



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
Mark Lewandowski	Tomball ISD Trustee Position 4

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: As a graduate of Tomball High School, I have a vested interest in the Tomball community and the success of Tomball ISD. If Tomball ISD is successful, our students are successful. I believe that consistent conservative and experienced leadership has been critical in the success that Tomball ISD has reached. Our students are our most important asset and deserve the best that we can provide. Our teachers are the best in the state and deserve stable leadership which helps keep morale high, is a known quantity, and will have their back and support them in being successful performing the difficult and demanding job they have been tasked with.

Our priorities must always be doing what is right for our students, parents and taxpayers and the employees of the district. I support:

- Safe learning environments, we have hired more police in our buildings.
- Providing pathways for all students whether it be College, Career and technology, or military service.
- Uphold community values and keeping the small-town atmosphere.
- Manage student growth
- Provide Teachers support, training, tools, and time to do their job
- Protect our students from social engineering, CRT, etc.
- Be fiscally conservative, work to reduce district debt, and control the tax rate. We have recently lowered our tax rate from \$1.25 to \$1.23. We continuously work to keep our tax rate low while providing for the needs of our students.
- Advocate for the legislature to address the accountability system. It should not be focused on standardize testing as this limits teachers from teaching to their full potential.

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 running with fellow board members John McStravick and Michael Pratt. I have not received any donations, nor have I asked for any, currently I have been self-funding. I have received an endorsement from the Honorable Sam Harless, Precinct Chair of 529 Barbara Tague, Former Precinct Chair of 0127 Matthew Heffernan, and numerous endorsements from the community. We have purchased signs, created a website, trying to use social media, and will print push cards and door hangers.

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 am a proud parent of three sons who are graduates of Tomball ISD. I am a Christian and a current member of the Knights of Columbus Chapter 11472 at St. Annes. I graduated from the University of Houston. I am currently the Manager of Engineering for Celeros Flow Technology and have three patents. I am a member, past president, and a current director in the Greater Tomball Area Pachyderm Club. I coached basketball and was a director in the old Tomball Youth Basketball League. I have served on a Tomball ISD campus improvement team, I am a graduate of leadership TASB, I have served on each of our board committees, I am a past president and current director in the Gulf Coast Area Association of School Boards. I have also served as President of the Tomball ISD Board of Trustees. I take this position seriously and work to exceed TEA required board training hours to better understand board governance.

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

Answer: Tomball ISD is the highest rated school district in Harris County based on the current TEA accountability system with straight A's and an overall score of 95. We are continuing to expand our career and technology programs and offer several courses that provide certification that will allow students to graduate and go straight into the work force. I support further development of our Career and Technology programs. We must continue to ensure sound curriculum that will help students be successful whether they go to college, enter the workforce, or enter the military. Tomball ISD has been very successful in educating its students and continuous improvement is part of the culture.

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: Both organizations provide TEA required continuing education for their members. TASB also provides membership services such as policy administration, and other services. TISD does not employ either TASB or TASA for advocacy. TASB does support more local control, something that our legislators seem to want to reduce.

I do not feel that there should be mask or vaccine mandates anywhere for Covid. I am not in favor of mandates, however if legitimate science shows that a medical mandate can be effective then it should be reviewed as required by state and federal elected officials but people should always have the right to opt out and should never be penalized.

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: The role of the school board trustee is to work together with the other trustees to hire and supervise the superintendent, provide governance and oversight over the district, set the tax rate, set district vision and goals, advocate for education and educational excellence, and represent the values of the community. We adhere to the Texas Open Meetings Act and follow Texas law.

The best way to address differences of opinion between board members and administration is to be educated on the topic, have meaningful discussion, and understand that the success of the student is the first priority. The board and superintendent develop a strategic plan and it is measured against student outcomes and success.

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

Answer: The compensation of the superintendent is based on performance. Meaningful superintendent assessments are critical to determining if defined goals and expectations have been met. Key performance indicators are used to measure the success or failure of the documented goals defined by the board. The superintendent's compensation is less than some of our surrounding districts even though performance is better.

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: Funding allocations for the M&O budget are adequate but in jeopardy as the recession continues and costs rise. We are in competition with other districts for teachers and administrators and just as in the private sector, demand can affect salaries. From the M&O side cuts to the budget especially in a fast growth district like Tomball ISD will directly affect student opportunity and success. Taxpayer resources should not be used for lobbying but there must be direct communication from district administration, board members, and the community with our legislators to ensure they understand the needs of our students and the effects that legislation may have on them.

Our current funding allocations are 84.03% for instruction and student support, campus, and instruction administration, 4.06% for general administration and 11.92% for non-student support. As the district grows so does the people required and we must work hard to control the budget while providing our students with the education they require to be successful citizens. Our current budget is \$192.5M.

While direct instruction is 60.44% and is the largest single budgeted cost the second highest is from plant maintenance and operations at 9.37%. This is also the most volatile of the budgeted items as rising costs from inflation and supply chain issues can have harmful effects. We must always be vigilant and manage our resources wisely. We have been blessed because the district is only one of about 16 out of over 1000 districts that have the ratings we do.

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: Tomball ISD has a rigorous budget process. Board members are involved by committee in the budget process. The current budget is considered a tight budget and cuts would reduce the services that would be provided to our students and expected by our parents. We are a fast growth district, we are in a recession, and our costs are escalating daily. There would be limited opportunity to make budget cuts at this time. However, that said, we must always be diligent and manage our needs and expectations to keep costs down and debt low.

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: The board represents the community. As a board, Tomball ISD trustees work to reflect community values and expectations as they perform their governance role. The board and all district personnel must be receptive to community input. However, not all input may result in further action. The board is accessible multiple ways, through personal contact, email, open board meetings, etc. and in most cases can communicate best through district resources and through the superintendent. As a board member we must continue to attend school and community events and listen to our students, parents and taxpayers, and employees of the district.

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: Student growth for TISD must always be managed. It requires allowing for teachers, food services, facilities, and transportation in the budget, providing those services when students arrive and going forward. As buildings become crowded a bond may be required for new facilities. As a conservative, I feel we must focus on student success, teacher and staff development, financial control (I recently voted to reduce our tax rate), we must work with our legislators and TEA to reduce the number of state assessments and how schools are measured and work towards consistency, more local control, prompt and timely data from the TEA and the County appraisal districts. While we write our own curriculum in many areas, our teachers potential is limited by constraints dictated by the laws and codes that include standardized testing. We must communicate with the SBOE to ensure they properly manage the information that gets into our text books. It must be factual and data based and not contain social engineering.

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: The primary focus of the TISD board is student success, we have several programs in place that address student success and remediation. These programs and methods are working as Tomball ISD is an A district with the highest score in Harris County. That said, we must work within the constraints' that we have been given by the state and TEA and until a better accountability system is put in place, we will work to be the best we can be within the system we have been saddled with.

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: Teacher performance is critical to the success of our students and the district. Salaries in the Houston area are very competitive and have to be considered. The board recently approved a 4% raise for our teachers.

Teacher performance starts with hiring the right teacher, providing proper support, having a good work environment and on-going training. For 2021, teacher turnover was 16% much higher than normal mostly due to Covid and teachers leaving the field, it appears that turnover rates across the state were up in 2021. Increased teacher workload is another result of the current accountability system, state mandates and the changes in society many teachers have had enough and called it quits. Teachers must have stability, sufficient planning time, have less non-instructional responsibility, meaningful professional development, commensurate pay, and the support of the district. Tomball ISD is working in that direction.

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

Answer: Performance based. I support the current teacher and principal evaluation system the T-TESS and T-PESS system. These systems are based on student response and professional development. Being a District of Innovation, we can leverage best practices to develop local instruments and appraisal practices.

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

Answer: By law we must teach all students. Tomball ISD has excellent programs for Special Ed., GT, and ELL. All of these programs are budgeted items. Unlike charters, by law we must educate all students. We must do our best to mainstream our ELL students as quickly as possible. We must limit excessive spending while providing what our students need to be successful.

Our students must lead the future not be led by it. We must prepare all students to be successful citizens in life and give them the knowledge and ability to succeed in whatever they choose whether it be to go to college, join the workforce, or enter into a military career.

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: Being a fiscal conservative, I have always worked with fellow board members to keep the financial status of the district sound. I feel that while we must provide our students the best education we can, it must be done prudently. I recently voted to reduce our tax rate from \$1.25 to \$1.23. Since I have been on the board, we have been blessed with ability to offer our taxpayers some relief in an effort to offset the out-of-control appraisal districts. I would have no problem allowing homeschool students the use of public funded facilities and equipment.

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

Answer: An attack on society to divide our people and disrupt our country and fundamentally destroy what the intent of the founding fathers were when they set up our government.

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 believe that that natural/biological males should compete with natural/biological males and should not be allowed to compete against natural/biological females. Sex education in public schools should be concerned with the biological process of procreation and its consequences and be taught to a student only if the parents have consented to have their children attending the class.

I with other board members recently voted down adopting the latest health book because of inclusive social engineering. We have written our own health curriculum. I support a parent's right to have their children opt out of sexual health education.

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.