

Questions to ask school board candidates

Many school districts around the country are experiencing a concerted effort by some groups to get pro-creationist members elected to local boards of education. As a science teacher and a concerned citizen, you have a right and responsibility to learn as much as you can about those people running for — and being elected to — your local school board. CSTA provides these suggestions for interviewing or obtaining written responses from school board candidates in your community.

We highly recommend you take into consideration the need for students in your community to learn science in terms of the nature of science and the facts gained by testable and peer-reviewed research. You might consider ways to make the interviews known to your local newspapers and other media outlets.

- Why are you running for the school board?
- What goals do you hope to achieve if you are elected?
- What special strengths do you believe you would bring to the board?
- Relative to other subjects students are required to take, how important is science instruction, in your opinion?
- California is in the forefront of many areas of science research and study. Much of California's economy is based on science and technology. What do you see as the role of science in our community as it pertains to the education of our youth?
- Preparing students for America's jobs of the future is a national priority. What would you do in this district to increase and improve student access to computers and other classroom technology?
- If someone were to say to you that learning the nature of science was important to the students of our community, what would that mean to you?
- Do you support research-based science instruction?
- What would you do in this district to increase and improve student learning of the nature of science and research-based science information?
- What is your position relative to teaching creationism as an alternative, or in addition, to the theory of evolution to students in science classrooms?
- What would you do as a board member to ensure that equity and fairness and scientific facts are used as the basis for decision making in terms of curriculum, materials and methodologies used in our districts' schools?

- What is your opinion of teaching evolution in our district's schools?
- What will you, as a board member, do to assure that teachers have the support and materials needed to successfully assist students in meeting state standards, including the teaching of evolution?
- How will you encourage the district administration to provide the support and resources necessary for teachers to successfully meet requirements for standards-based science instruction?
- How would you balance your decisions as a member of the board with the input of parents and teachers at each site in regards to science instruction?
- What kinds of influence do you think special interest groups should have on decisions related to curriculum and materials used for student instruction, and how would you go about making decisions about quality instruction if outside pressure is brought to bear on the board?