

Name: Ben Friesen

Tell us about your background. Include children attending the school, employment, education, etc.

I'm the parent of a current student at LCS and another coming in the fall. I'm an entrepreneur and owner/founder of a design/build renewable energy company. I have multiple degrees, licenses and certifications. I'll highlight the ones that have correlations to this position. They are in a variety of fields, including; Environmental Ed., Ed. Psych, Construction Project Management, Renewable Energy/Engineering, Real Estate and I am a licensed contractor.

Please share your thoughts on the role of schools and how it can best provide for excellent education.

Since this question deserves more space than I have been allotted for this application. I'd like to direct you to the document I provided to the Board titled "Educational Philosophy".

As a quick synopsis, here are some bullet points from that document.

- I'm of the opinion that parents/family lead the primary role in raising children and it is a school's job to teach core curriculum.
- Raising a child to become a productive member of society is the responsibility of parents/family, first and foremost. However, this notion isn't mutually exclusive to the notion that schools can play an important role in this endeavor. The Foundation Stones and Capstones (integral parts of Liberty's very essence) are useful tools that should be utilized as reinforcement to parent/family values and expectations for their children.
- I am pro-Core Knowledge and anti-Common Core.
- I believe in school autonomy and I do not think our educational system should be dictated in a "top-down" model, such as it exists today. In other words, I don't look to DC to tell us -as parents- how our children should be taught. Rather, I subscribe to the notion that "we" (as a community of parents) should be able to decide what type of education our child should receive, and from where.

Tell us what books you have read on education and education reform.

Until the last 5 or 6 years, most of the books I read about education (and various models thereof), were many years ago when I was getting my double master's degree in Environmental Ed. and Ed. Psychology. I do still have a strong recollection of various models such as Waldorf, Montessori, Classical and others. As mentioned earlier, I watched with a very keen eye when Common Core was implemented some years ago as our oldest was approaching school age and it terrified me. So, I set out to learn as much as I could, at that point, the Classical/Core Knowledge model was the obvious choice. I am familiar with E.D. Hirsch and heartily agree with his notions of "intentionalism" and am now currently immersed in studying his books "The Schools We Need" and "Cultural Literacy".

How have you contributed to Liberty Common School to date?

This is our second year with a child at LCS, so my wife and I have taken it upon ourselves to get woven into the fabric of the school as we are very involved parents. We embraced the "full parental involvement" philosophy 5 years ago when our oldest started at another Classical/Core Knowledge school. We find this to be an essential duty of all parents. We have attended, donated and/or volunteered at multiple school functions, including but not limited to: Spring Gala, Spring/Fall Festivals and the like. My wife does "Monday Folders" and is helping at the school at least once a week. I recently gave a presentation/demonstration to all 4th Grade Liberty students on Photovoltaics. I've attended multiple events at both schools, including a fascinating presentation by the Executive Director of the Ayn Rand Institute. We also make every Amazon purchase through the Core Knowledge Foundation Smile program, as well as all our groceries through the King Soopers school gift card program. I am a registered volunteer at the school, and I plan on getting involved in the Watch Dog group in the near future.

Tell us of any other skills, talents or access to resources that will help you be an effective BOD member.

The schools Governance Committee developed the following bullet points regarding ideal skills for BOD candidates. I thought it would be helpful for me to simply address each one, so that voters can see in an easy format, how my background lends itself well to virtually every category.

- **Finance (accounting, banking, insurance)** As mentioned, I am an entrepreneur who founded a company from scratch. I brought it from a one man shop to a multi-million-dollar business. Finance, is of course, a huge part of developing and operating any successful business.
- **Legal** I do not have a law degree. However, I am quite savvy regarding how law effects operations and liability. In those aspects I have a wealth of experience.
- **Human Resources/Management** I have multiple employees and I take that responsibility very seriously. Every organization is reliant on happy and healthy employees and it has been a primary focus of my role as a business owner.
- **Facilities (real estate, construction)** I went to real estate school in CO and received my State license back in 2005, so I am knowledgeable in real estate. My company is a design/build firm, so construction is a primary part of what I do (and have done so for nearly 2 decades), including years before I started my own business. I'm also certified in Construction Project Management and a licensed contractor. I am certain that I can help ensure we never overspend on our facilities and any future real estate transactions.
- **Fundraising (donor solicitation, training for board members on processes)** Simply put, fundraising is akin to sales. Being a long-time entrepreneur, I understand fully, the concept of how to present the concept of "value". This is essential to our school's viability.

- Public relations (marketing, media relations) I've been public speaking for many years in various roles. Marketing and media/relations are a large part of what I do as a business owner.
- Governance (previous board experience) I have served on a corporate Board, as well as being a former Board Member of my industry's State organization. So, I have lots of experience with how important Boards are and the intricacies of how they operate. This included some work down at the capitol, lobbying and crafting legislation/regulations.
- Academic Expertise I have a graduate degree in Environmental Ed. and Ed. Psychology. A requirement of my Residency was teaching at a local college. I'm familiar with developing and implementing curricula.

Why do you want to be a member of the Board of Directors?

If you are reading this, then it's possible that you are just like I was. A parent who's intently involved with your children's education/life. Someone who donates to the school, volunteers and/or supports the school in a variety of ways. Like me, you probably thought to yourself "*I'm sure the Board is doing a great job, I'm sure someone really good will run for the Board, I'm sure Liberty is doing fine*". The good news is that the Board *is* doing a great job and really good people *are* running, but they need our help more than ever. I met the other candidates and they are great people. You can't go wrong in this important decision in front of you, but here's the not-so-good news.

Our Charter, our autonomy and our values are under assault, make no mistake about that. Speak with a current BOD member, Principle or even the Headmaster and you will understand that we are in unprecedented waters. I *am* heartened by the fact that this year, for the first time in a long time, we have more parents running for the Board than there are slots to be filled. This is a good sign for our school. However, we are against a head wind with the force of a squall.

I can't sit idly by when I see opportunities where I can help manifest the things in this world that are important to me. Particularly in the current climate down at the capitol, I feel more strongly than ever that I must do whatever I can to protect and preserve the rights of communities such as ours to stand-up to these powerful forces. I also want to help ensure that what has made Liberty great in the past, can continue to stand against conformity urges that many other schools have succumbed.

Serving on the Board is a big commitment. I attended the most recent BOD meeting and it was nothing short of intense (and enjoyable). The hours of work and complexity of issues the Board deals with is immense. I encourage more parents to attend the meetings that are "open". I honestly am kicking myself for not attending them until recently. I was quite surprised to see that there wasn't even a handful of parents in attendance. Again, I was one of those parents, until I decided to run for the Board, and I regret that. If we want to continue to survive as a school, it's just not enough anymore to donate and volunteer.

We need more parents/family members to get involved, get on committees, read our newsletter with more intensity and be better advocates/defenders of our school. The current Board Strategic Plan serves to bolster these urgent needs and I applaud them for their hard work in this area. There is no better time than now to join with me to reinvigorate parental

involvement in how the school is run. There is no better (or more urgent) time to get on a committee or find other effective ways to help ensure we stay viable and autonomous. Regardless of whether I get elected to the Board or not, I pledge to get more involved, I hope you will join me.