

Houston GPS Questionnaire

Candidate Information

1. Brief bio: Education, HISD children (if any), employment, previous elected office(s).

Education:

Southern Methodist University, graduated 2004

Bachelor of Arts

Major: Political Science, Minors: Economics & Philosophy

South Texas College of Law, graduated 2008

Juris Doctorate

HISD children:

Proud parent of 3 HISD students

Employment:

Member of the State Bar of Texas since 2008

2008-2011 - St. Luke's UMC, Executive Director - Gethsemane Campus in Sharpstown

2011-2020 - Crestwood Equity Partners & Crestwood Midstream Partners

Manager, Land & Right of Way, 2011-2012

Director, Land & Contracts, 2013-2013

Assistant Legal Counsel & Director Land Services, 2013-2014

Vice President, Land & Government Relations, 2015-2017

Vice President, Business Development, 2017-2020

2021-2025 - McDonough Family Holdings, President & CEO

2025 to Present - Webster Vicknair MacLeod, Sr. Counsel, Trial Attorney

Previous elected offices: None

2. Civic involvement: Boards, organizations, officer roles (dates included).

2005-Present - St. Luke's UMC

Children's Sunday School Teacher & Children's Ministry Volunteer, 2015-2025

Church Council Member, 2017-2024

Gethsemane Leadership Team, 2021-2024

Annual Conference Delegate, 2022-Present

Boys Small Group Leader and Student Ministries Volunteer, 2022-Present

Staff Parish Relations Committee, 2025-Present

2016-2025 - Herrod Elementary Parent Volunteer

2022-Present - MPVA Parent Volunteer & Theatre Booster Club Volunteer

3. Why are you running for HISD School Board?

I'm running for the HISD School Board because our students deserve an education as great as our city. I believe that every student deserves access to an excellent and equitable education that prepares them for success in life. Our schools are the heart of the community, and I want to ensure that they remain strong, well-governed, and responsive to the needs of students, families, and educators. As trustee, I will focus on listening to the community, promoting transparency and accountability in decision-making, and supporting policies that put students first. I want to contribute my experience and perspective as an attorney and parent to help our district continue to grow, adapt, and thrive.

4. Top 3 priorities for increasing student success the board can influence (max 200 words).

Student success depends on the Board's ability to set clear direction and hold leadership accountable for results. First, the Board must establish specific, measurable goals for student achievement—defining what students should know and be able to do at each stage. These goals provide the roadmap for improvement and ensure everyone in the district is working toward the same outcomes.

Second, the Board must regularly monitor progress toward those goals. Ongoing evaluation allows trustees to identify what's working, address challenges quickly, and ensure the superintendent and administration remain on track over the lifespan of each goal.

Finally, the Board must ensure financial resources are allocated wisely and equitably to support those priorities. Budgets should reflect the district's commitment to students, educators, and programs that directly advance student learning.

By focusing on clear goals, consistent monitoring, and strategic resource allocation, the Board can create the conditions for every student in HISD to succeed.

Governance & Leadership

5. What is the role of a school board vs. the superintendent?

The school board and superintendent have distinct but complementary responsibilities. The **board's role** is governance: setting the district's vision, establishing clear, measurable goals, adopting policies, and ensuring financial stewardship and accountability. Trustees represent the community and must hold the superintendent accountable for student outcomes and the responsible use of taxpayer dollars.

The **superintendent's role** is management: implementing the policies set by the board, overseeing daily operations, and leading principals, teachers, and staff. While the board defines *what* success should look like, the superintendent is responsible for determining *how* to achieve it.

For HISD to succeed, the board must stay focused on big-picture goals and accountability, while empowering the superintendent to handle operations. That balance—paired with transparency and trust—ensures students remain at the center of every decision.

6. What are your expectations of the Superintendent during budgeting?

I expect the Superintendent to present budget priorities clearly to both the board and the public, ensuring that the process is transparent and accessible. The budgeting process should begin budget workshops early in the calendar year—around January/early February—so there's enough time to review projections, set priorities, and gather community input. Starting early ensures that by the time the budget is adopted, trustees, parents, and stakeholders have enough time to review proposals, ask questions, and provide feedback. Such a process ensures thoughtful planning and alignment with the district's goals and students' needs.

If cuts are proposed at the campus level, the administration must provide a full accounting of those changes so the board can understand the direct impact on students. We also need realistic enrollment forecasting to accurately project both funding gains or losses and recapture changes. HISD must also be pushed to resume publishing a comprehensive Budget Book each year, so parents and community members can easily track campus budgets and see how funding changes from year to year.

In short, my expectation is openness, clarity, and accountability because every budget decision must keep students at the center.

7. How would you handle disagreements with board members or the Superintendent?

Much of my professional life has been spent building consensus among people with very different priorities and perspectives. I've learned that even in disagreement, we often share more common ground than we realize. My approach is to listen carefully, focus on areas of agreement, and work from there toward practical solutions.

Ultimately, both the board and the superintendent share the same goal: ensuring HISD students achieve at the highest level. By keeping that goal front and center, disagreements can become opportunities for collaboration rather than obstacles—and that's the spirit I would bring to the board.

8. How will you stay informed on national education trends and best practices?

Staying informed on education trends and best practices is essential for making thoughtful decisions as a trustee. I will rely on trusted sources like the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), national school board associations, and Rice University's Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC), which provides high-quality, locally relevant research on student outcomes.

Equally important, I will learn directly from educators, parents, and students here in Houston. I will also look to the best practices and experiences of other school districts here, regionally, statewide, and nationally. Best practices don't just come from think tanks—they also come from classrooms. By combining insights from TASB, HERC, and national research with feedback from local stakeholders, I can assess which innovations make sense for HISD.

Finally, I will collaborate with other trustees, policymakers, and community leaders to share knowledge and learn from their experiences. My goal is to promote the best ideas, whether from research or from our own classrooms, into HISD.

9. What should elected trustees do during the state intervention and transition back to local Control?

Every Trustee should be focused on getting their seat back. To do this, Trustees must demonstrate they are principally focused on doing what it takes to provide our students with a quality education. They must advocate for their beneficiaries—ALL HISD students—while engaging deeply with and listening closely to HISD families, educators, the Board of Managers, and the Superintendent to ensure that practical, sustainable solutions are adopted—solutions a fully elected board can build on.

Transparency and access to data will be critical in this process. Trustees should always push for open communication about decisions, clear explanations of policies, and accessible data on how those decisions are affecting students. Houstonians deserve to know how resources are being used, how success is being measured, and where improvements are needed.

Equally important is the role of trust in this process. We must acknowledge that our communities have lost faith in HISD. While this problem has accelerated during the state's intervention, this is a problem that goes back years. We have an opportunity now to head in a new direction. Trustees must work to build trust with the community, the Board of Managers, the Superintendent, and—most importantly—with each other. For too long, outside influences contrary to student success have led HISD to make decisions that are disconnected from what parents, teachers, and students actually need. By advocating for openness, accountability, and genuine community engagement, I will help lay the foundation for a smooth transition back to locally led governance and restore confidence in HISD's leadership. We must be ready to govern responsibly together. Our students and our city depend on it.

Community Engagement

10. How will you stay connected to issues and goals in HISD and your district?

I take student outcome goals very seriously. As trustee, I will carefully study presentations at board meetings, attend HISD events, and ask direct questions of the administration whenever concerns remain unaddressed. I will also pay close attention to public comments, looking for patterns in what families and educators are experiencing, and follow up to ensure their concerns are heard.

Beyond board meetings, I will meet regularly with principals, teachers, parents, and students to stay connected to the realities in our schools. I will hold community meetings in my district so

constituents can share their perspectives directly. By combining careful oversight with ongoing dialogue, I will make sure the community's voice informs every decision I make as trustee.

11. What's your approach to engaging the community during your term?

If elected, I will take seriously the responsibility of representing HISD and our community. That starts with consistently showing up—at board meetings, workshops, and community forums—and being visible and accessible to families, educators, and students across the district.

I will make it a priority to listen to principals about the needs of their campuses, to teachers about what's happening in classrooms, to families about their concerns and hopes, and to students about their experiences. I will also meet regularly with local leaders, community organizations, and the business community to stay connected to the broader challenges and opportunities facing HISD.

By showing up, listening carefully, and engaging openly, I will ensure that the voices of our community are heard and reflected in the decisions I make as a trustee.

12. How would you navigate controversial decisions (e.g., school closures)?

I will lead with both facts and empathy. Controversial decisions, like school closures, must be approached with transparency, data, and community input. I would carefully review all relevant information, listen to parents, educators, and stakeholders, and weigh the impact on students and neighborhoods. My goal would be to make decisions that are fair, evidence-based, and in the best interest of students and the district while communicating openly throughout the process. Even when decisions are difficult, maintaining trust, professionalism, and focus on student outcomes is essential.

Student Success

13. Which 3 student outcomes should HISD prioritize and why?

First, 3rd-grade literacy must be a top priority. Research shows that students who are not reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade are far more likely to struggle academically in later years. Ensuring literacy at this critical stage - and this begins early with high-quality PreK - lays the foundation for lifelong learning.

Second, Algebra I proficiency by 9th grade is key. Algebra is the gateway to higher-level math and science, and passing it is strongly linked to high school graduation and college readiness. Focusing on Algebra I ensures more students are prepared for advanced coursework and future opportunities.

Third, HISD must prioritize outcomes for students receiving special education services. That means not only meeting compliance requirements, but ensuring meaningful academic progress and equitable access to resources. Every child—regardless of ability—deserves the chance to

thrive, and HISD must be held accountable for closing gaps in achievement for students with learning differences.

By focusing on early literacy, Algebra I, and special education achievement, HISD can address foundational skills, prepare students for the future, and fulfill its obligation to serve *all* students equitably.

14. How will you address disparities in outcomes for Black, Latino, and high-need students?

Addressing disparities begins with honest data. I would ensure that student outcomes are always reported in a disaggregated way, so trustees, families, and the community can clearly see how Black, Latino, and high-need students are performing. Without that transparency, it is too easy for achievement gaps to remain hidden, making it difficult to close the gaps between higher and lower achieving groups.

Beyond monitoring, the board should set goals that explicitly require progress for all student groups. One way to do this is by attaching constraints or guardrails to those goals that prevent gaps from persisting or widening. This ensures that equity isn't an afterthought—it's built into how we measure success.

Finally, the board must hold the superintendent accountable for developing and implementing targeted supports that meet the needs of historically underserved students. Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed, and HISD should be judged not only by its overall outcomes but also by how well it serves its most vulnerable learners.

15. How can the board sustain gains in historically underperforming schools?

Sustaining progress in historically underperforming schools requires consistent accountability and transparency. The board must hold principals and district leadership responsible for maintaining improvement, with clear expectations tied to student outcomes.

Equally important, data must always be disaggregated so that struggling campuses and student groups cannot be hidden by overall averages. Regular monitoring of that data will allow trustees to spot early warning signs and ensure targeted support is provided before progress slips.

By combining strong accountability with transparent, campus-level reporting, the board can help ensure that gains are not only achieved but sustained over time—so all students, regardless of where they attend school, continue to have access to high-quality education.

Policy & Values

Please select your stance (Yes / Maybe / No) for each of the following:

- Support weighted funding based on campus needs, including extra funding for persistently

failing schools. Yes

- Support incentives to place top teachers/principals in highest-need schools. Yes
- Support bold school improvement decisions (e.g., restaffing, new calendars, reallocating funds). Maybe, bold does not necessarily mean effective. We should be focused on data-driven improvement decisions.
- As a trustee, should decisions prioritize your district, or the entire HISD student body? The entire student body
- Should bold action be taken for any school rated D/F for multiple years? Maybe. If a school has been persistently failing, it is clear that something needs to change. However, change for the sake of change is also not the answer. We need to find examples of success and adapt them to our students.

Statements of Belief

Please rank your agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree) on the following:

- Budget transparency is essential. 4
- Student data is key for goal setting and monitoring. 4
- All board decisions should prioritize student outcomes. 4
- Independent financial reviews should be regular. 4
- The district should explore vetted partnerships to improve school performance. 3
- Teachers/principals should be evaluated and compensated based on performance and student growth. 3
- Resources should address achievement gaps and expand access to quality pre-K. 4
- School boards should focus more on student outcomes than day-to-day operations. 4

Optional: In 250 words or fewer, elaborate on any of your answers above on a separate sheet of paper. Do we want to do this? I feel like we have already said all the things.

I am running for school board trustee because I care deeply about the success of every student and the strength of our schools. As a parent of three children in the district, I experience firsthand both the opportunities and challenges our schools face. This perspective drives my commitment to putting students first, listening to families and educators, and supporting thoughtful, transparent decision-making.

I believe a school board's role is governance, not day-to-day management. Trustees set the district's vision, adopt policies, and ensure responsible financial stewardship, while working closely with the superintendent to implement strategic goals. I value collaboration and professionalism; disagreements with board members or the superintendent are best navigated through listening, respectful dialogue, and a focus on what is in the best interest of students.

Staying informed on national education trends and local needs is also critical. I plan to engage with professional associations, review research and data, and learn from other districts, while remaining deeply connected to our community through conversations with parents, educators, and students. This ensures that board decisions reflect both proven best practices and the unique priorities of our district.

Finally, I believe in transparency, inclusivity, and long-term planning. From budgeting and financial oversight to navigating complex challenges like state intervention or controversial decisions, my goal is to make thoughtful, evidence-based choices that strengthen our schools, build trust, and help all students thrive.