

SALT LAKE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Questions for Mayoral Candidates 2023

ROCKY ANDERSON RESPONSES

1. Please describe your previous public service, and your experience with the public-schools (i.e. volunteerism, jobs/offices held, etc.)

My previous public service has included my service:

- with several non-profit organizations, including
 - Guadalupe Schools (Board Chair, member of Board for over a decade),
 - Planned Parenthood Association of Utah,
 - the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah (Board Chair),
 - Citizens for Penal Reform (Board Chair),
 - Salt Lake Academy of Music (Board Chair), and
 - Haitian Orchestra Institute;
- as Chair of the Litigation Section of the Utah State Bar; and
- as a two-term (8 years) Mayor of Salt Lake City.

Co-oping for six years at my son's elementary school. Although I had a very busy law practice and was heavily involved with numerous non-profit and other community organizations, I was pleased to co-op one morning each week in my son's ELP classes at Lowell Elementary for six years. I think it was the best means of learning about my son's education, the challenges facing school teachers, and the immense positive difference they made in my son's and other students' lives.

Volunteering with Guadalupe School when I was in college. In connection with a course I took in college, I tutored a student at Guadalupe School. After my course was finished, I continued tutoring because I found it incredibly rewarding to know of the difference it made for the student I tutored. That experience led, many years later, to my service on the

Guadalupe Schools Board for more than ten years, including two years as the Board Chair.

My many years of work with Guadalupe School. After I returned to Salt Lake City after law school, I was invited to join the Board of Directors at Guadalupe Schools. I served on the Board with some of the finest people I've ever known, I had the pleasure of working with the incredible Suzanne Weiss, the Executive Director of Guadalupe School, and continued on the Board for over ten years.

When I was Board Chair, we had discussions about whether we should expand the K-3 school program to sixth grade. After I researched the differences that could be made in a child's life by providing rich educational and social programs at the earliest stages of life, I advocated for focusing instead on an enriched pre-school program, beginning almost at birth, which we implemented. The program proved the enormous difference such opportunities could make in a child's life, with Guadalupe School students, at one point, scoring the highest in Salt Lake City in language development.

My commitment to public schools. I've always been a champion of public schools and had hoped that my son would continue to attend public schools. However, after he finished the ELP program at West High School and started attending East High School, I discovered that he had cut classes for an entire month, without anyone contacting me about it. He was clearly unhappy and felt alienated and ignored. Because of my deep concerns, he enrolled in a private school, Judge Memorial, during high school. I've always felt that every student can benefit a great deal from attending public schools and that they need our support. However, some public schools, and particularly some administrators, need to do more to support *all* students and keep parents apprised if obvious problems arise.

My recognition of the tremendous difference good teachers make in the lives of their students. I've had the good fortune to have outstanding teachers throughout my years in public schools (Whittier (Logan), Edith Bowen (Logan), Morningside (Salt Lake City), and Polk Elementary (Ogden), then Mt. Ogden Jr. High School and Ogden High School). My son's teachers, with whom I became well acquainted by co-oping through his elementary school years, were remarkable.

I paid tribute to my most influential teacher in an essay I wrote, "Mr. Vogel," in Marsha Serling Goldberg and Sonia Feldman, *Teachers With*

Class – True Stories of Great Teachers (Andrews McMeel Publishing 2003).

My work with public schools while I was Mayor. I visited with students and teachers in many schools and worked with Salt Lake School District Superintendent McKell Withers while I was Salt Lake City Mayor. I also worked extensively with the Salt Lake City School Board and others to bring effective, evidence-based drug prevention programs, the ATLAS and ATHENA Programs, to Salt Lake City schools after I terminated the involvement of Salt Lake City in the failed DARE Program. (See <https://archive.sltrib.com/article.php?itype=storyID&id=100E80EDA5C4BCE4>; <https://www.deseret.com/2000/6/25/19514710/i-dare-say-rocky-may-be-right-on.>)

2. If you are elected as mayor, what would be your top three priorities?
 1. To significantly decrease the number of homeless people in our community by (a) returning to the rapid building of supportive permanent housing for chronically homeless people, as was happening when I was Mayor (with adequate outreach and case management, which is now too often missing); (b) eliminating encampments throughout the city by providing a temporary sanctioned camp, which would include decent bathrooms and showers, meals, security, property lockers, and outreach and case management to help transition people to appropriate treatment, jobs, and housing; and (c) building a campus where all homelessness services and facilities will be in close proximity to each other and ending the deleterious effects of current “resource centers” on neighborhoods.
 2. To make housing in Salt Lake City far more affordable at every income level by ending the subsidies of millions of dollars to private profit-driven developers and investing in city-owned mixed-income affordable non-market housing that would be architecturally superior to most of the unaffordable apartment buildings that have sprouted up during the past few years. (See <https://prospect.org/infrastructure/america-needs-social-housing/>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/23/magazine/vienna-social-housing.html>.)

3. Making Salt Lake City safe again by deterring crime through effective enforcement of the laws and pursuing rigorous restorative justice programs, pursuant to which the focus will not be punishment and retribution, but, rather, problem-solving (e.g., successful drug addiction treatment through Drug Court; mental health treatment; victim-offender reconciliation) and restoration of victims (e.g., through restitution), offenders, and the community as a whole. In connection with that effort, I would reform the culture of the SLCPD, bringing new leadership to the police department and making certain that there is full accountability for abuses or dereliction of duty.
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3. How do you think the mayor's office could support Salt Lake City School District schools? Specifically, how do you see the balance between maintaining high standards of behavior, School Resource Officer support, and the School to Prison Pipeline?

As I emphasized during my first State of the City Address soon after I first took office as Mayor in 2000, we are all better off making investments up-front in the education and socialization of our children than in dealing with the disastrous, expensive long-term effects of neglect, exposure to drugs and violence, and lack of opportunities.

Based on my commitment to providing young people with the best opportunities for learning and enriching experiences and relationships, I started a city-wide youth after-school and summer program, YouthCity. I would expand the program and coordinate YouthCity with Salt Lake City School District schools so that we can provide the best possible programs to serve the greatest number of young people, with a focus on those most in need.

I would also work with the School District to engage in effective public education campaigns about such things as the dangers of alcohol and drug consumption, particularly among young people; the importance of good nutrition and exercise; and how help can be found for those who are in need.

The expectations of our schools and city government should align in connection with standards of good behavior, utilizing the support of teachers (including coaches, who are often extremely influential with young people), School Resource Officers, community-based police officers, and other

people in the community who are particularly influential with young people. In dealing with violations of the law, incarceration should be avoided whenever possible, with diversion of offenders to restorative justice programs focused on solving problems that may have led to the offenses.

4. The opportunity gap is one of the top concerns in education. What do you feel is the cause and how could you as a mayor advocate for marginalized individuals?

Factors over which a student has no control, such as economic deprivation, racism, and the lack of opportunities to learn during early childhood, can set children significantly behind other children educationally, socially, and emotionally. They can also cause problems with the physiological development of one's brain.

At Guadalupe School, during my early years on the Board, we often spoke about the deficits our students had when they started kindergarten and how difficult it was to bring them to "grade level." Then we decided to provide an enriched pre-school program, predicting that our students could later succeed as well as, or even surpass, students from more affluent homes and areas. In fact, those receiving the benefits of the enriched pre-school program (consisting of in-home learning starting right after birth, then in-school part-time preschool, then in-school full-time preschool) did extraordinarily well, academically and socially, compared with their older siblings who did not go through the pre-school program and compared with other Salt Lake City students.

We should do all we can to end the conditions we often complain about as being reasons for certain children starting school far behind where they would otherwise be. We should make sure that all children, from the time of birth, are intellectually stimulated, which makes a big difference in the physiological development of the brain. Particularly when parents are functionally illiterate or for some other reason not likely to read to their children, arrangements should be made for someone to read to children—and to teach them letter sounds and, ultimately, to read. Keyboarding at a young age can have an enormous impact on a child's brain development and later academic capacity, particularly in math and science. Piano or other keyboard teaching should be arranged for young children whenever possible, as should math instruction.

I would advocate for big-brother, big-sister programs, or something similar to help economically-disadvantaged or otherwise marginalized parents to provide their children with opportunities that will better equip them for educational and social success. I'd be excited to do whatever we can, working together, to provide the very best early childhood opportunities for every child in our community and, from our successes, inspire other cities around the world to do the same.

5. How do you see the relationship between the mayor, the school board, SLEA, and the district? How would you approach the job of working with these groups?

I would work closely with the school board, SLEA, and the district (including teachers and administrators) to provide the very best opportunities we can as a community for all children, especially those who would not have the opportunities many others enjoy. Just as we were often known as one of the “greenest” cities in the nation when I was Mayor, I would want us to be the city that offers the greatest opportunities to *all* children to succeed and to “fill the opportunity gap” with participation from trusted and capable members of the community. We would have the chance to develop a community-wide partnership with our schools to offer every child the very best opportunities for educational, career, and life success.

I would also like to renew my efforts to make certain that our children receive the most effective drug-education and -prevention programs. When I was Mayor, I created a Mayor’s Drug Policy Advisory Committee, which I would revive. It consisted of a wide variety of people, including top drug-abuse researchers, treatment providers, and people who had lived through tragedies of drug-overdose deaths and addiction. As part of our efforts, I introduced to the Salt Lake City School Board the highly effective ATLAS and ATHENA drug prevention programs. Those programs were implemented for a time, but coaches who had been involved seemed to lose interest and, unfortunately, the programs appeared to be unsupported by district officials. We should re-commit to utilizing evidence-based drug education and prevention programs.