

***Full Name***

Daniel Dahl

***What interests you in serving on the School Board?***

Our family has lived in the Heber Valley now for 20 years. This is our home. Sharlene and I have raised our three kids in this amazing community. Our kids all attended public elementary, middle and high school here. All three are proud Wasatch High School graduates. The public schools in Wasatch County truly provided our kids with engaged learning, top-tier academic preparation, exceptional extra-curricular activities, and appropriate civic preparation. All this has launched our three kids into wildly successful adult lives and prepared them to navigate the challenges of today's complex world.

I personally have been shaped in many ways by Wasatch County School District. In 2005, I was hired as a counselor at Rocky Mountain Middle School. Shortly after, I moved to the High School. Under the tutelage and guidance of great counselors and administrators, and working alongside excellent teachers and staff, I excelled professionally. My skills and abilities as a counselor grew as did my understanding of the principles of effective learning and education. WHS is where I came to understand and embrace the PLC ideology and today I remain a staunch supporter of the PLC process. My own professional beliefs and practices have been shaped largely by my experiences at WCSD.

This District has given me and my family so much over the years that now it is my turn to give back. I want to ensure that current and future WCSD students, families, and employees are given the same opportunities for success that my family has taken advantage of. I would love to be a part of the School Board ensuring the best education available for students, providing unparalleled opportunities for educators, all while being responsive and sensitive to community needs. Being a positive contributor to public education within our community is of great interest to me.

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

Because of my past role as an educator in the School District and my current employment as a public educator, I believe that I am in a very unique position to build strong positive relationships with teachers. Many teachers in the District know me personally and professionally. We have worked side-by-side in the past. I have counseled and advised their kids. I am facing many of the same daily challenges as an educator in South Summit District as Wasatch educators encounter. My unique situation creates a connection and level of empathy that would be difficult to match. I already have a strong relationship with teachers in many cases and new relationships will come naturally as I get to know others in the District.

I also see a continuing need for honest, open communication between Board members and teachers. I remember my relationship with Ann Horner, a past President of the Board. Whenever she would see me, she would ask how things were going. She was interested in how I was doing personally and how things were going at school. Although every vote Ann made on the Board didn't necessarily align with my preferences, I knew she had listened and had weighed all sides of the issues before making decisions. Creating open lines of communication with all stakeholders is an essential responsibility of the Board.

On this topic, one last thought comes to mind. I see a potential opportunity that I hope the Board doesn't let slip by. As we all know, teachers have lost their chance for collective bargaining with the Board. I believe that if the Board makes the effort and takes the time to find a different forum for meeting with teachers and hearing their collective concerns and desires, it would go a long way towards creating positive relationships and trust. I would love to help facilitate a process of hearing teachers' thoughts and concerns that fit within the restraints of the new collective bargaining law.

I am certain I would be pivotal in maintaining a strong relationship of trust between the Board and teachers.

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

Growth.

Wasatch County has been experiencing explosive growth for well more than the past decade and I'm not seeing any signs or predictions of that changing. Although the answer "growth" is an obvious culprit on the list of challenges our District faces, the solutions to the challenges growth brings may not be so simple. As our valley grows, it will be essential that our Board stays ahead of that growth by making sure that our students have adequate facilities for top-tier student learning. The Board and District Administration will need to make sure that teachers have all the resources available for high level instruction for all of their students. Concerns with school safety can become exacerbated by school growth. Student involvement in school and extra-curricular activities can be limited as schools see excessive growth. As class sizes balloon, growth can have an unwanted effect on teacher job satisfaction and retention. The Board will obviously have a significant challenge in mitigating the negative effects of rapid growth.

As the Board plans for and responds to growth, there is a difficult balancing act between the educational needs of our stakeholders and the financial concerns of our community. Although there is no way, at times, to find solutions that make everybody happy, I respect the tough and bold decisions our Board has made in the recent past to ensure the best opportunities for our students and employees. Moving forward, it is critical that decisions concerning growth be as proactive as possible, rather than reactive. It is imperative that the concerns of all involved parties be considered fairly and objectively before decisions are reached. I believe I would be a significant asset on a team finding innovative solutions to the challenges WCSD faces.

*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?*

The excessive rise in housing costs referenced in this question is obviously not unique to Wasatch County. Many political leaders across the country, state and county have pledged to end the unaffordable housing crisis. As far as I can see, political leaders have been completely unable to affect the rapid rise in housing costs. I believe that economic forces associated with a free market are largely to blame for this rise. I frankly don't believe that a School Board has much, if any, power to impact those market factors. If what I read in the media was accurate, President Bluth himself was forced from his home, at least in part, due to unaffordable housing issues in our county. All three of my own kids have had to leave the valley because of the ridiculous cost of housing. As a public educator, I could not afford to move to the Heber Valley today. Solutions to this issue aren't coming easily.

Even though I find the current housing situation discouraging, I am not advocating that the Board throw up their hands and declare defeat. The board must be accountable to the public for all money that is spent within our district. Working with District leadership, an accounting of how money is allocated and spent should be closely scrutinized to assure there is no waste. Concerted efforts need to be made to keep property taxes as low as possible, while honestly balancing the educational needs of our community. I don't know that I have all the answers, but I know there can be creative solutions to tough problems. South Summit School District has purchased a few smaller houses that they are now renting back to teachers at affordable rates. That was one unique solution to the housing crisis and its impact on teacher recruitment and retention. I'm not saying this same thing is a solution for WCSD, but I do believe a small group of well intentioned people can work together to find answers to tough questions, and I'd like to be a part of that with our School Board.