

Attribute Profile of an Effective Central Texas School Board Trustee

The quality and equity of education is a priority concern of educators, parents, business and community leaders and public officials across Central Texas – for our students and for our economic future.

To ensure high quality education, the citizens of Central Texas must identify and elect Board Trustees who are qualified to meet the many difficult challenges facing their districts.

In an effort to identify and define the attributes that a school Board Trustee needs to meet these challenges, more than sixty leaders from 30 community organizations and many businesses came together in 1993, then again in 2007, to develop an Attribute Profile of an Effective School Board Trustee. Based on national best practices, regional experience, and the expertise of these leaders, this Attribute Profile was created.

The image below details the qualities highlighted by a broad range of community partners as the most important attributes of a successful school board trustee. The following pages list a series of suggested questions based on these attributes to use to interview board candidates.



The following organizations participated in the collaborative development of and/or endorsed this profile:

- Austin Area Research Organization (AARO)
- A+ Coalition (no longer active)
- African American Coalition for Quality Education (no longer active)
- Austin Area Urban League
- Austin Council of PTA's
- Austin Independent School District
- Austin Interfaith
- Austin Partners in Education
- Capital City African American Chamber of Commerce
- Capital Metro
- City of Austin Mayor's Office
- Community Action Network
- E³ Alliance
- E+ Coalition (no longer active)
- Executive Women International
- Greater Austin Chamber
- Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Junior League
- Leadership Austin
- League of Women Voters in Austin
- Real Estate Council of Austin (RECA)
- Ready By 21 Coalition
- Southwest Key
- Texas Business & Education Coalition (TBEC)
- TFAME (no longer active)
- The Austin Project
- The University of Texas at Austin
- United Way – Capital Area
- Women's Chamber of Commerce of Texas
- Community, Civic and Business Leaders
- Other regional school district representatives



An Effective School Board Trustee Should:

- Be a visionary, goal-directed, and willing to take risks. Be willing to set and have experience setting policy priorities.
- Have proven and appropriate organizational, fiscal and leadership skills suitable for the size and complexity of the school district.
- Demonstrate commitment to equity and access to quality education and world-class standards of achievement for all students.
- Demonstrate the ability to build consensus and to achieve collaborative outcomes.
- Value diversity and equity as criteria for decision-making.
- Be willing to set an example and establish accountability at all levels for achievement of all students, by understanding how to identify relevant data and use it appropriately.
- Practice good and efficient governance, understanding the role of policy-maker versus administrator.
- Represent the population served by our district and be a strong advocate for public education.
- Understand the need for alignment from early childhood through college and career success and across education providers to create a continuum of success for students.
- Exhibit personal qualities that embody a positive role model for our children and our community.

Use the following questions to evaluate which candidate has the attributes needed to be an effective school board Trustee.

- *Be a visionary, goal-directed, and willing to take risks. Be willing to set and have experience setting policy priorities.*
 - ▶ Explain your understanding of our district’s education vision. How does this vision conform to or differ from your own?
 - ▶ What are the three most critical issues in our district today? What actions are needed to resolve each of these issues?
 - ▶ Describe a position you have taken or a policy you have supported which demonstrated risk-taking and vision in this community.
 - ▶ Give an example of a time when you failed in implementing a “visionary or risky” goal. What did you learn from this experience?
 - ▶ When there are requests for limited resources from different interest groups, how do you prioritize and determine what falls “below the line?”

- *Have proven and appropriate organizational, fiscal and leadership skills suitable for the size and complexity of the school district.*
 - ▶ What experiences in leadership do you have that qualify you to oversee an organization the size of our district? How would you describe your leadership style?
 - ▶ Describe your experience in goal-based strategic planning. What kind of strategic planning do you believe is appropriate for the district?
 - ▶ In your view, how does our district’s budget affect overall policy decisions for the district administration? What strategies would you use to prioritize and create incentives to work within the budget?
 - ▶ Describe an experience that has prepared you to maintain fiscal oversight over a budget the size of our district’s, and to understand and resolve complex budget issues.

- *Demonstrate commitment to equity and access to quality education and world-class standards of achievement for all students.*
 - ▶ How would you define “world class” standards of achievement in terms that will apply to all students?
 - ▶ How does this region’s involvement in global competition for jobs impact your district’s outreach to students? Is it realistic to expect all students to achieve “world-class” standards?
 - ▶ What do you think are the causes of ethnic and income-based achievement gaps, and what do you think our school district should be doing to eliminate these gaps? How

would this understanding impact your view of student curriculae and resource allocation?

- *Demonstrate the ability to build consensus and to achieve collaborative outcomes.*
 - ▶ Describe a challenging situation in which you were able to foster collaboration and achieve consensus.
 - ▶ What have you done to build consensus in the community and within a Board on controversial subjects?
 - ▶ In the past, how have you ensured that the voices of diverse populations in your community are represented in collaborative decision-making?

- *Be willing to set an example and establish accountability at all levels for achievement of all students by understanding how to identify and use relevant data appropriately.*
 - ▶ What standards do you intend to set for the superintendent, and what steps are you prepared to take if those standards are not met?
 - ▶ How would you hold campus leaders/administration leaders accountable for student achievement?
 - ▶ What key variables do you consider critical markers of student achievement based on regional or national research? Why?
 - ▶ In the past, how have you ensured your accountability criteria included sensitivity to issues of diversity and equity?

- *Practice good and efficient governance, understanding the role of policy-maker versus administrator.*
 - ▶ Describe your view of board/superintendent relationships, both for the board as a body and for individual board members.
 - ▶ To what extent do you believe boards should follow public opinion or lead public opinion?
 - ▶ Based on current issues our district faces, give an example of how you would build connections between differing constituent groups on a given education issue. Give an example of how you would create greater efficiencies through resource alignment.
 - ▶ What would your role be if the public came to you with complaints about a principal or administrator?

- *Represent the population served by our district, and be a strong advocate for public education.*
 - ▶ What actions and behaviors demonstrate your strong advocacy for public education?

- ▶ Who are our critical constituent populations in this district? How do you/would you reach out to them?
 - ▶ What are strategies that you would use to respond to negative publicity and to promote policies that are new to our district?
 - ▶ How do you incorporate student values and voices in advocating for and promoting district policy both to the public and to fellow board members?
- *Understand the need for alignment from early childhood through college and career success and across education providers to create a continuum of success for students.*
 - ▶ What do you think are some of the most innovative programs in our region that have a demonstrated record of success? What strategies would you use to advocate for successful, broad-scale implementation of best practices?
 - ▶ What is the district’s responsibility in preparing students for college? Should all students be prepared to demonstrate college readiness? What do “college ready” and “career ready” mean to you? How do you create equity across the diverse student population?
 - ▶ How have you worked with foundations and the business community to align strategies and resources? What strategies would you use to reach out to these sectors for our district?
 - ▶ How do you work with other government entities to develop policies that benefit our district and our student population?
- *Exhibit personal qualities that embody a positive role model for our children and our community.*
 - ▶ What are your volunteer and/or community service experiences? Describe your key accomplishments.
 - ▶ What are the personal qualities you feel are most important for board members in presenting a positive role model for children? For District staff? For community members?

