



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

This questionnaire has two parts; a short answer section to go onto the Voter's guide and long answer section that will be posted onto the conservative coalition of Harris County website for public viewing.

Candidate Name	Position that Candidate is Running For
Steve Szymczak	Position 4, Klein ISD

Short Answer Question Form: Please indicate your position with the following abbreviations. (SF-Strongly favor, F-Favor, U-Undecided, O-Oppose, SO-Strongly oppose, NR-No Response, or Yes/No)

Question	Answer
Are the district superintendent's salary and benefits in line with their performance?	Yes
Should the school board trustees have term limits?	Same as State Reps
Should the district propose a bond issue for expanding ISD facilities and/or services at this time?	Today - no
Should any district resources go to parents that home school their children?	Some

Long Answer Question Form. Please give your answer to each of the following questions and please include your rationale with each answer. Please be concise & clear.

- Why have you entered this election?

Answer:
I am the incumbent. I am running because I believe in public education as being the backbone of our nation's future. An educated populace is the primary source of stability for a democracy.
- What are the two main issues facing the district? What is your solution to these problems?

Answer: The school finance model in Texas is antiquated and needs serious attention. Producing graduates of superior academic performance is now and always will be a critical issue.
- What can be done to improve the ISD bond ratings? Does the ISD need more funding due to growth or change in demographics?

Answer: My understanding is that KISD has the highest bond rating available less one notch. To attain the last notch is inconsequential because of the overriding influence of the State's backing. In other words to go from current to next is of little actual value in establishing the best interest rate.

4. What good things are happening in the district and should be enhanced or continued?
Answer: We have significantly broadened the number of students taking AP and dual credit classes. This increases our achievement levels and reduces the total cost of college by the amount of college credits earned while in high school.
5. What is the proper role of TASA and TASB with respect to independent school boards?
Answer: I see these as advocacy groups that perform certain advisory and legislative advocacy roles in order to consolidate and concentrate the priority of districts in the advancement of certain legislative and instructional efforts.
6. What things can your district superintendent do to improve the ISD?
Answer: Continue to move forward on achieving of seeing every student enter with a promise and graduate with a purpose. Focus on real world achievement is critical. We must produce graduates that excel in our economy.
7. Is your superintendent's compensation in line with job performance? Why or Why not?
Answer: When compared to CEO's of publically traded entities he is undercompensated. When compared to his peers in-state and in other states his compensation is sufficient to keep him at our district.
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?
Answer: Spending is now, has been and will ever be a contentious issue. What is the right level? That is the center of the argument. In terms of budget spending I am satisfied that our allocations fit our needs. We continue to struggle with spending that is forced upon the district by the state. These are commonly called unfunded mandates.
9. What is your overall view of the operating budget of the district? Does TRE funding need to be increased or decreased? What items need to be expanded or cut from the operating budget?
Answer: There is no such thing as TRE funding as I understand it. Based on student growth, the flat growth of the state allocation model and the increased needs and demands for what schools supply to the public I think there is a legitimate call for increased spending. The source and formulae for that funding is always the issue.
10. What can be done to save money and/or eliminate waste within the school district? Can any services / positions / etc. are you committed to transfer from the district to the private sector to save ISD funds?
Answer: The private sector argument is a canard. It was tried in industry years ago under the name of outsourcing. Like squeezing a balloon, all one does is shift the spending from one line item to another. Legitimate expenses are legitimate. Wasteful expenses need to be cut. School districts are transparent in their budgeting. Any input from interested parties as to how to better spend without negatively affecting student performance is welcome. I have yet to see any suggestions from inside or outside entities that radically alter the amount of funds necessary to operate. From what I see when comparing cost per student expenditures in other states, Texas schools are rather efficient in their spending.

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:** We need to identify student deficiencies earlier in order to correct them and put the student on the path toward academic excellence. We need to continue challenging our students and raising the bar of expectations for their respective performance. We need to encourage our teachers to increase academic rigor. Today’s society appears to have a somewhat “slacker” attitude about things in general. The truth is that only hard work and perseverance make better students, not better iPhone apps.
12. Is student performance adequate within your district? What can be done to improve overall student performance?
- Answer:** Can you always do better? Are you making enough money? Could you be happier? This question is like these I pose. Of course, we, like all institutions, want to do better. The key is metrics. Do we have a god handle on real performance today? From those real benchmarks do we have a practical strategy as to how to improve? Can we measure the improvement in order to go back and correct in process rather than at the end. This issue and struggle will never end. We just need to do it better than others.
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?
- Answer:** You must be kidding or do not read. Of course teachers need to make more money. Of course, we like to have the funds to do so. As it is we have what we have. Is teacher performance adequate? Yes or no. Do we have benchmarks and performance indicators for teacher performance? Yes. Do we need to improve our performance regarding those metrics? Yes.
14. What type of teacher evaluation system and administrator evaluation system do you support?
- Answer:** Like an evaluation in the private sector there are both tangible and intangible elements. Vertical classroom improvement is critical; more so than horizontal performance. Every classroom and every school has a different set of students. In a small sample size it is dangerous to put too much emphasis on class to class to school to school performance improvement. The system we have, to my understanding, is built around measuring both the tangible and intangible. It has not been a topic of broad discussion for years. I believe it is working well.
15. What role should/will the internet, virtual classrooms and technology play in the development of future curriculum for the district?
- Answer:** What did people say to Gutenberg 500 years ago? Did you know you needed a smart phone before Steve Jobs sold one to you? Technology is a way of life today. There is no pick and choose. Go to any workplace, home, store or Starbucks. There is your answer. As an educational institution we must decide and use the technology in the most efficient manner to assure the student gains academic value and not play value. It is here to stay.

16. Do you support reduction of school district ESL funding? Why or why not?
Answer: In my opinion every person in this country should be able to conduct life using English. Since our inception as a country we have had immigrants whose native language was not English. You read that Houston has people who speak 42 languages. If so, why do we only teach to those who speak Spanish? I'd like to go to English immersion for all students and citizens.
17. What role should the federal government play in local schools? Should the district move toward common core standards to gain more federal monies?
Answer: There should be no role for the federal government in local schools. However, the reality is different. Until we can eradicate all federal influence, I suggest the feds go to a lump sum grant based on the number of students. Will it happen? Probably not in my life time. Our standard should be - what works. In my opinion neither the state nor federal officials who make policy decisions know enough about education to make an educated decision. Politics and education are a reality, but there is little in common in their respective purposes.
18. Would you support replacing the property tax system of financing public schools? What would your ideal replacement revenue source consist of?
Answer: That's a loaded question. I am a taxpayer. I pay taxes on 5 properties. Would I like to pay nothing? Yes. Do I want to see a good school district and rising property values? Yes. In one sense my opinions are oppositional. People vote with their feet. Once a school district changes for the worse the property values start to devalue and the quality of resident drops. I'd rather pay higher taxes than see decline. Remember also that higher property taxes are a signal of increase property wealth. If the alternative is a state income tax, then no. I'd rather keep what we have. If the alternative is a higher sales tax, then there could be some improvement there. Someone has to pay the piper. Yes, I complain, but I also make money when I sell one of my properties. I'm ok where we are.
19. What is your strategy to handle the growing and changing demographics of the student population in the district?
Answer: Educate all students. Teach parents how to be parents (that a tall order across all demographics). Set high standards. Demand rigor. Don't give in to the downward pull of the general society. Expect excellence and don't reward those who do not perform. Not everyone deserves a trophy.
20. What are your opinions regarding bathroom privacy policies?
Answer: If you have a penis, then go to the boys' room. If you have a vagina, then go to the girls' room. It has worked for thousands of years.
21. What steps would you take to ensure public notice, access and input on the trustees' approval of instructional materials to cover 100% of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills?
Answer: I have no idea what is meant by this question. If the state has mandated certain material to be germane to our essential skills and knowledge then it needs to be in the curriculum. As for ensuring notice, access or approval, then call me. My number is 713-647-2469.

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.