**RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS:**

**1. What are the top three priorities you would focus on during your first year in office if elected to the D60 Board of Education?**
I. THE “WAR ON PUBLIC EDUCATION”

 Public Education is under attack by many foes who favor privatizing education completely. Some individuals want to completely privatize education, where only families of means could then properly educate their kids in expensive private schools. We need to FIX public education… not END public education! Therefore, there is an urgency of support needed for the continued viability of a good public education school system. D60 needs budgetary dollars to assist with all its fiscal problems, many of which stem from declining enrollment as we lose out to private schools, online schools, home schooling, D70 competition and even people who move to Colorado Springs (but still work in Pueblo) so that their children do not have attend D60 schools.

To address this problem, we need to increase enrolment, bolster D60 educational credibility, and fight for more tax dollars from state and federal sources, as well as try to get local sources as well. As an older school district, District 60 has a two-part infrastructure problem. First, we have dilapidated buildings and declining infrastructure. Second, we simultaneously have brand new schools that we cannot fill due to dwindling student enrollment. These issues are putting severe fiscal pressure on the District. District 60’s schools are, on average, only about 66% utilized (i.e. many have declining enrollment, underused capacity), which strains resources. As a result, efficient budgeting and disciplined fiscal management are critical.

II. STUDENT & TEACHER SUPPORT

 District 60 has alarming student achievement issues, especially when compared to the rest of the State, and the country. Our students generally perform lower on standardized tests, when they should be performing much higher. Unfortunately, there is a narrow focus by some who just want our students to depend on the memorization of facts, at the expense of genuine deep thinking, good writing, creative pursuits in the arts and music; and pursuing more innovative methods of learning. To succeed academically, we must do more than just “teach to the test.” In this process, we must combat chronic absenteeism—but we can only do this if we have an educational system that provides real reasons for students to attend school and see education as a real means to a real end, so that they really want to come to school.

 District 60 needs better financial as well as substantive moral support for our teachers! Our teachers have an incredibly difficult job to do, and we rely heavily on them to prepare our students for the future. For example, Artificial Intelligence already exists in society and surely will continue to expand, so this technology should be fully incorporated into our classrooms and should not be feared as taking over society. At the same time, the venerable basics of hard work, determined preparation, and focused discipline, must still be instilled for success!

 District 60 must have safe and secure learning environments in schools. We also need to begin the discussion of having mental health-trained social workers in our schools. Teachers should not have to carry the additional burdens of serious mental, and disciplinary, issues, on top of their already complex academic teaching loads. We need additional professionals to help relieve teachers and school resources officers to keep schools safe; and to allow our teachers, as experts, to spend as much time as possible on actual teaching and student learning.

III. PARENTS & FAMILIES; COMMUNITY

 Too many of our parents feel ignored and completely shut out of the important school decisions that shape their children’s educational lives. If I become a School Board member, then I will be transparent on all educational issues, and I will be accessible to the public. The reason for that is because in order to be accountable to the public, School Board Members first must be transparent & they must be accessible.

 So that is what I will do on the School Board, and I will encourage other School Board members to do the same. We need to have Town Halls Meetings and Listening Tours, MORE THAN school board meetings, where there is more of a chance to hear from parents and families and the community at large.

 In terms of community, District 60 can and should incorporate more concurrent enrollment with PCC and CSU Pueblo, and with other colleges and universities, to provide more higher-learning opportunities for our students.

 We also need to work with local businesses to train students in the kinds of jobs and the types of practical skills they will need in the future. But to do this, we need a visionary school board, in full partnership with industry, so that industry connects with our students, AND with our teachers.

 So, although we obviously need REAL RESULTS IN THE CLASSROOM, our success will mean more than just better test scores. Success means opportunity and many educational paths forward. That is why I will push for more apprenticeships, more partnerships with local businesses, and for more pathways into the trades. Pueblo is built by hard work, by skill, and by grit. Our schools should prepare kids to step into good jobs right here at home. College is great for some, sure; but it is not the sole pathway for our youth. We need EVERY kid to succeed. But none of this even matters if students do not feel safe, or if they feel that we do not care about their issues.

 We can’t have our kids walking through schoolhouse doors, only to feel wholly invisible, and completely unmotivated, and not seeing school as a real means, to a real end, for their future. When kids feel safe, healthy, supported, and seen—that’s when they learn, and that’s when Pueblo’s future shines brightest.

**2. How will you ensure that the perspectives of teachers and students are meaningfully included in decision-making at the district level?**

1. Establish a “Teacher and Student Advisory Council” with representatives from each high school and middle school (students), and at least one teacher per building to meet with the superintendent and board members to discuss proposed policies, curriculum changes, and school climate with the intent to foster two-way communication and generate policy insight from students and teachers.

2. Include Teachers and Students on Key District Committees by reserving voting seats for teachers and student representatives on standing committees. This action will evolve from consultation to shared governance on issues that directly affect them.

3. Develop a “Student Voice Framework” by empowering Student Councils to submit annual “Student Priorities Reports” to the Board and then tie those reports into district goal-setting and accountability metrics.

4. Strengthen Teacher Representation in Decisions by using short, rotating teacher task forces to review curriculum, workload, and professional development policies. Offer release time or stipends for teachers to ensure participation does not just increase teacher workload.

**3. What steps will you take to strengthen and expand opportunities in Career and Technical Education (CTE), as well as arts programs like choir, theatre, and band?**

 **Bolster Career & Technical Education (CTE) & real-world readiness**

* Continue aligning CTE programs to local labor market needs: health care, manufacturing, tech, hospitality, etc. Make sure certifications are meaningful and recognized. Pueblo already has some strong CTE offerings, but we need more.
* Expand internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, partnerships with local businesses. These give students experience, motivation, and clarity about future options.
* Expand Career & Technical Education (CTE): Local partnerships with PCC, CSU–Pueblo, and businesses for hands-on pathways.
* Develop Magnet & Specialty Schools: IB, STEM, arts, bilingual, and heritage-based programs to attract and retain families.
* Adopt Project-Based Learning: Real-world, community-connected curriculum that motivates attendance and learning.

**4. How will you work to foster a safe, supportive, and inclusive school environment where every student and family feels valued?**
1. **Enhance specialty focus and magnet school options**
	* Continue to develop and market specialty schools (IB, magnet, STEM/STREAM) to attract students and offer rigorous pathways. These can help counter enrollment decline by offering choice.
	* Consider adding themes or focuses that resonate with local culture, environment, or economy (e.g. environmental science, agriculture, arts, heritage, bilingual education).
2. **Improve teacher support, professional development, and retention**
	* Given that underutilization and budget strains exist, retaining high quality staff will be critical. Opportunities include more professional learning communities, mentoring, ongoing training in best instructional practices (especially for meeting diverse learners).
	* Possibly incentivize teachers to work in harder-to-staff schools or in specialty programs.
3. **Integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) and mental health more fully**
	* Students with unmet emotional or mental health needs are less likely to attend, more likely to underperform. Embedding SEL, trauma-informed practices, and counseling may help reduce absenteeism and improve learning.
	* Partner with community providers to help with mental health, counseling, mentorship.
4. **Use community partnerships more effectively**
	* Expand involvement with nonprofits, higher ed, businesses, for both academic and extracurricular opportunities.

**5. Describe an ethical dilemma you’ve faced. How did you resolve it?**

 I had a professional acquaintance approach me for personal advice. They asked me to keep what they revealed to me completely confidential, and I agreed. However, what they told me was that they were about to do something unethical on their job, bordering on criminal—taking money that they felt they deserved and were not compensated for but for which their boss disagreed and thought it was part of his regular job duties. It was a close call legally. Although I determined it was not a violation of the law per se, not revealing to the boss how funds were to be compensated for “extra” work was problematic, not because it was close to being illegal (although it was not) but because it was being deceitful.

 The acquaintance told me that they were going to obtain the funds that belonged to them, it was not that much, and the boss would not miss the money gone (relatively small amount) but I still said it was wrong. I said I felt compelled to tell his boss of the intended deceitful action by the acquaintance, but the acquaintance told me he was relying on my confidentiality that I had promised him. I was concerned because the attorney-client privilege means that an attorney will not reveal what they learn as someone’s attorney asking for advice. I did not simply want to relay on that legal privilege, so I did all I could to convince the acquaintance not to take the planned action and let me negotiate with the boss instead. The acquaintance was not happy about it but reluctantly agreed. And the two compromised but the boss appreciated the person’s honesty and for getting me involved.

**SUMMARY OF ISSUES:**

**1. Combat Chronic Absenteeism --** D60’s absenteeism rates are over 40% in some schools—this is the single biggest barrier to learning.
- Launch a **District Attendance Action Team** (principals, social workers, family liaisons).

**-** Implement **“Every Day Counts”** campaigns — positive messaging, attendance tracking, and small recognition for improvement.

**-** Partner with **local nonprofits and health providers** to help families facing transportation, child care, or health barriers.

**-** Add **attendance mentors** for at-risk students.

**2. Early Literacy & Foundational Learning (K–3 Focus) --** Early reading is the biggest predictor of later success. Pueblo’s early literacy gaps are significant.

**-** Add **reading intervention blocks** in all K–3 classrooms.

**-** Deploy **trained literacy tutors** (through AmeriCorps or community volunteers).

**-** Offer parent workshops for at-home literacy support.

**-** Increase bilingual and dual-language supports for English Learners.
 **3. Mental Health & Social-Emotional Learning--**Student behavior, absenteeism, and stress are connected to unmet mental health needs.

**-** Train teachers on **trauma-informed practices**.

**-** Partner with **local counseling and mental health organizations** for on-site support.

**-** Implement **school-wide SEL programs** (e.g., Second Step, Zones of Regulation).
 **4. Teacher Support & Retention--**Pueblo’s teacher turnover affects consistency and quality.

- Provide **monthly professional learning communities (PLCs)** for shared planning and support.

- Create a **“Teacher Advisory Council”** to give input on district policy and morale issues.

- Recognize high-performing teachers publicly and through stipends (if funds allow).

**5. Career & Technical Education (CTE) Expansion--**Pueblo’s workforce needs skilled trades, healthcare, and tech workers. CTE attracts students and boosts graduation rates.

**-** Partner with **Pueblo Community College, CSU–Pueblo, and local employers** to expand hands-on pathways (e.g., healthcare, welding, coding, culinary).

**-** Offer **micro-credential programs** for high school students.

**-** Develop **“Career Academies”** inside existing schools to avoid new facilities.

**6. Magnet & Specialty School Development--**Choice and innovation will likely attract families back to D60.

- Expand successful models like **STEM, IB, dual language, and arts magnets**.

**-** Create unique themes tied to Pueblo’s culture (e.g., environmental/agricultural sciences, trades, heritage arts).

**-** Market these programs district-wide to prevent “flight” to charter or out-of-district options.
 **7. Project-Based & Experiential Learning--**Students learn better when work feels relevant.

- Integrate **project-based learning (PBL)** units across all grades.

- Expand outdoor and community projects (Pueblo nature schools, local history projects).

* Partner with museums, parks, and local industries for authentic experiences.

**8. “Rightsizing” & Facility Optimization--**Underused schools drain resources; some consolidation is inevitable, BUT – we must conduct transparent community input before closing or merging schools. Then reinvest savings into smaller class sizes, tech, and CTE expansion.
 **9. Blended & Flexible Learning Pathways--**Some students need alternative routes — online, hybrid, credit recovery.

- Strengthen **Pueblo Virtual Academy** and blended options for middle/high schoolers.

- Offer flexible scheduling for students with jobs or family responsibilities.
 **10. Data-Driven Continuous Improvement—**We can’t improve what we don’t measure.

- Build a **real-time data dashboard** for attendance, academics, and interventions.

- Train principals and teachers to use data effectively for early intervention.