

PARENTS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF HOUSTON

HCDE and SBOE Voter's Guide

Vote * Tuesday, November 6th * Vote
Early Voting is October 22, 2012 - November 2, 2012



As a service to the community, Parents for Public Schools of Houston (PPSH) has assembled this Voter's Guide to the 2012 Harris County Department of Education Board of Trustees and State Board of Education Elections (whose districts include portions of the Greater Houston area) to be held on Tuesday, November 6, 2012. PPSH is nonpartisan and does not endorse any candidate. We distribute this information to aide voters in casting a more informed vote on November 6th.

Our Guide is a comprehensive text including all data collected from all races. You are encouraged to visit the HCDE and TEA websites for specific information regarding district boundaries. You are also invited to attend a candidates' forum sponsored by PPSH.

**Parents for Public Schools of Houston & LULAC Council 402
Public Education Candidates' Forum
Tuesday, October 9, 2012
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Harris County Department of Education
6300 Irvington Blvd., Houston, TX 77022**

PPSH invited each candidate to answer 10 questions. Responses to Questions 1-5 were limited to one (1) word answers. Questions 6-10 were limited to a 50 word response and are reproduced exactly as submitted by the candidates up to that limit. PPSH did not change or edit responses in any way.

A response of "NR" means a response was not received at time of publication.

2012 HARRIS COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Questions	Position 3		Position 4		Position 6	
	Diane Trautman	Mike Wolfe	Silvia Mintz	Kay Smith	Juliette Barlett-Pack	Erica Lee
Are you an advocate for public education?	Yes	NR	NR	NR	Yes	Yes
Do you have personal experience(s) in public schools in Texas?	Yes	NR	NR	NR	No	Yes
Do you support programs to enhance instruction for all student populations (i.e. gifted and talented; limited English proficiency; special needs; historically under educated, etc.)?	Yes	NR	NR	NR	Yes	Yes
Do you believe the amount spent for children classified as “special needs” is adequate?	No	NR	NR	NR	No	No
Do you support generating funds for public education through taxes on liquor, tobacco, lotteries, casino gambling, slot machines, etc.?	No	NR	NR	NR	Yes	Yes

SHORT ANSWERS

What is your position on the value and importance of public education and college/career readiness?		
3	Diane Trautman	Harris County's economic future depends on an educated workforce. Every child deserves access to a quality education that will lead to college and/or career readiness. We need to fund Pre-K programs and protect HCDE programs like Head Start and After School Programs to make our children successful.
	Mike Wolfe	NR
4	Silvia Mintz	NR
	Kay Smith	NR
6	Juliette Barlett-Pack	I think public education is a valuable tool that should prepare students for higher education, entrepreneurship, or jobs in skilled trades.
	Erica Lee	K-12 public education is meaningless if students do not leave prepared for career-track opportunities or college courses. A quality education offers students choices in life. Public education is the pathway to a strong economy and a well-rounded citizenry. Education should be one of our highest values.

2012 Harris County Department of Education Board of Trustees Voter's Guide

What is your position on current pending court cases that would affect funding for public education in the state?		
3	Diane Trautman	In the latest court case of 83 Texas school districts against the state of Texas, the court will be asked to make the state determine the cost of meeting state educational goals and fund the system accordingly. I believe this will end the legislature's indiscriminate cuts to education.
	Mike Wolfe	NR
4	Silvia Mintz	NR
	Kay Smith	NR
6	Juliette Barlett-Pack	The 1960s case Rodriguez v San Antonio ISD asked the federal court to declare Texas' funding system unconstitutional. In December 2011, a suit was filed by Houston, Dallas, Austin and 60 more school districts on behalf 1.5 million students challenging adequacy and equity funding. This issue has not been solved...
	Erica Lee	Fair funding formulas and distribution are sorely needed in the State of Texas. Too many high needs areas have been underfunded and Texas ranks 45th in per pupil spending. If we get what we pay for then our students will not receive the high quality education they deserve.

Identify your priorities for improving public education and how you plan to address them.		
3	Diane Trautman	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take the politics out of the HCDE Board of Education by putting our children first. 2. Deliver efficient & effective programs by enlisting constant feedback from our schools and communities. 3. Increase community outreach about the HCDE through townhall meetings and open house events.
	Mike Wolfe	NR
4	Silvia Mintz	NR
	Kay Smith	NR
6	Juliette Barlett-Pack	My first priority is to restore character in our children. One way to restore character is to teach students how to discipline themselves academically, emotionally, and intellectually. My next priority is restoring the foundation of education by encouraging policies that ensure students can read, write, perform math and science. The...
	Erica Lee	My priorities are quality resources; quality instruction; and quality opportunities for our students. I will connect high needs schools with the resources they need through innovative sharing; support quality professional development for teachers to address the unique needs of students. Also, I will work so that a zip code does...

2012 Harris County Department of Education Board of Trustees Voter's Guide

Describe the responsibilities of the Harris County Department of Education Board of Trustees as you see them.		
3	Diane Trautman	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing a yearly budget 2. Budgeting and allocating funds 3. Contracting with service providers 4. Setting the HCDE tax rate 5. Electing the superintendent & board officers 6. Monitoring quality control of educational programs 7. Representing HCDE in the community and meeting with constituents
	Mike Wolfe	NR
4	Silvia Mintz	NR
	Kay Smith	NR
6	Juluette Barlett-Pack	The Trustees are responsible for ensuring that policies are implemented to provide the services and programs to the 26 school districts in Harris County and surrounding areas the Department of Education serve.
	Erica Lee	As Trustees, we ensure a responsible budget through our review and approval process. We are the voice of our constituents to reflect their educational needs and interest. We help set the programmatic direction of the Department. We have oversight over all programs and direct hiring authority of the Superintendent.

The state of Texas recently introduced a new public school assessment tool, STAAR. Numerous controversial aspects of the examinations have resulted in increased costs and changes to time tables for implementation. Is the assessment a true measurement of student achievement? If not what modifications in your opinion, are appropriate?		
3	Diane Trautman	As a former teacher, principal and professor of education, I can tell you that our students and our teachers are stressed out and burned out due to "teaching to the test". I believe we need to move away from the overuse of standardized testing and move towards the use of ...
	Mike Wolfe	NR
4	Silvia Mintz	NR
	Kay Smith	NR
6	Juluette Barlett-Pack	I understand that even though the raw-score results were available in the summer for grades 3-8, the passing standards for the test will not be established until the fall of 2012 and made available to districts in January of 2013. Therefore, the assessment may or may not be a true...
	Erica Lee	STAAR measures student achievement on the exam; however, it does not measure their overall educational attainment. The exam was released without providing proper training to teachers and grounding it in the established curriculum. The exam has not been tested for cultural relevancy. The exam should broaden to consider critical thinking...

2012 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Questions	District 4		District 6				District 8	
	Lawrence Allen	Dorothy Olmos	Donna Bahorich	Gene Clark	Traci Jensen	GC Molison	Barbara Cargill	Dexter Smith
Are you an advocate for public education?	Yes	NR	Yes	NR	Yes	NR	Yes	Yes
Do you have personal experience(s) in public schools in Texas?	Yes	NR	Yes	NR	Yes	NR	Yes	Yes
Do you support programs to enhance instruction for all student populations (i.e. gifted and talented; limited English proficiency; special needs; historically under educated, etc.)?	Yes	NR	Yes	NR	Yes	NR	Yes	Yes
Do you believe the amount spent for children classified as “special needs” is adequate?	Yes	NR	NR	NR	No	NR	No	No
Do you support generating funds for public education through taxes on liquor, tobacco, lotteries, casino gambling, slot machines, etc.?	Yes	NR	Yes	NR	Yes	NR	No	Yes

SHORT ANSWERS

What is your position on the value and importance of public education and college/career readiness?		
4	Lawrence Allen	All students who complete their education from a Texas public school should be college ready. The choice to attend college is then up to the student.
	Dorothy Olmos	NR
6	Donna Bahorich	Nine of ten students are educated in public schools. Texas will educate 5 million public school students this year. Our students represent about 10% of the public school students nationwide. Well-prepared students matter not only to the future of Texas but to the future of the nation.
	Gene Clark	NR
	Traci Jensen	Education will determine our success or failure. College and career readiness for all children means critical thinking and problem solving imbedded into the acquisition of content. We need a balance between skill acquisition and knowledge so that students may choose their own path and not have it chosen for them.
	GC Molison	NR
8	Barbara Cargill	It is my goal as an elected member of the SBOE to give direction to educators so that our schoolchildren will have quality academic instruction to prepare them for postsecondary success. This includes preparation for college and/or the work force. The value of a quality public education
	Dexter Smith	A strong and viable public education system is vital to building a strong Texas economy. College readiness is important but it should not dominate instruction. The needs of every child should be met not just college bound. Schools must provide an option for students to learn a skill or trade.

2012 State Board of Education Voter's Guide

What is your position on current pending court cases that would affect funding for public education in the state?		
4	Lawrence Allen	I am hopeful that the state legislature will correct the funding problem in the next session. The pending court cases represent the concern of the citizens of Texas.
	Dorothy Olmos	NR
6	Donna Bahorich	Our state constitution stipulates the state must fund its public schools efficiently and adequately. There is a major problem when neighboring school districts receive inequitable, arbitrary and vastly different funding from the state. School funding must be addressed in a major way by the legislature.
	Gene Clark	NR
	Traci Jensen	I support districts standing up for students and parents. Hands have been tied for far too long. Shrinking budgets, rising student populations, and accountability have made schools struggle unnecessarily. We are not living up to our responsibility as a state in providing adequate resources while demanding the highest standards.
	GC Molison	NR
8	Barbara Cargill	I do not have a position due to the complexity of the cases.
	Dexter Smith	I support school districts and charters in their actions against the legislature. They have failed to meet their responsibility of properly funding public school and failed in their Constitutional duties to the children of Texas. Through legislation they have place more burdens on the schools and denied adequate resources.

Identify your priorities for improving public education and how you plan to address them.		
4	Lawrence Allen	My top priority is to improve the state standards by reducing the number of expectations, giving the teacher a chance to truly teach at deeper levels.
	Dorothy Olmos	NR
6	Donna Bahorich	Increase rigor and clarity in our curriculum standards. Promote increasing access to the 195 courses found in Career and Technical Education. 50% of jobs require education beyond high school but less than 4-year degree. Good careers are attainable with the licenses, certifications, and college credit possible with CTE.
	Gene Clark	NR
	Traci Jensen	We must depoliticize public education. We must reject ideologically based proposals that have failed. We should demand that the board implement new checks and balances when revising curriculum and selecting instructional materials. Board members must recognize their own limited knowledge and rely on experts in content areas needing change.
	GC Molison	NR
8	Barbara Cargill	I will continue to fight for academic rigor in the curriculum standards and for the quality control that our rigorous textbook adoption process ensures. Schoolchildren must be taught about their country, their rich heritage, and about the sacrifices that our forefathers made for them.
	Dexter Smith	The first priority should be the creation of sound educational standards free of political and social issues. This can be accomplished by providing an opportunity for all stakeholders to provide input on their development and approval. The SBOE should rely upon experts with valid credentials and not promoting special agendas.

2012 State Board of Education Voter's Guide

Describe the responsibilities of the State Board of Education as you see them.

4	Lawrence Allen	The role of the SBOE is to provide guidance for school districts and create policy that help the students of Texas prepare for the world they will live in.
	Dorothy Olmos	NR
6	Donna Bahorich	Primarily, the SBOE is the fiduciary over the Permanent School Fund, adopts curriculum standards to be used in instructional materials and assessment, reviews and adopts instructional materials, approves new charter school creation, adopts standards for adult education programs provided by public education. The SBOE provides leadership for Texas public schools.
	Gene Clark	NR
	Traci Jensen	The board oversees the Permanent School Fund but its most visible role is determining what is taught in every school. They help determine school culture and the direction of public education by setting curricula and selecting instructional materials. Other states look to the board as well.
	GC Molison	NR
8	Barbara Cargill	The Board establishes policy and provides leadership for public schools. The Board works closely with the Commissioner of Education and also with the Texas Education Agency. Some of our more important roles include overseeing the investment of the Permanent School Fund, approving the state curriculum standards for our students, adopting...
	Dexter Smith	The official responsibilities of the SBOE is create education standards, approve textbooks and govern the Texas Permanent Fund. The unofficial duty is to serve as an advocate for the parents, students and teachers of their district.

The state of Texas recently introduced a new public school assessment tool, STAAR. Numerous controversial aspects of the examinations have resulted in increased costs and changes to time tables for implementation. Is the assessment a true measurement of student achievement? If not what modifications in your opinion, are appropriate?

4	Lawrence Allen	The STAAR test is not the only thing we use to evaluate achievement. The test results must be used for professional developemnt and not for punishment. The results should not hold students back but help them to succeed.
	Dorothy Olmos	NR
6	Donna Bahorich	The STAAR assessment, as our next generation in accountability measures, is meant to help inform parents, focus instruction and improve the quality of public education. To accurately measure schools, we need a more comprehensive performance index to include STAAR results, achievement gap progress, annual achievement growth & postsecondary readiness evaluation.
	Gene Clark	NR
	Traci Jensen	Testing is here to stay but high stakes testing does not have too. It is not shown in research to be a good measure of achievement. Student achievement can best be measured through tools developed by educators and administration who work together to use multiple forms of assessments.
	GC Molison	NR
8	Barbara Cargill	The cost to administer state tests is very high and must be reduced. The goal of the tests is to ensure that students are being taught our state's excellent curriculum standards. Students will be tested on proper grammar, standard algorithms, American history, and strong science. I do not support the...
	Dexter Smith	The test does not work and it is a waste of tax payer dollars. Professors from UT have provided evidence to demonstrate its failure to measure student learning. The test also reduces the number of instructional days. EOC exams are given before the end of the term.

Programs & Projects



OF HOUSTON

Mission

Parents for Public Schools of Houston promotes and strengthens public schools by organizing, training and engaging parents.

Vision

All students in the Greater Houston Area will receive a high quality education.

Vantage Point

Monthly newsletter to inform parents and supporters of educational resources in the Greater Houston Education Village.

Collaborative Calendar

Notification of programs and projects sponsored by PPSH and other organizations to improve the Greater Houston Education Village.

Parent Weekly

Weekly list of links to top education stories and events.

Town Hall Meetings I, II, III

Joint ventures with HISD Board of Trustees. Harris County Elected Officials explained progress and answered questions regarding the Texas biennial budget.

Legislative 101

Meetings of Greater Houston Area parents to understand Texas education funding and school districts' priorities.

HISD Board of Trustees Candidates' Forum & Voter's Guides

Candidates' responses to education questions.

Guiding Star Award

Education excellence program identifies "previously unsung heroes" for their contributions in the Greater Houston Education Village.

West Houston P-16 Council Member

Panel of education professionals with business and community leaders working to enhance and reform public education.

PPSH Education Summit

Over 300 participants attended seminars covering a range of topics including: Parent/Community Engagement, Achievement Gap, Education Technology, Gifted and Talented, Healthy & Safe Schools and Special Education.