



Grand Junction Area
CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

MESA COUNTY VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT 51 BOARD

VOTER GUIDE 2015

This guide is designed to provide voters with a brief introduction to the candidates for the 2015 Mesa County Valley School District 51, School Board election. The County Coordinated Election will be held on Tuesday, November 3, 2015 and will be conducted by mail ballot.

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

1. What role does business have in K-12 education?
2. Are you in favor of the current school year calendar?
3. Are you supportive of the performance based learning (PBL) system and D51's implementation of the model?
4. How well are D51 high school students prepared for the workforce upon graduation? What should the district be doing differently?
5. Why do you think the Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce should endorse you over your opponents?

DISTRICT B



CINDY ENOS-MARTINEZ

1. I would like to see business people assist in helping to educate our students serving in the capacity of a mentor/tutor. The idea of having various types of businesses going into the classroom and/or holding workshops will be very beneficial. Businesses should be at the table with District 51 discussing how to best prepare students entering the workforce.

My motto: It takes a village to raise a child and a community to educate one.

2. No, not at this time. I do not believe there was enough participation in the survey and I need to see the data showing how this calendar improves student achievement.
3. I am very supportive of implementing various forms of learning, that being said, I have questions on performance based learning. The models that District 51 has looked at have a much smaller student population than the current 22,000+ in Mesa County

and I am not sure this type of learning will work for D51. I question if the District has sufficient amount of staff to deal effectively with high performers, the average students and the high risk students. I also question how will the district ensure that the high performing students progressing through the curriculum are emotionally prepared to move forward.

4. The District has worked on preparing students for the workforce, but much more preparation is needed. The District needs to offer more technical trade programs to students. The programs at the Career Center need to be offered to all students. This can be accomplished by a round-table discussion with business leaders in the community.

5. This is what I bring to the table as a native and seasoned member of this great community; Vested interest in **all** students, Experience, Trust, Approachable, Good Listener and basic Common Sense



GEORGE RAU

1. Business and the Chamber should take a stronger role in setting higher expectations for our school district. As many of us know from experience and our district's mediocre test scores show, most of our children are not graduating as educated as they should be, or often without the character traits needed to be successful.

Additionally, D-51 should focus more on those students who are not academically inclined, but want good careers that don't require a college degree. We should develop for these students a good apprenticeship program which would need the support of our local businesses. This has been critical for the economic success of many European countries.

2. Yes, I support our current calendar with a shorter summer break and multiple short breaks during the school year.

3. I support Performance Based Learning, but it's too soon to evaluate whether it's being implemented well. It will take 3 – 5 years to really get it spread through our schools and to make it work locally.

4. Our students are not prepared for our work force and this limits the economic vitality of our community and our ability to attract new businesses to Grand Junction. Executives considering a move to Grand Junction compare our education system with that of other prospective locations both for their own children and that of future employees. With approximately 35% of students needing remedial classes in order to attend CMU, and a large percentage not being proficient in math and English, our schools need to set much higher standards.

5. I'm the only board candidate from District B who has been a teacher, coach and principal, although in the private school world. In private education, your school closes if the students aren't given a great education since parents are paying tuition for their children to attend. I also have built a successful financial planning firm managing \$25 Million in client assets since I moved to Grand Junction, 14 years ago. I have been a member of the Chamber, and understand the frustration of many of its members with the mediocrity of our local school program.

Additionally, being Swiss by birth, I know the European school system which is recognized as superior to our American system.



PAUL PITTON

1. To provide resources and support to District 51 students that connect them with the real world that awaits them. I have had many business related guest speakers from around the valley speak to my math classes about their profession and its

relationship to the content we are teaching in the classroom. Internships and Job Shadows are a very powerful tool for school-to-career opportunities.

2. The current school year calendar is controversial around the community and has mixed responses from community members. I would like to see data that reflects on: interference with family vacation, student summer jobs, improved growth scores and retention of content material. Then I could make a definitive statement on whether I support it or not. At this time there is not enough valid data to support it one way or another.

3. Yes, as a retired Math, PE and Media Productions instructor I find that we (teachers) adapt to changes in our world and society as needed in the education field. The government has had a major influence on what we are now teaching our kids. The application of real world problems that require critical thinking and problem solving skills, technology. Integration of content areas is common in the work force and is now present in education. Performance based education has been around in one form or another for many years. It allows us to account for student growth and teacher performance.

4. I think that District 51 is doing a great job keeping up with the demands and requirements that they are being challenged with. I feel it would be better to distinguish between kids that are college ready at the end of high school and the ones that are planning on going into the workforce or military right out of high school. We used to have a "School to Career" program to channel kids into job shadows and internships. This program was cut during the first years of the recession. I would like to see it come back to our schools.

5. I have four sons and their wives who are currently in the workforce and doing great! I am thankful for the connection that the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce has with their respective places of employment. The support you provided to them while they were in school and now in the workforce is not getting the recognition and support that it deserves. With your support, I hope to change that and work with you to bring the connection of the Chamber and the school district back together again.



DISTRICT A



ARVAN "JEFF" LEANY

1. Business should be offering internships working with the school district by bringing in students for a quarter to semester, letting the student and business see if this what the fit is for the student as we did early on in our country, hands on.

2. Yes, we are in the business of educating our young people, the old calendar was set up for agriculture, which few of our young people engage in. The poor kids can suffer up to two years of grade loss due to the old calendar due to memory slide over a long summer, see Chalkbeat article dated August 7, 2015 "The not so secret ELL summer slide that no one has quantified".

3. It is the best system out there that we have found, it puts the student in charge of their own education and will reduce social promotion, as well as, truly educate all of our students, it is truly a huge winner to set us up as the best school district in the state.

4. We can do better and that is the reason that PBL is the key to better equipping our students to be in a position to go out make something of themselves when they leave SD51. Education at the HS level will give students a multitude of options; a vocation, going to college or pursuing a harder professional college, of which students will have a concise direction as they go through school with the PBL model.

5. All of the changes in PBL and performance based pay as well as building a new high school and opportunity center, working to get the federal and state governments out of assessments being a local control board have been advanced in the last 4 years of my tenure, I would hope that the Chamber would see the value of having me on the board and wish to keep me there as the only business leader on the board. We are walking the walk in our district, not just talking!



KELLY REED

1. Businesses, along with schools, government and the community, have a key role to play in helping students overcome skills gaps. Traditionally businesses have produced text books, videos, etc. but had little direct role in the process.

In a rapidly changing world, education and business must find ways to collaborate to improve student outcomes through training programs that equip students with skills relevant to industry. Businesses have an unique ability to overcome workforce constraints in ways that bring economic benefits back to their companies and the workforce in general.

Business must become partners with education, not telling education how, but supporting with resources, expertise and innovation. Business can help education to find new ways to educate, motivate and incorporate the potential of today's youth into a vibrant future economy.

Education and business must find ways to be on the same side in creating and maintaining a 21st century workforce that will continue to generate a solid economic base for the future.

2. No, I am not in favor of the current school year calendar. It creates more hardships and obstacles than it provides benefits.

- It cuts short the summer break hindering family vacations / time.
- Limits opportunities for teachers and administrators to further their education as the summer break does not coincide with university schedules.
- Begins the school year during the hottest time of the year costing the district extra to keep the buildings cool.
- Costs local businesses, that are dependent on summer revenues, to lose revenue (ie: Lincoln Park pool)
- Fall break and Spring break forces parents to find daycare for their students.
- Intercession activities have been poorly attended and cost the district additional funds for little gain.

3. I support the philosophy of Performance Based Learning, but am deeply concerned about implementing, funding and maintaining a system with fidelity across the broad spectrum of District 51. A great many elements need to be addressed before a program of this type is instituted.

Feedback needs to come from teachers, administrators, support staff, parents and the community before it is initiated. Few teachers or administrators have been asked for their feedback.

4. I believe a majority of D51 high school students are prepared for post-secondary opportunities to further

their education which, in turn, will further prepare them for the workforce.

So many jobs now demand college, trade-school or military training to qualify an individual for the workforce. Few high school graduates are prepared when they complete their Senior year.

Students need to be better prepared and informed about the demands of the job market and steps are necessary to accomplish the goals they wish to attain.

Simply put, most D51 students are partially prepared and in today's world that is not enough.

5. My experience, 28 years in public education, a business and military background and service in various public arenas gives me a unique and broad perspective of what today's students need and should have afforded them.

Being in the workplace I see first-hand what is working and what is not. I have a pulse on teachers, support staff, administrators and parents and their concerns and needs.

I have served as a teacher, coach, athletic director, principal (at elementary, middle school and high school), director of an on-line school, assistant superintendent and twice as a superintendent of schools.

I have been active in state organizations, having served as President of the Colorado Association of Secondary School Principals for the past two years, a member of the Colorado Association of School Executives Coordinating Council for the past four years, a member of the Routt County Economic Development Council, the City of Alamosa Planning Board and Zoning Board. I have also served as Vice-President of Membership for the Western Colorado Council of Boys Scouts of America.

I also bring experience as a former business owner and military veteran of seven years.



DOUG LEVINSON

1. The role businesses should play in K-12 education should be one of support. Obviously their financial patronage through property taxes and direct donations is essential and greatly appreciated. However, I would like to foster more opportunities for

the business community to get involved. Some ideas might be business guest speakers, career exploration presentations, and internships. I believe there is a lot of untapped value in this type of local business-mentorship program.

2. No! I have talked to many people in our community – parents, teachers, students, business leaders, and many more, and I have yet to find anyone who does support the current calendar. My understanding is it was implemented to reduce the amount of catch-up learning time students need at the beginning of the school year by shortening the period of time students are away from school. The second reason was to create intersession blocks (one week in October & April) to help students who are lagging behind academically. I am not convinced it has done either.

3. I support the concept of PBL, which is being piloted at selected schools this year. In subsequent years, all schools will be on board. During the 23 years I served as a principal in D51, leadership has rolled out countless numbers of programs, all with good intentions. Experience has taught me, however, that unless we support our teachers, the implementers, the plans fail and we move to something else with the same results. The key for success is to support, value, and listen to our teachers and parents, the ones who have the most influence upon our students.

4. Direct feedback and involvement from local businesses could help us determine if our graduating students are prepared for the workforce. This would be a win-win-win situation. First, our schools would benefit from the ongoing business review process by understanding what they can do better to prepare students for their future careers. Secondly, as our career preparation improves, our students will be better equipped to enter and be successful in the workplace. Finally, our local businesses will enjoy a more qualified and competitive workforce.

5. In one word, experience. I have been involved in the educational system for over fifty years—as a student, teacher, administrator, and parent. All business people understand the value of bottom-up experience and that is what I want to bring to the D51 School Board. Many business people continue to answer the call to mentor young entrepreneurs after they retire. In much the same way, I want to give back, stay involved, and work to improve our local educational system.

© 2015 by the Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce
360 Grand Ave · Grand Jct., CO 81501 (970) 242-3214 |

www.gjchamber.org

An electronic version of this GJACC Voting Guide can be viewed by visiting www.gjchamber.org.