



**EDUCATION ALLIANCE**  
OF COLORADO

# Questionnaire Results

## Colorado Springs School District 11 School Board 2021 Candidates

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**Do you agree or disagree with the idea that parents, not systems or institutions, are best positioned to select the school or educational services that best meet the needs of their children? Why or why not?**

**Rebecca Kenderdine:** Parents play an important role in their students' education. It is important for parents to stay informed about what their children are learning and communicate with the teachers about any issues the students may experience while in school. It is also important to note, that parents are best positioned to select the school or educational services that best meet the needs of their children as long as they have enough information to make those decisions. Children do not belong to systems or institutions, they are molded and given values and morals by their parents.

**John Gustafson:** I agree. Parents are the people most sensitive to the needs of their children and therefore are best suited to determine the educational services their children need to grow and thrive. May our educational institutions be so profoundly and self-evidently beneficial that parents clamor to have their children attend.

**Julie Ott:** I agree that parents should be able to select the "best fit" school or service for their children, simply because they best know the needs of their children. Local school districts should offer excellent schools, educational services, and resources for parents to help them meet the needs of their children.

**Jennifer Williamson:** I agree. Parents know the needs of their child and the particular needs of the family.

**Lauren Nelson:** No response

**Chris Wallis:** No response

**Shawn Gullixson:** No response

**Albert Loma:** No response

**Sandra Bankes:** No response



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## Should students in your school district have the unrestricted ability to attend a charter school or other public school of choice if their families so choose? Why or why not?

**Rebecca Kenderdine:** Students should have the unrestricted ability; as long as parents are involved in decision making; to attend a charter school or other public school of choice. When parents can make an informed decision based on factual information, they should be able to send their child to any school they choose. School District 11 believes in school choice for all families and as a former teacher I always believed that families should be able to choose where to send their child.

**John Gustafson:** Please see first answer.

**Julie Ott:** Students should have the ability to attend a charter school if their families choose. Choice is ideal; however, not every school can meet the needs of every child and it may be difficult for some schools to provide required services due to a lack of specialized staff.

**Jennifer Williamson:** Yes, students need to find a school where their needs can be met.

**Lauren Nelson:** No response

**Chris Wallis:** No response

**Shawn Gullixson:** No response

**Albert Loma:** No response

**Sandra Bankes:** No response

## Do you believe that public charter schools or other choice schools should have the flexibility to operate autonomously within the bounds of state law, including through waivers of certain local district or board policies? Why or why not?

**Rebecca Kenderdine:** Most public and private charter schools and other choice schools have mostly had the flexibility to operate autonomously within the bounds of state law. The majority of charter schools operate under their own school board in conjunction with district boards. This collaboration is important so that the district is informed about what happens in charter schools and can inform families and communities that these schools are available to their children. It is important for this type of collaboration exist within the district and community.

**John Gustafson:** As a parent I have personally felt a bifurcation of understanding between the prerogatives of the State and the imperatives of me as a parent and at those times I have certainly wished to have more discretion over educational policies and environmental concerns that affect me directly. I know many people who feel the same and I speak for them as much for anyone else.

**Julie Ott:** All schools should be held to the requirements of state law. District schools and charter schools do have some flexibility and are able to legally waive some policies. However, all publicly funded schools should be open to all students, and transparent and accountable with their governance and finances.

**Jennifer Williamson:** I do believe there are situations in which antiquated rules can hinder a school's ability to try new things and meet the needs of today's students. Charter schools can be a place where new ideas are tested and risks are taken to meet the needs of students in creative ways. My friend is the vice principal of Atlas Preparatory Charter School and they have been able to do things like increase teacher pay, that raises the standard for others schools in a way that benefits students.

**Lauren Nelson:** No response

**Chris Wallis:** No response

**Shawn Gullixson:** No response

**Albert Loma:** No response

**Sandra Bankes:** No response



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## If elected, how do you plan to support both new and existing public-school options—charter, magnet, online, speciality, etc.—in your school district?

**Rebecca Kenderdine:** If elected, to District 11 school board, supporting both new and existing public-school options—charter, magnet, online, speciality, etc. can only be supported based on school data, assessments and student success. Listening to parent/citizen comments is also important in order to assess these different schools. It is also important to be a sounding board for the business community.

**John Gustafson:** I plan on being sensitive to the needs of my community, on a micro and macro level.

**Julie Ott:** District 11 offers several program options and is expanding them, including the opening of a Spanish Dual Language Immersion Program at Rogers Elementary and Spark Online Academy. As a current board member, I have supported funding for staffing and resources for these programs. As described in the Academic Master Plan, additional program build-outs are expected. While district charter schools are part of the district family, they are able to operate fairly autonomously as allowed by state law. Charter School Institute (CSI) charter schools are independent of the District. I support keeping communications open between charter schools and the District to promote the education and well-being of students.

**Jennifer Williamson:** I support the Academic Master Plan that would start new magnet programs. I see this as a way of finding new ways to meet the needs of students and building off of the talents of teachers and the needs of the community. The role of the school board is to align resources and support what is working and the programs that are best reaching the students.

**Lauren Nelson:** No response

**Chris Wallis:** No response

**Shawn Gullixson:** No response

**Albert Loma:** No response

**Sandra Bankes:** No response



## **As a school board member, how will you balance the needs and priorities of the district itself against the needs and priorities of families, students, and communities?**

**Rebecca Kenderdine:** My vision for the school district: a laser focus on ensuring that our students get the very best -- highly qualified teachers, advocacy for all stakeholders with students as our number one priority, and an ongoing, transparent dialogue between our school district and the community it supports

**John Gustafson:** With careful concern and consideration.

**Julie Ott:** I believe we all want what is best for children and that the needs and priorities of the district align with those of families, students and our community. As a board member, I advocate for every school to offer an excellent, well-rounded education. I also advocate for expanded academic opportunities for our students, in language programs, online school, career and technical education options, as well as arts, outdoor education, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs. District 11 offers additional programs, preschool, and before- and after-school child care at some schools; if families have additional needs, the district should explore offering those options.

**Jennifer Williamson:** I believe the school board is a bridge between the community and the school. Therefore it is important to listen to the community, create channels of communication and understand what the needs are. Then the school board can advocate for those needs. In a collaborative culture, which is what I will work for, it is an environment of mutual accountability, learning and growth together.

**Lauren Nelson:** No response

**Chris Wallis:** No response

**Shawn Gullixson:** No response

**Albert Loma:** No response

**Sandra Bankes:** No response