

Questions for Georgetown Independent School District Board of Trustees

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Position Seeking: GISD Board of Trustees, Place 2

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1. How do you define the role of a trustee?

The role of Trustee is a unique type of leadership role, in that a Trustee is distinctly not a “director” or “executive” or “administrator”. A Trustee does not dictate to school district personnel how to run our schools, but instead serves as a liaison between the district and our citizens to ensure the district knows the expectations of our citizens, and then holds the district accountable for meeting those expectations. In short, a Trustee has been “entrusted” by Georgetown’s citizens to be a voice for all students, parents, and educators.

2. What makes you passionate about education?

Education is the foundation of a strong society. The Texas Constitution states that “a general diffusion of knowledge [is] essential to the preservation of the liberties and rights of the people,” and history has shown this statement to be true. Since the inception of compulsory education in America, we have made leaps and bounds in the progress of industry, technology, and social equity. I myself am the product of the public education system, and it has served me well in becoming a successful attorney, business owner, and community volunteer.

3. Elected Trustees are part of what is called the Team 8. This refers to the concept of trustees working with the superintendent to implement policy. What makes you uniquely qualified to help the trustees achieve the district direction from a team perspective?

My experiences as an Army officer have honed my ability to operate effectively with other team members. I can identify others’ strengths and work with them to the team’s advantage, while keeping an open mind in considering different viewpoints and opinions. Although it may be overused to be point of cliché, there is ample truth in the saying “T.E.A.M. – Together Everyone Achieves More”.

4. How do you build consensus with fellow trustees to help shape the direction of improving GISD?

Before I can make another person see my point of view, I have to thoroughly understand the rationale behind my own point of view and then be able to clearly and succinctly explain that rationale to others. I am adept at this skill, and I will use it to encourage consensus with my team members.

5. How do you define College, Career and Military readiness?

A strong work ethic and the ability and desire to seek knowledge. It is simply not possible to arm every student with the answer to every question they may encounter when venturing out into life after high school, but we can equip them with the skills to find those answers, and to not give up in the quest for the answers if they encounter obstacles.

6. As Georgetown ISD continues to grow, what do you think is the biggest challenge facing the school district?

The biggest challenge is the uncertainty of our growth. We have data from demographers and other experts that have analyzed our city's growth rate and compared it to similar cities elsewhere, but there is no certainty that Georgetown's growth will remain the same, or increase, or slow down dramatically, and many citizens have widely diverging opinions on the future growth rate. Building new schools is expensive and time consuming, and ensuring we have enough well-prepared educators ready to accept new students as they arrive is a precarious balancing act with the budget. The best way to manage this balance is to be transparent and articulate with the citizens so that they understand why dollars are being spent and why such expenditures are vital to our students' education and our community as a whole.

7. What can GISD do to be the first choice of education for Georgetown residents?

Employ professional, well-prepared, and passionate educators; promote a rigorous and relevant curriculum; and offer exceptional extracurricular activities.

8. What is the role of bonds in relation to funding for school districts?

Okay, I'm going to geek out a little bit here, but I am a tax attorney after all. Bonds are how school districts raise money for capital needs – primarily buildings and infrastructure. The district's operational and maintenance needs (i.e. "day-to-day" expenses) are paid for with money from the general fund. Both bond money and general fund money comes from local property

taxes, but the primary difference is that every cent of every tax dollar collected towards bond money is kept and spent by the district, but not all cents of every tax dollar collected towards the general fund is kept by the district – we are a “property-wealthy” district and some of our general fund money has to be paid over to the State, leaving less money for us to spend. Fortunately, there are some “day-to-day” expenses that can actually be characterized as capital needs, such as transportation and technology, which means they can be paid for with bond money, ensuring every cent of the dollar taxed on our citizens is being spent on our schools and not being used by the State. Carefully thought-out bond propositions maximize the amount of our own tax dollars benefitting our own schools.

9. What is the role of GISD in closing the skills gap and utilizing community resources?

There are generally thought to be two types of “skills gaps” in our high school graduates: “hard skills” consisting of basic reading, writing, and math, and “soft skills” consisting of work ethic, organization, and self-motivation. Both types of skills should be instilled in our students through a rigorous and relevant curriculum and professional, passionate educators, but this could be greatly aided by drawing upon the vast resources available to our community in the form of volunteers, mentors, and partners. We are uniquely fortunate to have a large population of retirees who possess immeasurable knowledge and experience to share with our students. The district already has programs in place to capitalize on these resources, and as awareness of these opportunities spreads, so too will the utility of them.

10. How do you define quality public education outcomes?

Much like the answer I gave to question number 5 above, a high school graduate who has received a quality public education will face life with a strong work ethic and the desire and wherewithal to seek knowledge.