

Full Name

Charles Balch

What interests you in serving on the School Board?

Over the past few years, I have been asked a similar question on why I choose to serve, coach, or engage in various boards and activities that my family have participated in. My answer is simple: "I love what my children love." While my children may not always "love" school, their experiences, memories, and actions clearly reflect their strong connection to Old Mill, Timpanogos, and now Wasatch High School.

Serving on the school board is a unique opportunity to give back to the community and district that has played a significant role in shaping my children and countless others lives. Education, extracurricular activities, and promoting an environment conducive to developing lifelong friendships are making a huge impact in our children's lives.

With more than 25 years in finance and banking, I can bring valuable expertise in budgeting, financial oversight, and sound decision-making to the school board. I am committed to fiscal responsibility, ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently to provide the highest quality education and opportunities for the students.

Along with fiscal responsibility, I feel transparency and accountability are also critical values. Families deserve open communication regarding school policies, budgets, and decisions that directly affect their children. My goal would be to improve the academic experience by listening to the teachers, to the community, and rely on the experts to provide a strong curriculum. This will prepare our students for success in the real world.

As Wasatch School District continues to change, it is important that we have forward-thinking leadership to manage this change while preserving the educational standards our community expects. As I mentioned above I am committed to listening to parents, supporting teachers, and making informed, data-driven decisions that will benefit all students.

It would be an honor to serve on the Wasatch County School Board with you. Together, we can work to ensure a bright and successful future for our schools and children.

How will you collaborate with the school board and district leaders to build trust and improve relationships with teachers?

Teachers are the foundation and building block of any successful school district. Collaboration between the school board, district leaders, and teachers are key to ensuring that we are all working toward the same vision.

After talking with a few teachers, I believe a positive relationship between the district and teachers exists, and if chosen as a board member it would be my responsibility to build upon that foundation. Open communication, listening, and valuing the input of teachers and district leaders are some of the vital components of maintaining and strengthening this relationship. I will make it a priority to ensure teachers continue to feel heard and supported by the board. I believe this happens when board members get involved beyond just board meetings.

I recently was able to meet a few of the school board members at Senior Night for the Boys and Girls' basketball teams. It was rewarding as a parent to know our Board of Education cares. I was able to watch as numerous parents, teachers and administrators approached them. It's this kind of formal and informal meetings that I believe help build relationships and make collaboration possible.

In order to further improve these relationships, I will collaborate closely with district employees and teachers to align on a shared vision of academic excellence, professional development, and student success. By working together to set clear goals, prioritize needs, and celebrate achievements, we can create an environment where trust is developed and teachers feel empowered to do their best work.

Ultimately, I believe our district fosters trust and unity among school board members, district employees, and teachers and we are positioned for long-term success. I am committed to working collaboratively to enhance that sense of

trust and ensure that teachers feel respected, supported, and motivated to help our students succeed.

What do you see as the most pressing need in our District?

My perspective on this issue comes from growing up in Rich County, where teachers and district employees lived in the same communities as their students. Despite the 41-mile distance between Garden City, Laketown, Randolph, and Woodruff, these communities felt united through the school. Teachers, administrators, and coaches were often also my friends' and classmates' parents, and their involvement in extracurriculars and community events created lasting relationships that I still value today.

One of the pressing issues facing Wasatch School District is the high cost of housing within our valley. The opening of a new high school will require additional teachers. Ensuring that we can attract and retain qualified educators without paying a premium and increasing a financial burden on an already exhausted tax base is a significant concern. The high housing costs make it difficult for teachers to live in the community they work. While we are fortunate to have awesome teachers, who do not live in Heber Valley, I believe the teachers who live locally have a better work-life balance and are more likely to become invested in the community, the students, and the district. This balance helps with teacher retention leading to more experienced teachers for our youth.

Unfortunately, the district cannot solve this issue alone. It will require collaboration among the district, local governments, county leaders, and private enterprises. Historically, such collaboration has been challenging due to competing interests. In my role at Zions Bank, I've worked closely with community leaders, businesses, and government officials to address similar challenges in communities across my area. This experience has given me confidence that, through cooperation, we can find solutions that will benefit the Wasatch School District and our community as a whole.

Many families in our community feel pressure from high property taxes and rising home valuations. How would you balance the goal of providing a strong education with ensuring that no family is driven away due to financial burdens, and what changes would you consider to address these concerns?

Having lived in Heber Valley for approx. 20 years I understand the challenges we are facing with rising property taxes and home valuations. I have experienced this increase in my own home and the effect it's had on my family's finances and budget.

These are difficult issues as there are no simple answers. A strong education system is vital for our community, but equally important is that we don't overburden and create financial hardships for families.

First and foremost, I believe transparency is key to building trust, especially when it comes to budget conversations. Second, it is important that we listen to our constituents, understand the impact of our decisions, and find that balance between costs and benefits. This helps us understand if something is needed or just wanted. Finally, we must trust our teachers. They are our greatest asset. They have valuable insights into how we can be more efficient and cost-effective, and we should tap into that knowledge. Focusing on transparency, listening to the community, and working with our teachers will set us on the right path to fiscal responsibility, while also building trust with taxpayers and educators alike.

I also recognize that budgets may need to be reviewed and adjusted from time to time. We can always find areas to be more efficient in, especially when utilizing technology. It's very possible the extracurricular experiences our students are now experience may look different in the future, and that's okay. Change is a natural part of progress and is needed with our changing community. However, one thing that must remain is our commitment to our teachers. We've worked hard as a district and community, and we can't afford to lower our standards, lose great teachers, and see our test scores drop.

If we continue to be responsible with our taxpayer funds and work together as a community, I believe we can provide high-quality education while ensuring our community remains affordable and accessible.