If yes, what would you include in the bond/mill levy request? If no, why not?

I do not believe our public school system in Denver is overfunded. I think the issue of a bond or mill levy increase is two separate questions as I believe that, generally, a bond measure is more appropriate for capital or one-time expenditures while a mill levy is for ongoing operational needs. If I, with the rest of the board, believed either was appropriate I would assess the extent of the need in the context of the overall economic climate (2010 or 2011 would not have been a good climates) and communicate to the taxpaying public the essential investment in our future the measure represents.

- 9) ProComp, Denver's pay for performance system, was designed to be modified and improved over time. If elected, would you support opening up ProComp for renegotiation between the district and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association?

Everything at the district should be designed to be modified and improved over time. At this point I am not aware of any compelling issues with ProComp. If any become apparent, I would be open to reevaluation and renegotiation.

- 10) Please give an example of a situation in which you were not familiar with a concept and had to gain the necessary knowledge to make the best decision. How would you apply similar strategies if elected to the school board?

My work as a professional water resources engineer includes a substantial research component that addresses unfamiliar concepts and moves to a decision or recommendation. Frequently, my clients require a highly skilled and inquisitive team of professionals. For example, I recently completed a 3-year study with the National Academies of Engineering to develop a practical approach for a specific situation. By collaborating with two colleagues and performing an extensive review of what others had accomplished that might be applied to the situation at hand we developed a useful and practical solution that we will be able to monitor over time.

I will apply this same approach of learning what others have done that might be applicable to Denver and collaborating with our stakeholders to arrive at the best decision.

- 11) In recent years, DPS has been building a portfolio of diverse public school options. As a school board member, what role do you think diverse public school models play within the district? How will you support the unique learning needs of students?

Diverse public school models play at least two positive roles for us. First, they allow us to approach our diverse student body, including ELL, G&T students, students with learning disabilities, and at-risk students, with approaches that meet them where they are and bring them to where they need to be. Second, they provide a laboratory to evaluate models of education that might be applied more broadly throughout our city. I will support the unique learning needs of our students by being vigilant to the identification signs of unmet needs. Remedies may include introduction of a new school or the adaptation of an existing school.

- 12) If elected, how will you attract and retain students in the district?

Students will come and stay if the district has, and deserves, the reputation of being a good place to learn and a good place to work; a place where children are successful and adults are motivated and empowered. I will work hard toward these ends.

- 13) Do you support the concept of social promotion? Why or why not? What action should be taken if a student has not demonstrated the skills necessary to move to the next grade level?

Strictly speaking, no. But I understand that each case is different and holding kids back without parental support can be detrimental to the child in some cases.

- 14) What is your philosophy on board governance? What strategies will you use to be a productive member of the board?

The board determines policy and provides oversight on its implementation. The district, led by the superintendent, implements board policy free of micromanagement. The board listens to its constituents and district personnel to stay informed and maintain the relevance of its policies. To be a productive member of the board, and to assist the board to become more productive I will work relentlessly and consistently to develop a more collaborative work environment. As I have observed the board and superintendent work over the past year there is no shortage of opportunities to instill a more collaborative atmosphere. For example, I will propose more frequent work sessions, some without the superintendent, to more fully discuss issues raised in meetings, but not resolved.

- 15) What are your top three ideas to recruit, retain, develop, and reward excellent teachers and principals?

Pay should not be overlooked, but it is not the key to recruiting, retaining, and rewarding excellent teachers and principals over the long run. Mission, autonomy, and collegiality are among the essentials for attracting and keeping excellent professionals. As greater attention is placed on accountability of principals and teachers, my top emphasis in this arena is to make sure they have the authority to control the outcomes in the classroom. Programs such as LEAP will assist in the development and continued growth of these professionals.

- 16) DPS continues to see a high level of principal turnover in low-performing schools. How would you work with the superintendent and school staff to address the school leadership challenge?

The response to question 15 is applicable to this question; mission, autonomy, and collegiality are essential. Beyond that, I would work with the board, superintendent, district staff, and school staff to identify the root of the high turnover rate. Is it lack of support to meet the needs of the student population? Is it longer hours? Is it lack of preparation? Community support? The approach will be tailored to the specific needs of the school. New principals and teachers, if needed, should have the appropriate experience, skills, and support for the situation.

- 17) DPS is a pilot district for the implementation of Senate Bill 191. What is your position on the law? If elected, what role will you play to ensure successful implementation in DPS?

The two most significant features of SB191, in my opinion, are the provisions on accountability and probationary/non probationary status. With respect to accountability, SB191 holds principals accountable and also, appropriately, provides them with authority to control their outcomes by choosing their teachers, for example. SB191 also holds teachers accountable, but does not provide new authority to control their outcomes.

Frequently, legislation can be problematic when legislators begin to micromanage legislative goals. For example, specifying 50 percent of evaluations should be based on test scores is micromanagement and the percentage should have been left up to the CDE and the districts. However, as a board member, my responsibility is to implement the law in the best interests of our students.

- 18) If elected, what are 3-4 measurable goals you hope to accomplish in your four-year term?

- Increase enrollment as a percentage the school age population in Denver. This is a measure of overall satisfaction with the schools as those from Denver and the surrounding communities choose Denver Public Schools.
- Increase high school graduation rates without remediation.
- Retain high quality principals and teachers. (Not sure how to measure this.)

19) What else could you tell us about yourself or your experience that can help us make an endorsement recommendation?

I make a living as a water resources engineer researching issues, collecting data, consulting stakeholders, collaborating on the development of plans, and delivering results. These skills are essential for the board.

Section II (for internal use)

- 1) Are you pursuing endorsements from other education advocacy organizations? If so, which ones?

- 2) If you receive Stand for Children's endorsement, how can we be most helpful to your campaign?