



Grand Junction Area  
**CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE**

# MESA COUNTY VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT 51 BOARD

## VOTER GUIDE 2017

*This guide is designed to provide voters with a brief introduction to the candidates for the 2017 Mesa County Valley School District 51, School Board election. The County Coordinated Election will be held on Tuesday, November 7, 2017 and will be conducted by mail ballot.*

*Each candidate responded to following questions. Candidate responses are listed in this Voter Guide.*

1. What do you hope to achieve in the next four years as a school board member if elected?
2. How would you partner with area employers and post-secondary institutions in order to insure students graduating from School District 51 are prepared for the future?
3. How would you build trust with parents, employers and other stakeholders of the District?
4. Why should members of the Grand Junction Area Chamber vote for you?

### DISTRICT C



#### **JOHN WILLIAMS**

**1. District 51 must continue to develop and maintain cutting-edge instructional models and initiatives.** Performance-based Learning, where each student progresses at his/her own pace and cannot move to the next level until

the student has mastered the subject, needs to be expanded district-wide. Seat time in class no longer leads to promotion through grades. Strategic Compensation is now in place for teacher salaries. A teacher must be proficient in classroom instruction and attend professional development education that is relevant to, and then demonstrated in, the classes the taught to get an increase in salary. We need to add to

the relevant educational opportunities for teachers as a key piece of Strategic Compensation.

#### **District 51 must get all kids to grade-level reading proficiency by the end of third grade.**

Most of the challenges students face in later grades are caused by the lack of reading proficiency.

District 51 must invest more on literacy in early years. Things like reading coaches embedded with regular classroom teachers works. We need to change our culture of celebrating modest improvements and move to the real goal - all third grade kids reading at third grade level.

#### **We need to get all graduating seniors prepared for college, the military and/or the work force.**

District 51 needs to aggressively pursue workplace collaborations already started with business organizations like the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce. Expanding the new Career Wise apprenticeship program, business internships and student attendance at WCCC and CMU are a must. Not all kids need to be on a trajectory for college. But all need to be on a trajectory for good paying jobs.

2. District 51 needs to continue to pursue, in earnest, existing collaborations with employers, WCCC and CMU. We need to focus on Career Wise and enroll all interested students in the spring of 2018. District 51 needs to expand student enrollment in WCCC where 500 District 51 students attend WCCC classes in 10 different program areas and earn both high school and college credit while gaining a certification that tells employers that the student is certified in a job skill.

We should also develop with CMU a “principal academy” where District 51 teachers who want to become building principals can be trained in management and leadership skills to help insure success as principals. The list of possibilities is endless.

3. Trust is earned. It is earned by always being open, transparent and accountable for the money entrusted to the District by tax payers. Trust is earned by always doing the right thing for kids, not making the adults in the District feel comfortable. Obviously the Board of Education members lead by their actions. The BOE must expect and insist this standard from all of District 51.

4. I have a track record of leading the District forward with initiatives like Performance-based Learning, instituted 2 years ago, where every student learns at his/her own pace, but must be proficient in each subject to move forward. I am proud of the constructive relationship developed through hard work with MVEA that benefits kids. An example of this effort is our strategic compensation model. Teachers and staff must be proficient in the classroom and their jobs, and also take relevant professional development course work, to earn an increase in pay. Last, I have been a leader in the current bond and mill levy override effort because of the financial needs of the District. I strongly believe that a great school system is the most important element for a thriving community and that funding matters.

**The Chamber endorses John Williams.**

## **District D**



### **DUSTI REIMER**

1. I want to be a financially responsible steward of public money entrusted to the district. I plan to establish and execute clear communication of goals and plans with the parents, students and the community to build trust and engaged

support. I also hope to create a long-term strategic plan for this school district. I feel that right now we have a lack of vision and leadership as to where we are going with education, and I believe we need to set our standards high and create a thriving, supported student population that is confident in their education and clear about their future.

2. I would like to see more opportunities for OJT (on-the-job training) and internships for students with local community organizations. I feel that giving them real hands on experience in various work environments will help them to understand the career fields that are available and help them to take the necessary classes or steps to get into the area of work that interests them the most. I believe that having the students be involved with local businesses also gives them a bird’s eye view of local issues that we have as a community and helps establish and create more civic responsibility in students.

I think that the Grand Junction Chamber and Colorado Mesa University have already done a wonderful job in partnering to bring this into our community on a larger scale and I would like to help foster that relationship and see continued participation from the School District with our students.

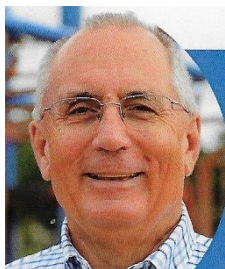
3. I think you establish trust by setting clear objectives and goals for where we need to go as a school district. By setting a clear long-term goal and building strong partnerships with parents and community, we will be able to all move in the same direction as a school district.

Also, I believe that as a Board member, we need to ask the hard questions about accountability to make sure that we are truly making decisions in the best interests of the students.

5. By creating educated and supported students in the Grand Valley, we will be able to see these benefits ripple throughout our community. We are only as strong as our weakest area. I believe that in the past years, there have been no clear goals or plans established to create a positive learning community and environment for our students to

thrive in. I feel that instead of creating a strong foundation, there has been a strong ceiling in which the students have been stunted in growth and development. I want the children in our community to come out of School District 51 with the pride of knowing that they received an education that was one of the top in the state and nation. I want them to go forth into the future knowing they have the support of our community and can be the best at whatever they choose to do.

**The Chamber endorses Dusti Reimer.**



**Tom Parrish**

1. For four years, I've been working hard to build a strong and diverse team for full implementation of the School District 51 Learning Model (Performance Based Learning). Together with input from parents, teachers, businesses and students, we're reinventing the old assembly-line model of education with a system more suited to getting kids the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills they need to get ahead in today's world. We need to move toward full implementation of the District 51 Learning Model (Performance Based Learning). It is important that we develop a stronger partnership with Western Colorado Community College and Colorado Mesa University to leverage and maximize pre-kindergarten through 16 educational opportunities to create a full range of educational possibilities for students. In the current environment of teacher shortages we need to recruit and retain high quality teachers to prepare our students for personal success on their pre-kindergarten through 12 educational journey. We need to work with our community and businesses to provide and maintain high quality schools which will attract businesses and jobs to our community.

2. Over 33 years as a teacher, principal, administrator, and School Board member, I've learned a lot about the difference between rhetoric and results in building strong partnerships. The future of our students and the future of our business community are two sides of the same coin. Neither

can prosper without the other, and our School District has to play an active and accountable role in building bridges. This partnership results in a quality education for students and a qualified workforce for local business. Our school district must collaborate with other community entities to leverage and maximize resources to create as many educational opportunities for students as possible. I'm committed to closing the deal on the great partnerships we have been building together. Our existing business partnerships have introduced our students to necessary entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial mindset. Students have been exposed to the workplace skills of responsibility, dedication, interpersonal skills, and discipline on the job. Currently our partnerships involve Colorado Mesa University (CMU), Western Colorado Community College (WCCC), The Work Force Center, Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce and our school district. The focus of this joint work has been Kick Start, Career Link, Hire Me First, STEM, Young Entrepreneurs Academy, Work Keys Assessment and Career Wise. Each of these initiatives involves and impacts local employers. The move to our District 51 Learning Model and the need to prepare our students for tomorrow's workplace requires that our business community and school district be involved and support the effort to expand these programs to reach a greater number of our students. I think it is essential that our school district begin to change its view of a student's educational journey from pre-kindergarten -12 to pre-kindergarten -16. How do we collaborate with CMU and CWCC to create more pathways for students to benefit both from the high school setting and learning options at both WCCC and CMU? This focus will offer our students the opportunity to seamlessly transition from the school district to higher education on his/her pre-k – 16 learning journey. This collaboration is essential if our school district is to address the low number of our students who move on to higher education and prepare students for tomorrow's workplace. A workplace where our graduates will need the ability to learn and use new

technology, have the ability to communicate across generational gaps, and the ability to reinvent themselves for new jobs.

3. From a lifetime of serving parents, kids, and community, I know how indispensable trust and strong communication are. It is essential that our school system:

- be open, honest and timely with accurate information at all times.
- have the courage to own the negative when necessary and always share and celebrate the system's successes.
- leadership be visible and actively involved in the community.
- respect and involve parents and community members in personal conversations around system issues and needs.
- Be effective, efficient and transparent with resources.

4. It has been my great fortune to have served in all aspects of public education for over 33 years, having served on seven different community boards all focused on the youth of our community, been employed at Colorado Christian University for the past seven years, served on the Board of Directors for the Colorado Association of School Boards, and currently finishing a four year term as a member of our local school board. In my recent capacity as a school board member I have been directly involved in the implementation of the District 51 Learning Model (PBL) and the move from a time based teacher compensation model to a performance based compensation system. Demonstrating my ability to seek out fresh and innovative programs and processes to improve the quality of our school district in meeting the educational needs of our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I believe in the promise of our children, the potential of our school district, and the future of our community, and I am committed to making the changes necessary in our school system to see that our children receive a quality education and are prepared to successfully meet the educational and work force challenges ahead of them.

## DISTRICT E



### **AMY DAVIS**

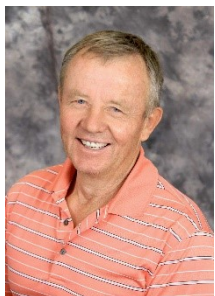
1. Every student deserves the opportunity to meet their potential. They need to be prepared for and competitive in the workforce or college. The district has instituted a new program called Performance Based Learning. I want to closely follow outcomes and assure that we are using a quality, evidence-based program to boost our literacy and math proficiencies and reduce remediation for our students who attend college. I am also very concerned about school safety issues. Specifically, mental health issues and substance abuse in our schools are of critical concern. The school district is in a position to champion interdisciplinary and interagency collaboration to tackle this problem. I would advocate that the school district take the lead in forging an unsiloed, collaborative approach to finding solutions. We are currently facing a teacher shortage in Colorado and in Mesa County. Our teachers are the heart and soul of our district's educational programs. I am interested in exploring recruitment and retention strategies so that we can cultivate a talented and committed teacher workforce.

2. I am a firm believer in bidirectional inquiry, input and communication. The district needs to have a finger on the pulse of the skills and competencies which are needed by employers. It is critical that community businesses continue to inform the school district about what is needed from its future workforce. Similarly, we need to solicit feedback from Colorado Mesa University regarding how our students are performing. Additionally, we need to know about how to prepare our student for jobs which may not even exist yet.

3. There is no substitute for listening honestly and openly to feedback from stakeholders with subsequent decision making that takes into account these interests. I also firmly believe in

transparency such that the decision making process is clear to all. Trust takes time, accountability, and integrity. I bring these characteristics to work every day; and I would do so on the school board.

4. I have a unique skill set which I would bring to the school board. I am an independent thinker and problem solver. As a physician, I solve both small and large problems every day. I have training in public health and education giving me experience at solving problems at a community level. I have also been in medical education for over 20 years and have experience in critical review of curriculum and learner outcomes. I am a leader and collaborator and have worked in both leadership and managerial roles in both healthcare organizations and on community boards. I have worked to help manage multimillion dollar budgets and understand the balance of mission and margin. Last, but certainly not least, I am a parent of three successful District 51 graduates and have over 20 years of experience in advocacy of our schools. I am passionate about public education and 100% committed to its success. If our students are successful, then our businesses and community will be successful.



## THOMAS KEENAN

1. Accountability in the Classroom for students, teachers, and parents. I want to get with performance base model and provide the students, teachers and principals with the materials and support needed. **Promote the profession of Teacher and expectations required to earn that respect.** Test results that are meaningful to the student, parent, and staff. What are the students strengths and weaknesses and know it now! Eliminate the radical empathy in the schools and develop relationships based on **challenging directly** and **caring personally** as referred to in Kim Scott's book "Radical Candor". I want to be a financially responsible steward of public money entrusted to the district. I want create a vision for this

school district and a focused budget plan that reflects the vision.

2. Establish required student activities that would create interests, knowledge and focus on Career

Readiness for all students. This would begin with activities that would not cost the district money or class time. Teaching eye contact, proper handshake, **character development, covered with dressing for success** in the hall during passing period. Activities required for graduation and completed during the 200 days the student is not in the classroom. Business community and parents would mentor and assist the student with their desired career path. As a Career Coordinator for 10 years I know the school and community interest.

3. I believe that through building strong partnerships with parents and community, we will be able to all move in the same direction and understand the needs, and as a Board member, we need to focus on accountability and that we are truly making decisions in the best interests of the students.

4. I have own business budgeted and meet payroll, received a Masters degree in K-12 education, built and lead field agents in the marketing and sales industry, and cherish the 30 years + of teaching and coaching.

**If you are alarming by the fact that of the 49% of District 51 2016 graduates that went on to pursue some sort of higher education (everything from career and technical trades, 2 year degrees, 4 year degrees, etc.). And the best result is 48 % to over 50% required remedial courses. Them we are on the same TEAM!**

**The Chamber endorses Thomas Keenan.**

## Ballot Measures

### Bond Measure/ Mill Levy Override

If approved this bond measure would allow District 51 to allocate \$118.5 million in bonds that would be paid off through property taxes, and would be used for the specific purposes outlined below.

- Maintenance across District 51, (\$55 Million)
- Replace Orchard Mesa Middle School (\$40 Million)
- Technology Upgrades (\$11 million)
- Build a gym at Dual Emersion Academy (5 million)
- Palisade High School auxiliary gym (\$5 million)
- Add security features to schools across the district (\$2.5 million)

The bond measure can only be used for these specific reasons that were outlined.

The **Mill Levy Override** is asking voters to raise \$6.5 million annually for 10 years. This would be raised through property tax revenue, and could only be used with the District 51 boundaries. The money would contribute to the following:

- 5 additional student contact days added to the school year calendar (\$3.2 million)
- Instructional materials and educator training (\$ 2 million)
- On going maintenance projects (\$1 million)
- Technology support (\$300,000)

If passed this is the general increase a resident can expect.

The median home price in Mesa County is \$200,000, would pay \$9.89 per month if both the bond measure, and mill levy passed. According to the District 51 website.

As for business owners, for every \$100,000 of their commercial property value they own they pay \$18.01 a month. \$9.42 goes to the mill levy override and \$8.59 goes for the bond measure. According to the District 51 website.

**Chamber's Position:** Vote **YES.**

### Public Safety Measure

This measure is asking voters to raise sales taxes by 3.7 cents on the dollar in order to provide more funding to the sheriff's and district attorney's office, along with 14 other agencies. This tax is projected to reach \$7.2 million annually if passed. The breakdown of allocation is:

- 67.29% would go to the Mesa County Sherriff's Department.
- 16.83% to the District Attorney's office
- The rest would be divided among the 14 other agencies

This measure is to make sure there is enough funding to keep crime rates down and public safety up. The agencies are in a safe place with budget temporarily, but are urging voters to pass the Public Safety Measure.

**Chamber's Position:** Vote **YES.**

