



Spring Branch AFT
American Federation of Teachers

Candidate **FYI**

SBSID School Board Candidate Response

Leaders and activists of our federation, the Spring Branch American Federation of Teachers (AFT), understand how important local school board races are. The people who serve as school board members are charged with the responsibility of maintaining policies and regulations for the district while making overall operating decisions. These decisions include hiring/firing staff, setting the goals for our district, and adopting budgets and financial plans.

On May 14, voters in Spring Branch ISD will have an opportunity to elect candidates to serve a new term. The purpose of our *Candidate FYI* is to help introduce you to the candidates who are seeking to fill one of the two open board positions.

Spring Branch AFT has chosen to stay neutral in this election and has not endorsed any candidate. In addition, Spring Branch AFT has made no financial contribution to either candidate. Candidates were provided a copy of our candidate questionnaire and were asked to return it to us by April 22.

Please take a few minutes to examine the responses to some important issues affecting our district. We hope this guide will help you make a decision or at least learn more about the people who will be representing SBISD in the future.

For questions about this publication, please contact Spring Branch AFT at 713/299-2300. This publication has been provided to current Spring Branch AFT members only.

Special thanks to our Committee on Political Education (COPE):

Craig Adams
Northbrook High School

Karen Donathen
Rummel Creek & Woodview Elementary

Laura Huddleston
Westwood Elementary

Linda Sawyer
Buffalo Creek Elementary

Board of Trustee Position 1

Two candidates have filed to run for the position of school board for Position 1.

Wayne F. Schaper Sr. *(Incumbent)*

List in order, what you see as the major issues facing the Spring Branch Independent School District, now and in the future.

Finance and keeping teachers.

As a school board member, what would be your priorities?

Finance and keeping teachers.

What improvements do you think should or can be made in salaries and fringe benefits for all school personnel?

Additional funds for health program.

Will you support and adhere to the "Safe School Act" as provided for in Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code?

Yes.

What are your views on class size? Do you support legislative efforts to eliminate provisions which place a class-size cap of 22 students for every 1 teacher in grades K-4? What measures would you support to reduce class-size throughout the district?

Supports a district average of 22 to 1.

Given current proposals to cut the district's budget and reduce staff positions, will you seek to rehire laid off employees or search to hire new employees from outside the district, state, and country when local revenues rebound?

Rehire.

What is your position on "contracting out" or "privatization" in regards to jobs held and performed by school district employees?

We have tried in several departments and it did not work.

What is your position regarding vouchers to be used by students to attend private schools?

A big mistake.

For the 2011-12 school year, and given budget conditions being proposed by the state legislature, what are your

priorities in terms of the top programs to fund, where would you make specific cuts to balance the budget, and what category of employees would you propose to cut first and why?

Classrooms (top to fund).
Across all departments.

The 2012-13 school year may be the toughest year in terms of budget cutbacks due to budget proposals being discussed in Austin. How do you plan to address another year of budget cuts, and how do you propose to balance the budget?

Stay in contact with our representatives in Austin. We need to see what they will do in Austin.

Do you believe it is in the best interest of the district to accelerate the sale of our remaining bonds while bond rates are low? Can you also explain how the SBISD bond process works and how this affects the overall budget of the district?

While bond rates are low, we need to improve our program to improve schools for students and teachers. Bond money (or tax) cannot be used for the operations of the district.

What do you consider to be the strengths of our SBISD schools? What do you consider to be our weaknesses?

The strength of our district is the teachers, administration, students and support of our parents.

What do you feel is the appropriate role of teachers' professional organizations? How do you plan to engage local professional organizations and involve them in the overall education process of SBISD?

Open communication with the administration. I have been a member of SBEC and ATPE as a teacher and administrator. The line of communication has always been open.

Would you support a policy which would give school employees the right to vote in an election to select an organization to represent all employees in negotiations with the administration over salaries and working conditions?

I believe all employees should have the right to choose (AFT, SBEA, and ATPE).

From what groups and individuals do you hope/expect to receive support?

Everyone who cares about SBISD.

As national reform movements continue to push for more standardize testing for our students, do you believe the testing emphasis is helpful or harmful to the overall education of our students? Do you support measuring a teacher's success solely on the outcome of student test scores and using these scores as a dominant variable for hiring/promotion/firing decisions?

While teaching, I would test to find what my students needed help with and re-teach those who needed help. I do not believe in grading teachers on student test scores!

If elected to serve as a school board member, what will be your number one priority to achieve during your term in office?

Find funds to help teachers in the classroom.

What characteristics make you qualified to serve as a local school board member? Please describe additional information about yourself and your campaign that you feel is important for us to know.

Teacher, Principal, and Administrator.

Michael Hawkins *(Candidate)*

Mr. Hawkins declined to return our candidate questionnaire by the requested April 22 deadline.

Board of Trustee Position 2

Only one candidate has filed to run for the position of school board for Position 2.

Mary Grace Landrum *(Incumbent)*

Ms. Landrum provided a written letter as her response to our candidate questionnaire. The following is her statement.

Thank you for the opportunity to acquaint Spring Branch American Federation of Teachers with my views and my reasons for deciding to seek another term as a Trustee for the Spring Branch Independent School District.

Because I am unopposed on the ballot, and I know that you and your staff are working diligently as am I to influence our legislators in Austin, I prefer to respond to your questionnaire with this letter and offer to meet to discuss my position on education issues at your convenience. I do so out of respect for your time and in the hope that our exchange can be a meaningful one.

The future of our society is forged in our classrooms today. As a life-long educator, I am committed to providing the highest quality education for each Spring Branch ISD student by ensuring the best quality curriculum and by providing

support for teachers who implement the curriculum. I am seeking the privilege of serving another three years as trustee so that I can continue my work to:

- Promote programs that attract and retain the best teachers and staff.
- Support high standards and a challenging curriculum for all SBISD students.
- Monitor implementation of the District Five-Year Educational Plan.
- Insist on parent, teacher, student and community contributions to key school decisions.
- Communicate to legislators the pressing need for adequate school funding.

While I can be proud of the work I've done on the bullets above over the past two years, there is still much to be done on the last bullet. Our state funding mechanism for education has created unprecedented challenges for local trustees in meeting the needs of our students and teachers. Our district deserves an experienced advocate who understands the issues, will actively advocate to fix the funding mechanism and can make decisions that will enable the district to maintain quality programs for students and teachers once the state passes a budget.

As teachers, you know that not all children reach success by the same route. Sadly, our local district must operate by rules formulated in Austin and in Washington DC. Our dedicated professionals cannot effectively serve our children under a "one size fits all" approach. Our district, our principals and our teachers must be entrusted with enough flexibility to accommodate the individual needs of each student they are entrusted to teach.

I look forward to working with you as we advocate for the children of Texas and for those who shape the leaders of tomorrow, our teachers. I place a high priority on teacher input and commit to continue to be available to you and all educators in the district.

Trustee Elections

The Board of Trustees consists of seven members elected to serve, without compensation, for overlapping terms of three years each. Elections are conducted annually in May. While candidates run for specific places, they do not represent specific geographical areas; rather, each represents Spring Branch ISD at large.

Board of Trustees Election is scheduled May 14: Early voting begins May 2 and ends May 10

You can vote early or vote on Election Day on May 14, but do remember to cast your ballot in the upcoming SBISD Board of Trustees Election.

Trustee Position 1 is currently held by incumbent Wayne F. Schaper, Sr. Trustee Position 2 is currently held by Mary Grace Landrum, who is also an incumbent.

Challenging Schaper, a retired SBISD administrator, is Michael D. Hawkins, a U.S. Dept. of State contractor. Landrum, a management consultant, is running unopposed.

Early voting will be conducted 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. weekdays from Monday, May 2, through Tuesday, May 10, in the east lobby of the SBISD Administration Building, located at 955 Campbell Road.

In addition, voting by personal appearance will also be conducted in the Administration Building east lobby from 8 a.m. up until noon on Saturday, May 7.

On Election Day, May 14, voters can cast ballots at the neighborhood elementary school in their attendance zone. Due to new school construction, Meadow Wood Elementary area residents will vote for Trustees this year at nearby Spring Forest Middle School, 14240 Memorial. Area residents of Shadow Oaks Elementary, also under construction, will vote at the West Transition Campus Site, 2100 Shadowdale. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. on Election Day.

For help on Election Day or for more voting location information, please call 713-251-2217 or email elva.dickens@springbranchisd.com.

The seven members of the SBISD Board of Trustees are selected at-large to serve three-year, overlapping terms. Trustees serve our public school district without pay.

