



Heather Nichols

490 Board of Education Candidates Questionnaire

1. Why did you decide to run for USD 490 Board of Education?

I decided to run for School Board because I want to use my skills and experience in a way that positively benefit the community. My husband Tony and I have 2 children in the El Dorado Schools, one at Grandview Elementary and one at El Dorado Middle School. Their education is extremely important to me. As a stay-at-home mom, I find that I miss contributing to an organization. I believe that my experience as the Executive Director of Quality Care Services, Inc., a non-profit Child and Adult Care Food Program Sponsor, uniquely qualifies me for the administrative knowledge required to be an effective leader for our community's children. I graduated from Emporia State University with a degree in Rehabilitation Services Education and spent several years working with individuals with developmental disabilities as a Group Home Coordinator and Staff Trainer at Heartspring School in Wichita. My entire professional career has been dedicated to Education.

2. Do you feel you are qualified for this position and if so, why?

I have a professional background that I feel would be a great benefit to our Board of Education. Immediately after graduating from college, I took a position with Heartspring School in Wichita. Heartspring is a private, non-profit, special education school. Many of the students live on-site in group homes. I have supervised Paraeducators, helped to write and implement Individualized Education Plans, recruited staff, trained staff, as well as administered employee benefits. I worked closely with Administrators, Special Education Teachers, Behavioral Therapists, Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Language Pathologists, and Nurse Practitioners.

I later went to work for Quality Care Services, Inc. and served as the Deputy Director and Executive Director for 8 years. As the Authorized Representative I was responsible to the Kansas State Department of Education for the overall

management of the agency. I created and submitted the annual organizational budget and was responsible for over \$1,000,000 per year in Federal Tax dollars. In all the years I was with Quality Care Services, Inc. there was never a significant finding by the Kansas State Board of Education or during the fiscal audits required by law. While in this position, I hired and trained the current staff, who have gone on to grow the agency- even winning a Kansans Can Award this year for Outstanding Customer Service by the Kansas State Board of Education. I continue to serve on the board of Quality Care Services, Inc.

3. If elected, what would be your top priority or focus?

If elected, my focus will be to make USD 490 the most desirable area school district for teachers, staff, and students. My first priority will be to reduce staff turnover. It is my hope that when USD 490 becomes the most desirable area employer for teachers and staff, we will be able to recruit and retain the most dedicated employees. I believe that teachers and staff who feel valued and appreciated will pass that feeling on to their students by their enthusiasm for learning. Students who feel their teachers are truly invested in them will enjoy school and learn more. In this environment, I feel that test scores will go up and graduation rates will increase. When we create a positive atmosphere of respect and enthusiasm, we will develop a reputation in the surrounding area of being the best. My belief is this reputation will encourage parents to want to live and work in this community, thus growing our community.

4. Is there anything else you would like to add as you are considered for this position?

I love this town. My husband was born and raised here. We lived here when we got married and I knew I wanted to raise our children in El Dorado. We moved to Kansas City while he was in school and we couldn't wait to come back. I am excited that there are so many candidates running for School Board. We are blessed to have a community with so many who are willing to step up and serve. I hope to win your vote on Tuesday November 7th.