

School Board Candidate Forum Questions: Keith Christensen

1. Tell us about yourself, your background/experience, and your connection and/or interest in the Treynor Community School. What are your reasons for seeking this position on the Board?

My desire is to simply continue supporting the district in a more official capacity.

As a professional school educator at Creighton, I (and my wife Carla also) work in a system where a Faculty Handbook serves as our "contract" and a university-wide faculty council governs the members. I have served on the school's admissions committee for the better part of 17 years as well as serving as the current school parliamentarian and chair of the school's Bylaws, Policies & Procedures review committee. Recently I was re-elected as the secretary of the faculty council and serve on the University Committee for Faculty Handbook & Statutes. I believe that I have some experience that may be helpful when making policy and other decisions moving forward.

My wife Carla (nee Tiarks) is a third generation Treynor High School graduate, and our children, Kayli (2015) & Kyle (2019), are fourth generation Treynor graduates. The district also worked with our nephew Anthony who moved in with us at the start of his sophomore year after he struggled academically. He became involved in activities and with the help of an IEP he graduated. Now that they have all graduated, I feel I will have adequate time to devote to school board work without concern of missing my kids' activities.

Since returning to Treynor my wife and I have been avid volunteer (and some might say Twitter) supporters of the school. Our kids were each four sport athletes in addition to being highly involved in the fine arts while excelling in academics. Subsequently in addition to general concessions and other prom/post-prom committee work, my wife and I began to more tangibly support the district/students in the following ways:

- Volunteered to pull many homecoming floats while the kids were in elementary school
- Statistician for football since the 2004 season
- Youth coach (soccer, coach/machine-pitch, baseball & football) from 2006 through 2014
- Purchased a complete band uniform for the 2007 uniform drive
- Substitute statistician for basketball since 2007
- Helped present the Junior Achievement curriculum to the elementary from 2007-2009
- Activities (and occasional route sub) bus driver since 2009
- School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) participant upon invitation on 4 different occasions since 2012
- Helped with drink purchasing and concessions work for the Athletic Booster club from 2014 through 2017
- Member of the Music Boosters committee from 2016 through 2019 including chaperoning the Chicago band/choir trip and purchasing drinks for concessions
- Science curriculum re-design committee (community member) participant upon district invitation 2018
- Most recently and upon request by the district, successfully petitioned and advocated passage of a bond issue that will be building a new auditorium, band/choir rooms, HS classrooms, and a new transportation facility. In addition to these new buildings there will be renovations for HVAC in the gym, locker rooms, wrestling and weight rooms and updated security and fire warning/suppression systems for the middle school.

2. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses you see in our district?

One strength that I have identified within the district is the student numbers and growth. I believe that this is the result of what Treynor Schools has/can offer in education, sports and the fine arts. With many districts looking for sharing and consolidation opportunities in order to survive, Treynor continues to show strength in numbers and quality. This is also due in part to the longevity of many teachers within the district which I would consider another strength.

Weaknesses that I may identify is the recent turnover within the administration that has been and/or is being reconciled. In addition, the failed PPEL vote from spring 2018 seemingly was a surprise to many in the district. Others that I have perceived include scheduling issues in the past that may have prevented students from pursuing fine arts or other elective classes (I am eagerly awaiting resolution with recent administrative changes), unstable science and math scores at certain grade levels, and perhaps students' perceptions of career readiness from an information gathering point of view.

3. What are some major issues that you believe our school district is currently facing? How would you like the district to deal with those issues?

Some of the issues that I will mention have been recognized along with efforts to resolve put into motion. I would like to opportunity to help resolve these issues through policy development and enforcement.

- I have heard that a recent survey noted that many kids in the district feel unsafe while at school for presumably a variety of reasons
- Vaping continues to be a nationwide issue that has affected our district
- Students refraining from taking higher level classes for fear of a decreasing GPA
- I have heard that certain spending practices may need to be curtailed/modified to prevent budgetary issues

4. What is your opinion of the new public employee bargaining law?

I do not have first-hand knowledge of what actions the current board has taken since the passage of the law. I have become aware that some teachers may leave or have left the district. There isn't any direct way that I or anyone running for these board positions can change or reverse what has been passed at the state level, but what we can do is continue to work to ensure that the district remains strong. This will require learning what the law says and working within the confines of the law passed to retain quality teachers and staff.

5. What do you believe is the role of a school board member?

I believe the primary role of a school board member is to make, revise and support the enforcement of policies for the safety, care, and growth of all students which I believe is nicely set forth in policy 200.1.

6. What ideas do you have to attract and retain the most qualified teachers at Treynor?

I believe that the current environment (for example lower class size, relatively mild temperament/discipline needs of the students) can be attractive to the teachers in or considering employment in the district. I believe that the district needs to continue to be aware of the challenges that teachers face, including funding their innovative ideas, provision of supplies in general and/or supporting professional development. Carla and I would be advocates of seeing the development of a foundation, funded through donations, that might be used to provide funds.

7. Do you believe that teachers should have greater input/voice in district decisions that impact their work and their students? If so, what would you support?

I do support the teachers' voice in district decisions that impact their work. I would be willing to listen (in a variety of settings including outside of official board meetings) to hear the concerns in order to be informed regarding any decisions that I may make. My experiences in my job may give me some insight and assistance.

8. What is your perception of the current working and learning environment in our school district? Do you have any ideas on how to insure a positive working and learning climate is in our district?

My overall impression over the last 5-7 years is that there seems to be some instability including tension between the teachers and the administration. While salary compensation may have limitations, perhaps other ways to provide support for the faculty and staff would enhance the environment. I make no promises, but this may present simply as showing greater respect and recognition for efforts. Other ideas include something I call in my workplace 'intangible benefits' (for example the ability to request time to attend a child's event), or perhaps identifying what motivates district employees to continue at their positions and provide that support. As previously mentioned, it is important that a safe place be provided for students to maximize their learning and growth.

9. What role do the Fine, Applied, and Technical Arts play in the education of our students? Do you think our district currently provides enough support for those classes? Is it important to educate the "whole child" or focus more on academics and basic skills?

I have been and always will be a strong advocate for educating the "whole child" which includes providing continued opportunity to pursue classes and activities in the fine, applied, and technical arts as well as other trades. The current support is good, and I would like to see that support continue and grow.

10. If necessary, where would you cut the school budget? What would you consider off-limits to budget cuts? Why?

I would hope that this doesn't become necessary. The aforementioned strength of the district is a stable if not growing student population which is important to the budget. While I do not feel I have enough understanding of the current budgetary process regarding where money comes from and how each pool of money can be spent, I believe that we need to maintain if not increase all of the offerings we currently have in order to give each child a chance to be involved and succeed. Reduction of offerings I believe may lead to reduced enrollment and that can send a district into a downward spiral.

Gina Mieska

- 1. Tell us about yourself, your background/experience, and your connection and/or interest in the Treynor Community School. What are your reasons for seeking this position on the Board?** I graduated from AT Still University with a Doctorate of Audiology degree. I attended my undergrad in Virginia as well as my Master's Degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders. After college I came back to Iowa where I was born and raised. I attended Lewis Central with my husband, Jeremiah. We've been married 20 years with 4 children. Luke (17), Owen (15), Jude (11), Finn (9). I am an educational audiologist with Green Hills AEA- serving 18 SWI districts which includes 39 school buildings. I have the unique perspective of seeing not only Treynor's 3 buildings with my own children but so many of the surrounding school districts. I'm running for the school board because I have 4 children attending Treynor from elementary to high school and I want to be a part of the decision making for the future of not only my kids but all students in Treynor district.
- 2. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses you see in our district?** Treynor is doing so many great things right now. Obviously the growth of our school to accommodate more students, the arts (new auditorium), new bus barn (safety for students in pick-up/drop-off), Teammates program, new science curriculum. I believe we lack in the opportunities for students that are interested in the trades. Dr. Hopkins and the board are currently working on developing a CNA program, possibly some agriculture classes. I'd like to see that expanded to include automotive and/or construction in the future. I also would like to look into an accredited preschool program within our buildings. I believe we're missing the opportunity to provide an education based preschool as well as state funding incorporated into Treynor. **What are some major issues that you believe our school district is currently facing?** Filling all of the positions to provide the opportunity and education for students. For the high school to have more accredited college classes available. Special education- it would be great to have more general education teachers trained in how to work with our growing population of Level 3 SPED students. How would you like the district to deal with those issues? Encourage teachers to further their education, more professional development on SPED, and/or mental health.
- 3. What is your opinion of the new public employee bargaining law?** I believe it lowered the morale of staff when things were changed in 2017, which makes it difficult for administration and teachers to not feel as if it's an 'us vs. them' problem, however, it's the law and we have to follow it. In my opinion, the employee bargaining law provides the school district an opportunity to maintain fiscal responsibility while at the same time working with staff to maintain progressive and sustainable benefits. (Health, dental, Retirement)
- 4. What do you believe is the role of a school board member?** To be an advocate for not only the school but also the employees, teachers, students and community. The goal is to provide a safe and educational environment for every student.
- 5. What ideas do you have to attract and retain the most qualified teachers at Treynor?** I would like to provide the best professional development opportunities for teachers to increase their knowledge in their field of expertise. Professional learning is so important to not only the growth of teachers but also for students. Building an open dialogue and communication between the teachers and administrators to ensure a positive work environment and finding ways to reward both parties for their effort and time spent improving the culture at Treynor. We need to make sure our teachers feel they have a voice and that that voice is heard. This, I believe, will create a positive culture within our district and trickle out to other districts. We need to make Treynor a place where outside teachers/professionals want to work.
- 6. Do you believe that teachers should have greater input/voice in district decisions that impact their work and their students? If so, what would you support?** I believe all parties involved should

have an equal voice in district decisions that impact the teacher's work environment and the student learning environment. Which is why I believe it's part the responsibility of the school board to be in the classrooms and buildings to understand the teacher's needs in their teaching environment. But in the end decisions must be made in the best interest of the school district and students, as a whole.

7. **What is your perception of the current working and learning environment in our school district?**
There are always aspects of a work environment that need to be improved upon. Because of the transitions in our district, such as a new superintendent and lack of full-time principal, as well as numerous teachers being responsible for multiple duties, this creates challenges that need to be addressed. It is difficult to create a positive learning environment when our teachers are not able to devote full attention to a specific subject. I was able to speak with 8 teachers over the last week. Overall the work environment seems to be good. For every negative there were 2 positives given. However, having an open dialogue between staff and administration was one of the hot topics. This could and should definitely be addressed. **Do you have any ideas on how to insure a positive working and learning climate is in our district?** To hire the appropriate full-time principal and provide the appropriate support to our teachers in terms of resources & materials. Finding ways to create and promote positive reinforcement to our staff and administration.
8. **What role do the Fine, Applied, and Technical Arts play in the education of our students?** The role these arts play create well rounded students and give students the opportunity to explore careers outside of traditional education. **Do you think our district currently provides enough support for those classes?** I believe we have a great fine arts program that has adequate support from the school district. However the fine arts programs excel due in part to the outstanding parent involvement from every aspect of the program. In terms of applied and technical arts I believe it's a very selective group that are interested in it. The student body would need to be surveyed to see if more time/funding needs to be put toward those programs. **Is it important to educate the "whole child" or focus more on academics and basic skills?** The whole child is most important to educate, in my opinion, because all students learn differently. The whole child approach supports all areas of learning- from social emotional and cognitive skills. However, academics and basic skills have their place and are vital in educating a student for future employment/careers. This will create a more well rounded individual.
9. **If necessary, where would you cut the school budget? What would you consider off-limits to budget cuts? Why?** If there is a time cuts are necessary it would be appropriate to look at all financial aspects of the district to determine where the cuts can responsibly be made.
10. Time will be left for closing comments at the end.

I want to thank the current school board, TEA, and administration for letting me be a part of this process of running for the school board. It's been a learning experience and I'm excited at the prospect of being a part of it. I feel I can provide opportunities to the students for growth in different programs as well as be a part of a progressive board that supports a positive working environment between teachers, administrators, and students. Go Cardinals!

School Board

Forum Answers – Bob Beattie

1. I was raised on a farm outside of Malvern, Iowa. I graduated from Malvern High School, now East Mills in 1970. I attended Iowa State University and graduated with a BS in 1974. The Treynor Community School District hired me in the summer of 1974 where I was an educator and coach until my retirement in the spring of 2018. I met my wife Cindy while at ISU and we were married in 1976. Cindy also became an educator and was with the Riverside District for 41 years before she retired. We have 2 grown children, Brendan, who now lives in Little Rock and Megan who lives here in Treynor and works in Omaha. Both graduated from Treynor and ISU. We have lived in Treynor since 1976.

Currently I am serving on the Treynor Zoning and Planning Commission and I am serving on the State of Iowa Board of Law Examiners.

I am a volunteer reader for the Charles Lakin YMCA Daycare.

I am a volunteer soccer coach for beginners at the YMCA.

Why am I running for a seat on the Board?

I have a passion for this Community and School. I have spent the majority of my adult life trying to help educate and inspire the countless numbers of young people I have come in contact with. I have tried to illustrate to them that they can achieve beyond what they think they can do.

I believe that I have more to offer and I believe that as member of the community, a parent and an educator that I would offer the experience and perspective to move forward and contribute to making an excellent school even more excellent.

2. Strengths - Excellent facilities/Dedicated Support Staff/Strong Faculty and Administration/Supportive Community
Weaknesses – Every School has things it could do better, if I am elected to the Board I would consult with the Administration and Community for recommendations and work with other Board members to address those issues.
3. We are fortunate that our School District is growing in enrollment. Planning and Financing for this growth is an essential function of this Board. Funding from the State Legislature has been problematic for several years. As a Board it is very important that we place our Students first and make the best possible choices for them.
4. I don't care much for it. I thought it was unnecessary and hurt the morale of dedicated teachers and state employees all over the state. However, it is the Law that we must operate under. We must do the best we can for those people who dedicate themselves to our young people.
5. The role of a School Board member has many parts. The Board acts as representatives of the people. The Board establishes and amends policies for the operation of the District. The Board listens to recommendations from the Community/Administration/Faculty/Support Staff and Students. The Board makes decisions that may not always be popular but the Board must act in accordance with the law and must always keep in mind the best interests of the Students.
6. The Treynor School District should work to make our district a magnet for the best and brightest educators who will challenge and encourage our young people to prepare for an ever-changing world. Attractive salaries are helpful but I believe that if we can provide an environment of encouragement, trust and a true appreciation of what educators can accomplish, that would serve as well as money.

7. Educators should certainly feel that they would be included and consulted and able to freely express their voice in any conversation that affects their work environment and in any conversation that affects their students' opportunity to learn.
8. On the whole pretty good. As a Board Member, I would be open to hear any positive suggestions from Faculty/Support Staff and Administration that would help the District move forward.
9. We must do everything we can to help our young people build a strong well-rounded foundation. I would be very supportive of strengthening and expanding any opportunity in the Fine, Applied, and Technical Arts.
10. It will be a sad day for our School District if we are confronted with the prospect of cutting our District's budget. The Board and Superintendent would have to make every effort possible not to be in that situation. If it becomes absolutely necessary to do so the standard I would use is: How can we make cuts that would do the least damage to our students?

BJ Dreyer

1. Tell us about yourself, your background/experience, and your connection and/or interest in the Treynor Community School. What are your reasons for seeking this position on the Board?

My name is B.J. Dreyer. I have two children in the Treynor School District. My daughter Mira is a freshman this year and my son Dylan is a 5th grader. My wife Megan is a 1998 graduate of Treynor High School. I've lived in the district since 2003. I currently work at First National Bank of Omaha and have been in banking for almost 15 years. I've had experience working with several school districts and other educational organizations throughout my professional career assisting them with their banking needs. This has given me an inside view of how districts function financially. I grew up in Farragut Iowa and cherished my experience of growing up in a small school district. My alma mater is also my motivation for serving on the Treynor School Board. In 2016, the state of Iowa made the decision to dissolve the Farragut School District. It is my goal to work with our board to make sure that Treynor continues on the correct path to prevent the types of missteps that can lead to outside intervention in our school district.

2. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses you see in our district?

One of the biggest strengths that our district has is our growth. As I previously mentioned I came from a very small school district, and I believe if you are not growing you are dying. A lot of our growth comes from our geography and our ability for metropolitan commuters to live in our district. I want to make sure that as a school district we are constantly working with our partners at the city level and county level to make sure the district continues to grow.

In regards to weaknesses, I hope all families feel that their children feel welcome and a part of our district. A family should not have to consider moving to another district because our district does not have the programming for children with special needs. My sister has Down syndrome, and my parents made the decision that it was better for my sister to attend school and learn in her home district rather than commuting every day to another district. There can be great opportunities for other students to learn from children with special needs.

We also need to make sure that we are challenging our students that excel in the classroom. We need to make sure we identify those students that are high performers and challenge them with the type of curricula that helps them be the most successful and avoid complacency in those students.

3. What are some major issues that you believe our school district is currently facing? How would you like the district to deal with those issues?

While attending recent school board meetings, I've had the opportunity to get an idea of some of the great work that is going on in the district. The district is currently implementing a new set of curriculum and I know there is additional work to cement this new curriculum into our classrooms. We also will be hiring a new high school principal in the near future. This is a key leadership position that is necessary for future growth of the district. The board also continues to amend policies that address the new challenges of vaping and other e-tobacco products. It is essential that everyone within the district takes a proactive approach to prevent this issue from growing into a bigger problem.

4. What is your opinion of the new public employee bargaining law?

In regards to the Iowa Legislature's rewrite of the collective bargaining law in 2017 and recent cases heard before the Iowa Supreme Court, there were significant changes made to the way governments are required to negotiate with public employee unions. The cases heard before the Supreme Court upheld many aspects of the new law. I understand this is a potentially hot button political issue with uncertainty around how this law might lead to negotiations at the local level. My goal as a school board member is to work with our excellent faculty to provide them with the resources they need to continue to be successful educators.

5. What do you believe is the role of a school board member?

There are several roles and responsibilities that a school board member must fill:

- 1. Top priority is to ensure that student learning and student success are at the forefront of any decisions that come before the board. The board monitors progress towards improvement efforts.*
- 2. Setting strong written policies that direct the school district and make sure that the district complies with federal and state law.*
- 3. Setting goals and evaluating the performance of the superintendent*
- 4. Evaluating the financial health of the district*
- 5. Overseeing the employment processes for other school employees through school policy*
- 6. Build an atmosphere of transparency that allows community members to trust the work that the board is undertaking.*

7. *Working with fellow board members as a body that completes the business of the district. Knowing that no single board member has authority, but that we have to work together as a whole.*

6. What ideas do you have to attract and retain the most qualified teachers at Treynor?

I'm a data driven individual, so I'm interested in learning metrics that help us identify the types of teachers that are the most qualified and will be the most successful at maximizing our students learning. I'm not solely referring to test scores, so I hope we can identify characteristics through different metrics that help us make the best hires possible and also help us retain the most successful teachers through a variety of incentives. I'm also interested in any public/private partnerships that could be established to help support our teachers in the district. This might come in the form of a community education foundation. Council Bluffs has an excellent community education foundation and I believe we could learn a lot from their successes.

7. Do you believe that teachers should have greater input/voice in district decisions that impact their work and their students? If so, what would you support?

First of all, my top goal as a school board member would be to have an open door to communicate with anyone within the district including all of our teachers. I will be more than happy to take a phone call, chat during a sporting event, or exchange an email with anyone wanting to discuss school business. These discussions with teachers will hopefully aide a feeling of greater input and voice in district decisions. In addition, I would be interested in serving on different committees that directly involve the input of our teachers.

8. What is your perception of the current working and learning environment in our school district? Do you have any ideas on how to insure a positive working and learning climate is in our district?

From the outside looking in, my perception is that we have a positive working and learning environment. As a parent I'm appreciative of the small class sizes that allow my children the opportunity to learn in a peaceful manner. That would be something I would strive to continue because I believe that working and learning in that type of environment is a positive. I was able to participate in the interview process for the recent superintendent hire. To hear from each of the candidates that Treynor was such a desirable position further tells me that our district is in a good place for working and learning. I would be interested in ways such as the previously mentioned community education foundation to

create a more supportive working environment for our staff. This is just one example of something that could be created to build a community support mechanism for our staff and faculty.

- 9. What role do the Fine, Applied, and Technical Arts play in the education of our students? Do you think our district currently provides enough support for those classes? Is it important to educate the “whole child” or focus more on academics and basic skills?**

I am a major advocate for the all of the arts. My wife and I met on a high school band trip to Europe. I often joke that even though I was an athlete in high school I was also a musician and my trombone took me farther than a basketball or football did. In saying that, I think it is very important to help young people identify where their strengths may lie. It very well might lie in the chorus or at the potter’s wheel or learning the technical artistry of graphic design. I also believe it’s very important that we continue to investigate offering agricultural curricula as another way for our future graduates to have a head start in a high demand industry.

- 10. If necessary, where would you cut the school budget? What would you consider off-limits to budget cuts? Why?**

In reviewing recent budgets, our current and past school boards have done an excellent job of the balancing act of the school budget and also being good stewards of taxpayer money. In relation to other districts in our area and our size, we are in a very good place in regards to our tax levy. Once elected, my first priority will be to familiarize myself with the budgeting process to learn the finer details of the budget. Items that I would consider off limits for would be those items that could compromise student safety.

- 11. Time will be left for closing comments at the end.**

I want to first start off by thanking the Treynor Education Association for inviting us to this forum to give us the platform to explain our positions as candidates. We have a great set of candidates and I believe that any of this group would be a good fit for our board. I appreciate this opportunity to serve this community. I am proud to say that I am a member of this community and I have great pride that my children have the opportunity to be a part of this school district.

Amy Bierbaum

1. Tell us about yourself, your background/experience, and your connection and/or interest in the Treynor Community School. What are your reasons for seeking this position on the Board?

My name is Amy Bierbaum. I grew up in Council Bluffs. I have three children that are now all currently in the Treynor school district. They are 10, 8, and a 5 year old. I am currently a nurse anesthetist. I have worked in healthcare for 16 years, the first few years I was an Intensive Care nurse. The last 10 I have been in anesthesia and now own my own anesthesia business with my husband Adam. I have served on the Board of Admissions for Bryan LGH School of Nurse Anesthesia and was the student coordinator for the anesthesia students at NebraskaMed. I have also sat on the clinical practice committee for CRNAs at the Med Center. I had a taste of education but haven't spent years teaching in a classroom. I definitely have a vested interest in this district as my children are just beginning their education. Adam and I moved to this area and this district for this school. We had heard very good things about this system and I grew up competing against Treynor in several areas and always respected their teams as well as the district as a whole.

I am seeking this position because I want to continue to improve this district and to plan for its future. I want to see Treynor grow in opportunities for our students as well as make Treynor a district that teachers and support staff WANT to come and be a part of.

My mother was a teacher for 40 years and was extremely passionate about education, she still is. I have several educators in my family including my brother. After watching them for all these years and realizing I am NOT a teacher in the practical sense, I wanted to participate in other ways. I used to teach anesthesia students but that was a far cry from being in a classroom everyday. I want to keep this district at the top and continually improve it in all aspects.

2. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses you see in our district?

The strengths that I see in this district are intertwined with its community. People expect more. On the field or court, or in the classroom, our athletes/students expect to win and excel. Our children are expected to perform

to the best of their ability. It's tradition and its ingrained. I feel the same way. When you have that sense and know what it takes to get to the finish line so to speak you make it happen. Parents are very involved in this community and willing to help in or out of school. I have a friend that offers teachers to come make copies or do whatever she can to help. You don't see that everywhere.

We have amazing teachers. In my experience, you have to love what you do. These teachers, maybe not EVERY day, love what they do but who doesn't have bad days? We need to continue to strive to be a community and a district that will attract these types of teachers and keep them here. We have already made strides to expand services, classes, and buildings to our students but there will be a need for more in upcoming years.

The weaknesses run right along with some of our strengths. One of the weaknesses I have seen in recent years is retaining some of these teachers. We have had a few of our teachers leave in recent years and I am hoping that it is not a starting trend.

I feel that we need to continue to expand our STEM programs as well as our enrichment programs, life sciences, and special education. We need to prepare our students for life and not just a degree.

3. What are some major issues that you believe our school district is currently facing? How would you like the district to deal with those issues?

Some of the major issues I see is keeping up with the growth our district is experiencing. My daughter is in one of the biggest classes that we have had and it has been dealt with for this one class very well but I feel that this growth is only going to continue.

After looking at our plans I believe that we are on the right track but additional space and facilities will be necessary. As well as teachers and staff.

Another issue I see is that we need to continue to offer advanced classes. Currently, students have access to three courses. In high school I was able to take 12 credits my junior and senior year. It saved me a fair amount of money in the long run. It also gave me the opportunity to take some classes in art that I would not have otherwise been able to fit in my schedule. This not only increases our students opportunities for receiving

credits for college but also challenges them to explore multiple areas of study without committing to a major. I would love to see some exposure to trades as well.

3. What is your opinion of the new public employee bargaining law?

This hits close to home for me in a way. Prior to my departure from my previous job we were forced to move from one "employer" to another. We had our benefits that we had had for several years cut by over 50%. We had no one representing us and it was done. We felt completely under-appreciated and betrayed in a way. I tell you this because it left a bitter taste in a lot of people's mouths. I love what I do but need to feel good about who I am working for.

The bargaining law is district dependent. This allows us to make our staff feel appreciated. I'm not saying everyone gets a huge raise and all the days off they want, but something they feel comfortable for them going forward. I feel that part of employee satisfaction in any job is feeling as though you have a voice. To retain employees you have to be competitive and put together a package that is appealing to those already in the district as well as attracting new ones if necessary. I feel as though we continue to add things to our teachers' list of duties and responsibilities but fail to offer them a sense of security that they will be taken care of by the very district that they serve.

That all being said, things need to be kept in balance. There are several working and moving parts of a district and even though teachers are a huge part of it they are not the only part. I hope to work to keep those parts in balance.

4. What do you believe is the role of a school board member?

I believe that the role of a school board member is to do what is best for the district, students, and its faculty. If one is running or elected you must be willing to look at all sides of an issue and leave the agenda at home. The role is to provide the best learning and working climate for our teachers, administration, and students and all the working parts of the school. The role of a board member is to attempt to harmonize all these areas so they can

perform to the best of the ability of the district. To provide a safe working and learning environment for teachers, students, and staff.

5. What ideas do you have to attract and retain the most qualified teachers at Treynor?

I feel that a lot comes into the equation when attracting and retaining teachers. Obviously pay and compensation packages will come into play, however there is a lot more to it than that. Feeling as though you have a voice is worth something. This may come in the form of an open discussion of contracts or meetings with the board or administration. I would like to have a monthly or quarterly forum for our teachers and administration with a board member. This would provide someone available to talk with, outside of the meeting, possibly monthly to ask questions and don't feel exposed in a public meeting.

Another thing I would like to do is offset some of the costs of classroom expenses with money from either the booster club or a separate one for our teachers. We have all of these booster clubs to support our extra-curricular activities but not really a whole lot that supports our teachers and some of the things they need or would like to have for their classrooms.

6. Do you believe that teachers should have greater input/voice in district decisions that impact their work and their students? If so, what would you support?

I feel that our teachers may quite possibly be our greatest asset in our district. They are the ground troops so to speak. They see what works and what doesn't. How things can run the smoothest. I feel that their input is invaluable. At a recent school board meeting this fall they had the student body president and vice president. I feel that it could be beneficial to have a teacher representative at these meetings.

7. What is your perception of the current working and learning environment in our school district? Do you have any ideas on how to insure a positive working and learning climate is in our district.

My current perception of the working environment is that it is "ok". I don't have first hand knowledge or the working environment. I can only tell you what I hear or have asked about. People are for the most part happy

with their jobs because they like what they do. They want to educate and inspire students. On the other hand I feel as though there is an uneasy feeling with some of the teachers and staff. This feeling comes from a feeling of unsteady ground. With possible changes to contracts and no say in what happens makes for civil unrest. I have been a part of a similar situation in health care. I speak from experience when I say that this can make employees feel as though what they do doesn't matter and that the bottom line is the only thing that does. I'll be honest, I have never worked in this district so some of this may be hearsay, however, this seems to be a general theme among a lot of teachers I talked to. I have talked to several. A sense of security and an "atta boy/girl" can really go along way.

As far as the learning environment that I am aware of, it's great. I have felt as though my children have been challenged by their teachers when they felt that things had become too easy for them. I always feel like there is room for improvement and this is where I would ask the people who are dealing with these issues on a daily basis their plan of action.

8. What role do the Fine, Applied, and Technical Arts play in the education of our students? Do you think our district currently provides enough support for those classes? Is it important to educate the "whole child" or focus more on academics and basic skills?

I feel that the role of the Fine, Applied, and Technical arts are very important. It exposes our children to various forms of art, technology, and possible professions. Not every student fits into a perfect mold. We need to encourage thinking outside the box so to speak. I feel like kids need something other than math and science to be successful in this life. Believe me, I LOVED science however, there are so many pieces that fit into the puzzle. My art teacher I had in high school knew my love of science but also knew I had a passion for art. She explained that I didn't have to choose. Why not be an anatomical or scientific artist? Something that I wouldn't have even known existed. Creating a well rounded student and future applicant and citizen is what is important.

There is a huge demand right now for the technical sciences. To be a successful citizen you don't have to go to a four year college or be a professional athlete. I feel like you need to be exposed to several areas of academics as well as basic skills that are essential. I feel as a community we have a wealth of knowledge that is untapped.

Building off what Jane Leick has done in her class with exposure to the sciences, we should be asking our parents

to participate in our children's education. For the most part, it's free (generally speaking). Use the parents and the strength of the community's professional experiences to show them possibilities in different professions.

9. If necessary, where would you cut the school budget? What would you consider off-limits to budget cuts? Why?

I don't feel that I can honestly answer this question for a couple of reasons. Is this budget cut for a year or over 5 years? How much is needing to be cut? If it is a large amount and there are jobs at risk then that means different cuts in other areas so that we don't have to cut positions. I would much rather reallocate funds or shift them around for a year or two if necessary than to cut funding for programs.

Stephen Winchell

1. Tell us about yourself, your background/experience, and your connection and/or interest in the Treynor

Community School. What are your reasons for seeking this position on the Board?

My name is Stephen (Steve or Beav) Winchell. My wife Kelsey and I were both born and raised here in Treynor. We built a home a few miles north of town four years ago and our two kids attend Treynor and ride the bus to and from school each day. Cooper is in 3rd grade and Elyse is in 6th grade. Kelsey has been a teacher for the Council Bluffs School District for the last 15 years. She was in the 1st and 2nd grade classrooms for the first 10 years. The past five years she has been an instructional math coach. I'm currently a Lieutenant with the Pottawattamie County Sheriff's Office. I've been with the office since 2004 as a corrections officer, deputy, corporal, sergeant and now lieutenant that oversees the road patrol. I believe I bring a unique perspective to the table due to being a public servant as both an employee for many years and now on the administration side of the job. As far as my reason for wanting to be on the board, well, I don't have an agenda, I want to make that clear. Nor do I want to come in and create problems that don't exist. The primary reason I want to be on the board is so our students at Treynor have board members that are able to sit down and listen to different ideas, desires, emotional pleas and best practices to be able to come to a decision that is best for the students, staff, and other stakeholders. I feel that my time in law enforcement has been just that for the last 15 years. My job as been in a large portion of the time, listening to differing sides and coming to a best possible solution while removing my own emotional desires, which makes me a suitable candidate for our school board.

2. What are some of the strengths and weaknesses you see in our district?

I believe our biggest strength is our sense of community. I have grown up here and been on the youth side of seeing our community members wanting us to succeed in the growth opportunities that this town/district provides and now on the parental side of wanting to come together for the betterment of the ones coming up behind us. Another strength I see is parent involvement. The majority of our parents are highly engaged with the kids and teachers, which is a wonderful and powerful thing. A couple areas I think we could agree that can always be improved upon are our leadership skills and professional development. I'm not saying that we as a whole are weak in this area, but there is always room for improvement to develop personal skills and those in leadership positions to sharpen skills through training and good curriculum.

3. What are some major issues that you believe our school district is currently facing? How would you like the district to deal with those issues?

I can't point to something in particular and say we have a major problem in a specific area. But, I'm not going to go into this position naïve and assume we don't have problems or issues that need addressed. As a board member that is stepping into something new to me, I will move into this role with an open mind, open ears and willingness to learn as much as I can about any problems and have an appropriate response, instead of a reaction to them.

4. What is your opinion of the new public employee bargaining law?

Whether or not I believe the law should have stayed the same or changed, doesn't change the fact that it has changed and we have to find an appropriate way to address concerns, desires, requests and long-term goals for staff. I believe that just like my line of public service work, we all have the same desired goals in mind. Good pay, good insurance, fair decisions in personnel matters, top of the line equipment, top tier training and trying to implement best practices are some of the top priorities for all involved.

5. What do you believe is the role of a school board member?

As stated in my answer for question #1, I believe the role of a school board member is to have an open mind and listen to all sides of the equation before a decision is made. Members can't be quick to judge or let emotions rule decision making. They have to be able to keep emotions in check and respond to situations instead of reacting to them. Some situations can be seen on the horizon and we can move to address those in due time with good information. On the other hand, some situations

explode out of nowhere and they have to be able to look around for good council and listen to those stakeholders and come to a fair and equitable decision. They have to be mindful of all the kids, staff, parents, laws, community standards and personal convictions that help us come to quality decisions.

6. What ideas do you have to attract and retain the most qualified teachers at Treynor?

I think an obvious and top answer for most would be pay. While that has a lot to do with it, there are other areas that people look toward for their desire to stay long-term. One of the top reasons people leave their job is because of their leadership in place, or lack there-of. People want to know that leadership has their interests and desires high on their priority list and they want to feel valued. If we can close the gap of “us vs. them” that seems to be everywhere in public service, people can feel valued and will want to strive toward the common goals we all have. As stated above, a good, strong atmosphere of training, equipment and desire to build others up help all to know that we want the best in every area. In regard to pay, it’s no secret that is almost always paramount on everyone’s checklist and anytime there is opportunity to get increases in that category, that should be pursued and evaluated.

7. Do you believe that teachers should have greater input/voice in district decisions that impact their work and their students? If so, what would you support?

Yes, as stated in question #6, employees need to have a strong voice and have the opportunity to come alongside leadership to help shape and define the impact that happens concerning students.

8. What is your perception of the current working and learning environment in our school district? Do you have any ideas on how to insure a positive working and learning climate is in our district?

The outside perception is that we have a quality working and learning environment in regard to student scores and the desire for open-enrollment that parents pursue to get their children into our district. Again, getting staff and those in leadership positions to quality training and striving to get all of us on the same page will insure we are all working towards common goals. Getting board members, leadership and teachers exposed to best practices in education and teaching will only further everyone’s ability to be better.

9. What role do the Fine, Applied, and Technical Arts play in the education of our students? Do you think our district currently provides enough support for those classes? Is it important to educate the “whole child” or focus more on academics and basic skills?

Fine, Applied and Technical arts play a huge role in the student body as a whole. As we all know, it takes all kinds to make our world go around. Kids today have information available to them that is both extremely valuable, and at times, more than they know what to do with. Looking at the valuable side, they are exposed to careers and industries that interest them and we have an obligation to expose kids to as many possibilities to those careers and industries that are developing at a rapid pace outside our normal day jobs. We have preached for a long time that all students need to go to college and get a four year degree, but that isn’t the case anymore. Students have a wealth of opportunity without a bachelor’s degree and high school is the perfect time to start letting kids explore those options. Again, I think we should strive to always do better at the things we currently offer and look for ways to offer new subjects as well. We need to look at the whole child as some kids are interested in different pathways than what is currently offered here in Treynor.

10. If necessary, where would you cut the school budget? What would you consider off-limits to budget cuts? Why?

With very limited knowledge on the budget and what goes where, I can’t say where I would start in regard to making cuts. This is something that I talked about above, we would need to listen to decision makers, those directly affected and those who can bring ideas that lie outside the box and weigh all the options.