

Karl Johanson-School board

1. What in your background leads you to believe you would be a successful School Board member?

I am already a successful Board member. Nineteen years ago, I applied for an open position on the Pullman School Board and have subsequently been elected to four, four-year terms. When I applied, I believed that I had the temperament, commitment, and previous experience necessary and had worked directly in education for 30 years, and earned a MA in Education and a PhD in Experiential Education. I had experience as a classroom teacher, special education program administrator, school principal and as a school superintendent primarily while working with at-risk and court involved young people. I had also created, and directed, what was then, Oregon's only district-wide program for high capacity students. I have used my experience as a valuable part of the Pullman School Board team.

When I joined the Board, I was an experienced non-profit administrator, and an elected national board member of the boards of the Association for Experiential Education, and of the Community Transportation Association of America. As a member of the CTAA Board, I was a key member of the Federal Transit Administration's committee that drafted the Federal ADA regulations for public transportation. I had also served on many other local, state and regional boards. In served 12 years as CTAA Treasurer and Loan Committee Chairman managing a \$6 million revolving loan fund. by-During my School Board tenure, I have continued in volunteer public service positions including service on the board of the Disability Action Center NW (DAC), and the Not for Profit Insurance Program (NPIP) which currently provides insurance and risk management support to almost 900 WA members.

During my years serving on the Board, the Pullman District has transitioned from being in great financial difficulty to a point of statewide leadership in fiscal operations. The Pullman Board rotates leadership positions in two year cycles based on relative seniority. I have served three successful terms as the Board President and 15 years on the Finance Committee. I have been active in the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA), currently serving as the elected chair of the Interscholastic Activities Committee (IAC) which advises the WIAA.

2. What do you hope to achieve if elected to the School Board?

I hope to continue to work collaboratively with fellow board members; three out of the last four years, we have been one of WSSDA's "Boards of Distinction." I will provide a special focus on the importance of school-sponsored activities, including athletics, and on expanding Career and Technical Education (CTE) opportunities for our middle and high school students. I want more of our current CTE courses to be offered for dual credit, through a program called Tech Prep.

3. What do you believe the School District is doing well?

- A. The District's graduation rate is one of the highest in the state despite enrolling students who transfer from Idaho with creates special challenges related to differing standards and attendance differences.
- B. PSD was awarded a \$7.2 million competitive class-size reduction capital grant which has helped expand the plans for Kamiak Elementary School to 24 classrooms instead of the original 18.
- C. PHS and LMS offer array of school sponsored activities including national competitive success in fields as different as Science Bowl and Math Olympiad to DECA activities like welding and machining.
- D. Success working with a wide variety of students from multiple cultures and primary languages.
- E. Completion of Pullman High School, on-time and within budget. The performing arts auditorium is already proving itself as a citywide public asset.

4. How do you think the School District could do better?

Answers to the next three questions are interrelated.

The District's biggest current challenges are growth and related changes in student/family profiles. The School District's demographics are changing along with the Pullman region. Pullman has a range of supportive social services for struggling families which attracts some families to the area. WA has a relatively high minimum wage compared to Idaho and Pullman is a border town. Schweitzer Engineering has grown dramatically, but a high percentage of the jobs are entry-level, and there is high turnover. As these employees come and go, their children are stressed which has a direct effect on student performance. WA's school choice allows families to transfer their students to Pullman. Some of those students were successful in their district of origin and some were not. Some parents transfer to access the Pullman District's excellent special education services.

The District's Mission is: Ensuring learning while challenging and supporting each student to achieve full potential." This Mission is challenging; the District could better fulfill its Mission. At a recent meeting of school principals one of them stated, "We are now seeing students that present challenges that we have never seen before. Our teachers are struggling to acquire new skills to help these students to succeed; however, when these kids walk in the door, they are 'our' students and we need to meet their needs."

5. What, in your opinion, are the three greatest challenges facing the School District? What, if anything, do you plan to do about these challenges if you are elected?

- A. Adjusting the overall District budget to newly passed state legislation. The new laws reverberate into every area of school finances. These adjustments will have to include salaries and benefits because, in 2018, for the first time in 43 years, there will be no statewide salary schedule. Although the legislation was specific to teacher and administrator salaries, all employee groups must be considered and treated fairly as part of an overall new plan for the short and long-term financial stability of the District. The statewide salary schedule, in place for many years, has been eliminated. In addition, all of the legal ramifications of state school property tax levies and local levies have changed, leaving major unanswered questions. Some of these questions are certain to be litigated. Careful analysis of the school financing elements has revealed that by 2019-2020 almost every school district in the state will be unable to operate in the black unless the per pupil funding formula is changed. I bring a wealth of fiscal and budgeting experience to help meet this challenge.
- B. Core 24 must be adjusted to serve the needs of all graduating students rather than just students who are going to college. For this to happen, the State Board of Education will have to change its Vision, which currently prioritized college readiness above all other post-graduation options. The US economy needs more trained employees career paths in which Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes provide a pathway during high school; however, it is difficult for students to pursue a CTE track through high school and still take the required courses for graduation. I am pledged to ensure that the School Board keeps this issue to the forefront. I value all career paths and will support multiple ways for students to succeed.
- C. Improving local confidence in the operations of the district including the Board, administrators, and overall communication among stakeholders.

6. How well do you believe the School District does in addressing the effects of poverty on the learning environment?

Research shows that poverty is one of the most significant factors that contributes to the achievement gap. The School Board made a decision three years ago to focus on reducing that gap in the Pullman District. That decision triggered expenditures related to teacher training, hiring additional teachers and paraprofessional educators, and providing family supports. Hunger is associated with poverty; in response, the District staff are teaming with community agencies and volunteers to establish weekend food supplement programs and food support during the summer.

7. Do you believe the School Board is sufficiently transparent in its operations? Why or why not?

Yes! I believe that the School Board is sufficiently transparent. Each School Board member has been carefully trained and certified in the legal requirements of the Open Meetings Act and all of the related nuances especially in the rapidly changing environment of electronic media and communications. The Pullman Board's meetings are broadcast live on local TV and are rebroadcasted several times during the week. In addition to the regular board meetings, the Board holds announced workshops once a month which are open to the public.

The Board was also the first in the state to adopt a policy which opened bargaining to the public. The Board took this action after the courts ruled that bargaining with employees did not have to be done in private, thus permitting the public to attend. Being the first in the state created controversy as the policy was initially opposed by the District's unions; however, the policy is no longer opposed. In fact, the paraprofessional group encourages their members to attend. D

The public has been critical of the Board's communication about personnel actions. This is unfair as the Board cannot legally comment on these actions because ultimately the Board is the appellate body.

8. Rank the following education issues in the order of what you believe the importance should be in the School District, with 1 being the most important and 12 being the least important.

These are all important and interrelated; for example, how can we increase teachers' and other staff members' salaries without balancing or maintaining the District's budget? How do those issues compare to reducing bullying, especially in light of the Freeman SD tragic shooting which may have been related to bullying?

1. Continuing to close the achievement gaps between students of different racial/ethnic or economic backgrounds
2. Preparing students for post-graduation opportunities other than college
3. Preparing students for college
4. Balancing or maintaining the District's budget
5. Increasing teacher and staff salaries
6. Reducing classroom size for all grades
7. Expanding class offerings
8. Reducing bullying
9. Improving relations with teachers
10. Improving relations with parents
11. Promoting the use of technology in the classroom
12. Promoting healthy eating and exercise for students

9. What are your views on standardized tests?

My views on a topic like testing are not really important, because the majority of the testing done in the Pullman schools is required by federal or state law. Despite a career in education, I am not a testing expert. I have a high degree of trust in the District's highly trained administrators. One of the School Boards yearly responsibilities is to approve the District's assessment plan. This plan must meet all the legal requirements, and also includes diagnostic testing recommended to better track individual student progress. When the plan is brought to the Board for approval, each element is thoroughly discussed. In general, testing must be done to determine an individual student's level of understanding of required concepts; however, much of the grouped achievement testing was triggered by No Child Left Behind which has been replaced by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which encouraged states and school districts to get rid of unnecessary testing. An excellent web site comparing NCLB and ESSA requirements is: www.understood.org

I am opposed to "high stakes" end-of-course assessment testing to determine graduation rather than being based on a student earning the required credits. An example is the Biology test that the Legislature just retracted as one the 2017 graduation requirements. The Biology test was not a fair or adequate measure of general "science" knowledge. The Biology requirement is withdrawn until 2020 when a new assessment will be available based on Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The English and mathematics test requirements are still in place. The just passed legislation will allow students to take graduation tests earlier to allow for more time for remediation.

10. What are your views on homework?

Homework can play a role in education, particularly in the upper grades where the courses are much more varied and demonstrating mastery can be more flexible. My concern, particularly with elementary school students, is that these students have more limited abilities for time management and for independent work. Given these two factors, parents play a much more important support role. This role must be supported and fostered by teachers and administrators. Frequently struggling students have parents who are not well equipped to tutor their children. Currently two of the elementary schools are experimenting with parent/child training programs focused on homework. LMS is using WSU students to conduct homework completion sessions at school, so it really isn't work completed at home.

11. What should the role be of Pullman Education Foundation?

The PEF's traditional role is fund raising to benefit enrichment of curriculum materials and for capital projects like playground equipment. The PEF also provides grants to teachers to attend special training and workshops. This is actually a very interesting question which may have to be determined by the courts. The new WA school financing legislation limits local M&O levies to about half of the current level in Pullman. Since PEF fund raising is in the form of donations and grants, these funds increasingly may be needed to support valuable current programs that the District may no longer be afford, e.g., elementary school orchestra.

12. What role should the School Board have in addressing disputes between parents and school administration?

As a body, the School Board's role is carefully defined in policy and by law. The Board often legally has to serve in an appellate role. In instances when disputes between parents and school administration cannot be resolved or when the parent is not satisfied with an administrator's decision, the decisions can be appealed to the School Board. Because individual action may cloud later formal actions, it is seldom a good strategy for an individual school board member to attempt to mediate between parents and administrators.

13. How do you think the District should handle underperforming teachers?

First, we have to get past the salient question, which is, "By what measure and/or by whom has the teacher been determined to be underperforming? This basic question is not for a School Board to answer as the processes for "determining" and for "handling" underperforming teachers are defined by state law and by the current contract between the District and the teacher's union, the Pullman Education Association. OSPI has a required, reasoned process of teacher and principal evaluation. Included are measures for determining competency. There are steps in place which can lead to termination, but not before the District has documented retraining and several levels of support for a teacher that may be underperforming.

15. What, if anything, will you do to better coordinate the WSU-PSD schedules (i.e., different start times, different spring break times, etc.)?

The District is in close communication with the administration at WSU about timing issues, and there may be future adjustments to the WSU calendar. The start of the PSD school year is determined by Board policy, and is not contingent on the WSU schedule. What is often misunderstood is why the PSD moved away from having the District's spring vacation coincide with WSU. The answer is that OSPI dictated the required statewide testing periods. No waivers were granted. The required testing weeks coincided with the WSU spring break and thus PSD spring breaks could not coincide with WSU. Since all the schools in our area and the schools in the Great Northern League had identical testing weeks, they soon developed similar weeks for spring vacation during which no league games are played. Currently OSPI's testing windows are more flexible as Federal Law has changed; however, to re-coinciding with WSU would mean that PSD, especially PHS, would be in conflict with the other league schools. PHS teams would have to play League games during spring vacation resulting in conflicts with family plans, etc. Summary: these are not just WSU and PSD issues and involve many more factors including WIAA regulations which determine the parameters and rules for HS scheduling, playoffs, practice times and lengths, etc.

16. If the School District had to take a 20% budget cut, how would you suggest allocating the cut?

To remove this question from the realm of being hypothetical or some sort of a "values clarification" exercise, I offer the following. There are only two ways such a cut could happen. The first would be if the local M&O levy would fail to pass. Since the new state funding formulas and laws governing levies have changed, the maximum for future local levies is going to be about 18%. By law, none of the M&O funds can be spent on "basic education" which was defined by the McCleary Supreme Court decision. Beginning with next year the state will fully fund "basic education" and local levy funds cannot be used to supplement basic education. In this case everything funded by the local M&O levy would have to be cut including all school sponsored activities (not just athletics), school counselors, all music, media, and art programs, any teachers that the District is funding above basic education, etc.

The second possibility would be a 20% cut in state funding, in which case the state would dictate; however, by law, no local funds could be used to make up the difference unless the cut was accompanied by a change in state law.

17. What are currently the three most important educational trends in the United States?

All three are related to a shift away from support for public education. This shift is being orchestrated by commercial interests and by organized religious groups which are championed by US Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVoss.

- a. Charter schools
- b. Vouchers to attend private schools including religious schools.
- c. On-line academies, mostly for profit, providing education without human contact necessary for socialization.

18. What construction projects, if any, would you recommend the School District undertake in the next 5-10 years?

The Board has a Facilities Plan which includes:

1. Bus/maintenance facility possibly in conjunction with a cooperative with regional districts (the District has purchased the land and is discussion with surrounding districts.
2. Expansion of Lincoln Middle School (preliminary discussions and planning are underway)
3. Complete modernization of the Pioneer Center facility.

19. Would you support offering free lunches to all children in the district?

Given that this would not be funded by state funds, local M&O funding would have to be used and something corresponding would have to be cut. I would support free lunches if it could be locally funded through the Pullman Education or by some other private funding strategy.

20. If you could change one School Board policy, what would it be?

I would change the policy that determines the lack of reciprocity among states regarding teacher certification and thus make it easier for a person to come to WA and teach and for persons with relevant skills and experience to become a teacher. (This is sort of a hedged answer as much of this policy area is dictated by OSPI and not School Boards.)