

GREAT CHOICE DOUGLAS COUNTY ACTION, INC.
DOUGLAS COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE SURVEY

Candidate Name: [Doug Benevento](#)

District: [E](#)

Date: [September 15, 2013](#)

1. What about you will make you a good school board member?

My best experience for the school board is my two daughters, Anna and Kate, who attend Douglas County public schools. Anna is in third grade and Kate is in kindergarten and watching them develop and grow and learn has been a great joy. What I want for my children is what I want for every child in Douglas County, a wide array of choices, a school district that is focused on their learning and for their great teachers to be recognized and rewarded for their efforts. Nothing less is acceptable, either for my children or anyone else's children.

2. What is your history of attendance at school board meetings?

As a board member I have a good attendance record.

3. What other school and district committees have you been involved with?

I have volunteered at my kids' school and also have served on the Douglas County Education Foundation. That is along with serving on the Board itself and having served in a leadership role on the Choice Task Force.

4. Have you regularly voted in past school board elections?

Yes

5. What is your position on the district's Blueprint for Choice?

As one of its drafters I am a strong supporter of its content. I believe that we need to provide parents with as many educational options as possible, we should not have a one size fits all approach to children. For some a neighborhood schools are the right options, for some charters and for others something else. We need to provide choice and options to parents so every child can be put in the best position to succeed.

6. What is your position on charter schools?

My kids attend a charter school and I think they are an important option for parents. As public schools charters should be treated like other public schools in terms of financing. Charter schools are established by parents and led by parents and to the extent the demand for charters increases we need to meet that demand. Over the past four years we have gone from about 4,000 charter students to about 7,700 charter students and from 7 charter schools to 12. To the extent the demand continues we should be prepared to meet that demand.

7. Do you believe charter schools have a fiscal effect on neighborhood schools and if so, what is that effect?

I don't think that charters have a negative fiscal impact on neighborhood schools. They provide a choice for parents and to the extent that some parents are considering a charter or a private school to the extent they choose a charter in Douglas County we have succeeded in both providing the right choice for a parent and succeeded in keeping a student in our District.

However, we have also used charters to alleviate growth pressures in the District. We are growing District and we know there is a demand for charters, to help encourage charters to meet that demand and help alleviate our growth we have

provided property for them to build schools and allowed them to access District credit so they can borrow at cheaper rates. In return we encourage them put a school in an area of need. This helps them start a school and helps us manage growth.

8. What is your position on the Choice Scholarship Program?

I helped author the Choice Scholarship Program, as an additional choice option for parents. We believe that we have an obligation to put all students into an educational environment that works for them.

9. If implemented, do you believe the Choice Scholarship Program would have an effect on district schools and if so, what would be the effect?

No. When we designed the Choice Scholarship Program we intentionally held back a portion of per pupil revenue to cover administrative costs so that it did not cost the District money. The program is at least cost neutral.

10. If you do not support the Choice Scholarship Program, would you seek to end it, if elected?

11. What is your position concerning the local teachers union and its value to teachers and students in the classroom?

The leadership of the Union has not served the District well and we should not let them back into the District. In 2009 the District was paying \$300,000 per year to union organizers who performed no work in the District. That was money straight out of the classroom into the pockets of labor leaders. They were collecting \$1.3 million in dues for teachers but spent less than \$10,000 on professional development for teachers, instead they sent over \$800,000 of that money back to Washington, D.C. to spend on political activity. The Union leadership put its interest first and our kids second.

12. What is your position on the district's pay for performance and market-based pay programs for teachers?

They are valuable in ensuring that we attract and retain the best teachers. Our best teacher and our least effective teacher did not receive an equal pay increase this past year. Our best teacher received an increase of over 8 percent while an ineffective teacher received zero. In neighboring districts their best teacher and a below average teacher would have received the same pay increase. We think we attracting the best because they know they will be rewarded and recognized.

13. What is your position on the district's teacher evaluation program?

I support it. We are required to have an evaluation program under state law and we have designed one in collaboration with teachers and administrators that measures success in different disciplines.

14. What organizations have endorsed you in this race?

The Douglas County Republican Party
Governor Bill Owens
County Commissioner Jack Hilbert
Castle Rock Town Council Member Jennifer Green
And many parents and educators

15. Is there anything else our supporters should know about you?

I believe the Board of Education's job is to empower the right decision maker, not collect power to itself. With over 60,000 kids in our District we need empower those in the best position to make decisions. That is what the Board should do; principles and parents should make school level funding decisions because they know best what that specific school needs. Parents are in the best position to know what educational environment is best for their child; our job is providing choices for them so that they can find the one that fits best. The Board's job is to empower others, not to amass power.