



Questions for Candidates for School Board Trustee from the Conservative Coalition of Harris County

This questionnaire will be posted onto the Conservative Coalition of Harris County website for public viewing (www.cchc-pac.org).

Candidate Name	Position that Candidate is Running For
Jim Engelke	Tomball ISD Board, Position 1

Candidates please give your answer to each of the following questions and include your rationale with each answer. Please be concise and clear.

1. Why are you running for School Board Trustee? Is there a particular issue that motivates you to serve on the school board? If elected, what will be your priorities?

Answer: Tomball ISD is blessed to be the best district in the Houston region, and one of the best in the State of Texas. I'm running to ensure that we keep that momentum by maintain safe and open schools, dedicated teachers and administrators, responsibility for taxpayers, and by keeping political activism out of our classrooms. I support investment in CTE, internship, and apprenticeship programs to make sure our students enter a competitive job market with an edge or transition to higher education with practical experience.

2. Are you running with any organized slate of candidates? Have you received any donations or endorsements from any group(s)? If so, which groups? How will you promote your school board candidacy?

Answer: I am not running with any other candidates, nor have I received any financial support from any political groups or organizations.

3. What experience or skills have prepared you to serve as a board member? In what school district or community activities/organizations have you been involved? What differentiates you from the other candidates and/or board members?

Answer: I have served as President of the Tomball Rotary Club. In addition, I hold a designation as a *Professional Community & Economic Developer (PCED)* indicative of my commitment to serve our community by seeking ways to enhance economic prosperity, a process in which TISD plays a vital role. I also have a Master's Degree in Public Policy Analysis in Education Policy & Administration and a Graduate Certificate in Public Management from the Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M University. I serve on various non-profit boards including my church council on the Finance Committee.

4. What issues do you believe your district needs to address in its academic program and offerings? What changes would you recommend?

Answer: I would like to see increased focus on CTE programs that enable students a wide variety of opportunities for career development in addition to continued investment in athletics, fine arts, and vocational programs like FFA that promote citizenship and stimulate creative thinking. I also believe entrepreneurship development and personal finance classes should be developed to help our students bridge gaps in social development so that they become responsible adults.

5. What is the proper role of TASA and TASB with respect to independent school boards? Do you believe there should be mask or vaccine mandates in public school? Where should these mandates originate, if at all?

Answer: TASA & TASB are professional associations that serve as resources for people working in those career or service fields. Neither organization, nor the opinions of such should have a significant bearing on decisions made in a classroom or board room. Local needs and decisions based on local ideals should be paramount in every consideration.

6. What is a school board member's role and responsibility? How does that role differ from the role of the superintendent or administration? What is the best way to address differences of opinion on the board or between the board and the administration?

Answer: A school board member should be a bridge between the community and the school system administration first and foremost. Each member should apply his or her own best judgment on policy decisions with one priority in mind: our children and what is best for them. Secondary to that commitment, members need to be transparent, open, and responsive to the needs of our community with regard to workforce development and partnerships in education.

7. Is your superintendent's and other high-level administrator's compensation in line with job performance? Why or Why not?

Answer: Tomball ISD serves our community well and has achieved great things under the leadership of Dr Salazar-Zamora. In today's tough environment, especially in education, we must remain competitive to keep the best administrators and teachers. This will become excruciatingly important over the next decade, and we can mitigate losses internally by ensuring we remain a beacon not only for families seeking a quality education, but also by being a place where educators want to dedicate their talents.

8. Is the current funding allocation within district spending categories (between administration, facilities, teachers, etc.) adequate? Why or Why not? If not, what areas of spending can be changed and how do you propose to correct it? Should resources be devoted to political lobbying?
- Answer:** I believe Tomball ISD has done a remarkable job balancing the needs of each area of the district. Is there room for improvement? In my experience, there always is. Tough decisions are often needed to be made and it's difficult to make every department happy or satisfy all requests for funding. In service to the district, I will ensure that we do our best to keep monitoring budgets and remain fiscally conservative, but also invest properly in areas of greatest importance as we grow.
9. What are your thoughts on the current and the proposed budget for your school district? As a board member, where would you look to make budget cuts? Are there any areas you would not consider cutting? How would you determine your budget priorities?
- Answer:** I would not consider budget reductions in the areas of CTE, safety and security, or staff and administrator compensation. These are three areas in which we must continue to invest to see continued success.
10. What is the public relations role of the board? How can the board be accessible to the community? To specific community groups? How can a board of education best communicate with its constituent groups?
- Answer:** I believe board members should be active attendees at local meetings. I am a proud member of the Tomball Rotary Club, and I actively attend Greater Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce events. I've also served on various committees at the Chamber including Government & Legislative Affairs and Mobility & Transportation. I've done so for 12 years because I believe in one's personal involvement in community. I will continue to be active in my community as a Board Member keeping the pulse of the community.
11. What is your long-term strategy or strategies for improving the quality of education and keeping pace with student growth within the district?
- Answer:** Impressive growth is one of the key issues that could face our district if it's not managed properly. TISD is already the largest employer in Tomball so we have a great responsibility in keeping the district healthy, not just for students and families, but for taxpayers and the community as a whole. I believe the current strategy outlined by TISD in the long term planning sessions of which I was part as a member of the community is still a solid response to the growth to maintain quality of education and efficiency for taxpayers.

12. What are your areas of concern regarding student achievement in your district? Do you have specific suggestions for improvement? Given all the issues that arise, how can the board stay focused on student achievement?

Answer: Education used to be measured by access. Then, it changed and over the years completion was the measure. Today, that simply doesn't cut it. We must focus on what happens *after* a student graduates to really gauge our success. Do we prepare our students to be good citizens and responsible adults (subject of course to guidance at home first)? Are our students sought after by employers trying to build a quality workforce? Are our students competitive in higher education environments, the workplace, or entrepreneurship? We should ensure every decision we make regarding programs and activities enhances this focus on developing the whole person in a responsible way, helping reinforce the ideals great parents already instill in their children and helping support students who may not have that solid home environment.

13. Is teacher performance adequate within your district? Are teacher's salaries adequate given current state budget condition? What can be done to improve overall teacher performance? What is your opinion of teacher morale in the district? Do you know the current teacher turnover rate?

Answer: Are they ever? Educators today are turning over at alarming rates. It's not always about salary, either. I believe teachers and administrators on the whole do an incredible job that is far more important than many others. Yet, we know that teacher pay is always a concern. I want to make sure that while we always seek efficiency and responsibility for taxpayers, we also remain competitive in all the ways we can. We must invest in quality teachers and administrators always, or like other districts soon, we will also face a severe problem. Much of this can be accomplished by making our educators feel welcome and appreciated through support and by providing a quality work environment with better professional development opportunities and more community engagement. Work gets better when employees feel like they're part of a larger purpose. TISD does that well, but we can always seek to improve.

14. What type of teacher evaluation system and administrator evaluation system do you support?

Answer: Teachers and administrators should be reviewed on various performance indicators; not just standardized test results. A comprehensive review process similar to what is done in higher education could be a possible solution where students and peers review the teachers and administrators as part of the process. Observation is a traditional approach that also has merit where it can be conducted. At the end of the day, like any effective organization, we want to develop the right things to measure and establish achievable goals along those measurements that allow the entire team to contribute to the mission.

15. What are your thoughts on your school district's programs for special education students, English Language Learners (ELL), and gifted students?

Answer: As Program Manager for the lifePATH program at Lone Star College-Tomball I worked with our special education administrators at Tomball ISD and I believe they are committed to student success. Working at lifePATH, however, I also saw room for improvements in special education state wide. I think this give Tomball ISD an opportunity to yet again lead our state in excellence. I would love the opportunity to help our team's development of opportunities for success for many of our students with disabilities. I believe that TISD's continued investment in Tomball Star Academy and other such special initiatives will allow us to continue to do well with our highest achieving students. COVID and industry-related crises eliminated a great opportunity we had in partnering to develop the region's first energy & global trade academy, but other opportunities like that can be sought after and brought to fruition.

16. How does a school board balance the need to provide a quality education with the need to respond to the local taxpayer burden? Should Homeschool students be allowed to use publicly funded facilities and equipment?

Answer: Fortunately, Tomball ISD is fiscally sound. Much of this is thanks to the district leadership in that regard for more than a decade, but it's also a direct result of the growing tax base we have thanks to economic development and families continuing to move to the district. The district must continue to make budgetary concerns a high priority in all regards, but we can simply afford to do some things in our district others cannot. This is an opportunity to lead.

While homeschool students do not attend TISD, their parents pay taxes in our district. I would be open to supporting such students being able to use certain facilities under the framework of a partnership arrangement as long as security concerns were resolved and user-based access was controlled. Again, this is another opportunity for Tomball ISD to innovate and be responsible community partners.

17. How do you define Critical Race Theory and its implementation?

Answer: Race Theory (the word *critical* is not so in this use) posits that one's race is a key factor in the ability of one to succeed in our country while race also controls all access to the channels of success. In other words, equal opportunity doesn't exist for some races while others find advantage. I find the idea repulsive personally in today's America where it would seem much more useful for us to focus on the ideals we share rather than our past differences. While this theory could (on a stretch) be a topic for critical debate in a post-graduate or doctoral program by academics and social scientists, it offers no benefit to the educational process for elementary or secondary students and completely counters any effort to help students work better together towards a brighter future.

18. What do you believe about natural/biological male students competing with natural/biological female students in publicly funded athletic programs? Would you support or oppose such programs? What role does public education have in sex education and when, if ever, should it be taught?

Answer: I vehemently oppose students who identify as one gender participating in sports designed for the other. The entire reason girls' and boys' athletic programs are separated by biological gender is to create a level playing field across districts and for student athletes to all have an opportunity to excel, in recognition of physical differences that often prevail. As we know from recent history, someone that identifies as a female who is not (biologically speaking) can reduce the competitiveness of and create a disadvantage for other biological female athletes on the team, especially in physically demanding sports like swimming.

Public sex education in Texas generally has begun in high school historically, but this is changing, primarily due to a changing environment where kids are sadly becoming sexually active at a much younger age. I believe it is ultimately the responsibility of parents to lead in educating their children in this regard, but also realize that many parents do not. Texas law calls for abstinence to be the primary discussion point regarding sexual activity and with that I agree. Ideally, schools would find a way to engage and support parents more in this role with each of their own students.

BY RETURNING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE, THE CANDIDATE ASSUMES FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL ANSWERS TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THE ANSWERS ON THE FOREGOING REFLECT THE CANDIDATE'S BEST EFFORTS TO ANSWER THIS QUESTIONNAIRE HONESTLY AND DIRECTLY.

Once this questionnaire has been completed, please email it to: alex@cchc-pac.org.

Please note: You ***must*** return your questionnaire from the email address to which it was sent. Questionnaires returned from any other email address will be considered fraudulent and will ***not*** be recorded and no answers will be published in the voter's guide. CCHC deems a return from the proper email address as authentication of the correct respondent.