

**Questionnaire – PISD Board Candidates  
Pflugerville Council of Neighborhood Associations**

Question 1	Mario Acosta – Place 3	Tony Hanson – Place 3	Carol Fletcher – Place 5	Lance Sandlin – Place 5	Vernagene Mott – Place 4
<p>What are the top three issues facing the school board and which one should be the number-one priority?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of a superintendent</li> <li>• Developing a bond proposal issue</li> <li>• Transitioning into the new state accountability by addressing the needs of all our students</li> <li>• Maintaining a balanced budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The hiring of a new superintendent.</li> <li>• Staying in front of the expected growth in student population and changes in student demographics – socio economic and cultures.</li> <li>• Locating and building facilities for the expected growth in student population. Facilities built today need to be viable tomorrow.</li> </ul> <p>The number one priority of the three would be the hiring of a permanent superintendent. The superintendent plays a very critical role in the administration of the district. This individual is the Chief Executive Officer and is responsible for implementing and monitoring plans, procedures, programs, and systems to achieve appropriate, clearly defined and desired results in the major areas of the district.</p>	<p>The Board's top immediate priority is to hire the next superintendent. This is THE MOST IMPORTANT job of a school board. I've been through the superintendent hiring process before and have learned from both our success and missteps so I think I have a lot of experience to offer in this area and will be ready to contribute on Day 1. Academically, we must balance the need to provide rigorous courses that will prepare our students for college and careers with the need to make those same courses relevant and engaging, particularly in high pay and high demand areas like science, technology, engineering and math. I have personally championed many of the innovative courses in PISD that help us engage students such as Robotics, Geometry in Construction and Video Game Design. Financially, even if we receive additional funding from the Legislature this year, we will still be working with less per student than most surrounding districts and less than prior to the recession. It will take a board with a great deal of knowledge and experience to continue to exercise the financial discipline necessary to maximize efficiencies and drive as many resources into the classroom as possible.</p>	<p>The top three issues facing the school board begin with identifying and hiring our next school superintendent. As I relate this to my experience, we are looking for our next CEO; one that can come in and quickly assess the needs within our district and set the course for the next 5-10 year period. Another highly important topic that we must continue to pursue is an increase in per student funding for PISD. By working with state legislators, a Board Trustee can support better and fairer funding formulas for our district. Neighboring districts have significantly higher revenues toward student funding making it difficult to offer comparable educational opportunities. Third priority would be expansion and continued development of our Career and Technical Education programs. Priority one must focus on identifying and hiring our next school superintendent.</p>	<p>#1. Hire a superintendent-this is a charge to the board by law. *determine the process which explores possibilities of consideration of internal/external candidates. * If external candidates, then RFP for a search firm, rubrics for selection of a firm, interview the top 3 firms and decide if the board does the search itself or engages a firm *Begin talking as a Team of 7 what attributes the leader should possess to match the needs, mission and vision of PISD *Take the time to vet potential candidates to ensure the glove will fit with the staff, the students, and the community. An interim supt. with PISD experience who knows the systems in place is already working with the cabinet and administrators. The hope is the transition will be seamless and the strong leaders on each campus will provide great support. #2. Resources-Funding uncertainty due to the pending lawsuit and also state allocations, but optimistic \$ will be greater than the last session. Complete confidence that CFO Adix will submit a balanced budget with input from all stakeholders that is transparent. #3. Bond –needs and timeline still being accessed.</p>

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Question 2	Mario Acosta – Place 3	Tony Hanson – Place 3	Carol Fletcher – Place 5	Lance Sandlin – Place 5	Vernagene Mott – Place 4
<p>What attributes will be critical in your selection of a superintendent candidate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A willingness to work within the systems and processes established in PISD, yet having the knowledge and skills to identify and implement new ideas that will expedite current systems that may need improvement.</li> <li>• The ability to lead us through the process of preparing, presenting and passing our next bond issue.</li> <li>• The willingness to make a long term commitment to our students, staff and community stakeholder</li> </ul>	<p>The attributes I believe to be critical are the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lead a growing and diverse district;</li> <li>• implement plans to achieve established goals;</li> <li>• manage and monitor performance and financial systems to ensure desired results are achieved/maintained;</li> <li>• communicate his/her vision not only internally, but externally to stakeholders in the community;</li> <li>• exemplify how he/she will care for each student in the district;</li> <li>• ability to identify the strength and weaknesses of the current leadership to ensure the right people are in the right place.</li> </ul>	<p>Our next superintendent should be fully committed to the <b>collaborative</b> and <b>inclusive culture</b> we are developing here in PISD. One of the reasons we are so successful in PISD is the collaborative decision making process we use that accesses the wisdom of all staff members and breeds a culture of commitment, rather than compliance. He or she must have demonstrated <b>prior student success</b> in a large, diverse, fast growth district like PISD. I would also place a priority on applicants who have shown a <b>long-term commitment</b> to the districts in which they work. We want someone who will lay down roots in Pflugerville, not someone who sees Pflugerville as a stepping-stone to bigger and better. In addition, I believe that the best candidates will have recent high-level leadership experience here in <b>Texas</b>, which shows they understand our unique Texas testing and accountability system. A superintendent who is bilingual would be wonderful as this might help us to engage more students and families in our diverse district. Finally, while we have been a successful district, we know that staying that way requires a culture of continuous improvement. Our new superintendent must embrace that culture to continue moving forward.</p>	<p>There are many important qualifications to consider. I believe it is vital we consider a candidate with experience in leading a district in both size and scope similar to PISD. The candidate would also need experience working with the same type of growth characteristics as those in Pflugerville. Experience says “I’ve done this before and I know how to navigate the pitfalls” with both internal and external stakeholders. Equally important, we need a superintendent that has the ability to set the course for both financial and human resource issues with the district. And finally, a superintendent that has demonstrated the ability to communicate a compelling vision for the district. Direct and open communication is vital to any growing and changing organization. I realize that finding this individual may pose a significant challenge, but we must strive for the best that we can obtain. Our students, teachers, and citizen’s deserve no less.</p>	<p>A healthy, energetic, amiable and passionate leader with educational experience on a large diverse Texas high school campus. This person is the face of the district and indeed sets the tone/climate for the largest employer in the city. It is vital to embrace the traditions and expectations this community have valued for over a century. Graduates have experienced educational excellence in the classroom at all levels as well as in extracurricular programs. The leader needs the knowledge, skills and experience to relate to and understand the uniqueness of operating 30 campuses in a majority minority district which is over 50% economically disadvantaged, finding creative, effective and efficient avenues to help each campus staff engage the students and parents to move each child forward. The leader has the pleasure of hiring the best staff in this vibrant learning community while also having the challenge to professionally move non-performing personnel out of the system; thus, able to make and execute tough decisions in a timely manner. When this outstanding person is identified, the leader will be warmly welcomed and be a part of the PISD Pfamily who already is making education a priority for each student on each campus in every classroom.</p>

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Question 3	Mario Acosta – Place 3	Tony Hanson – Place 3	Carol Fletcher – Place 5	Lance Sandlin – Place 5	Vernagene Mott – Place 4
<p>What is your position on the need for a bond package in the next fiscal year and what items do you believe are most critical? What other avenues do you think should be considered as alternatives to a bond?</p>	<p>We must address the needs of a growing student population and how to meet their academic needs. We cannot allow our schools to become overcrowded, so building space must be a critical consideration. We must also consider the location of where schools would be most beneficial in accordance to student growth. The infrastructure that would be needed at selected location must be a consideration. Maintaining and implementing the Technology Plan What other avenues do you think should be considered as alternatives to a bond? We currently have a committee that is reviewing alternatives such as: alternative scheduling, on-line courses and summer school.</p>	<p>The Comptroller of Public Accounts previously mentioned that Public School districts have the largest outstanding share of local government debt in Texas. PISD's Financial Facts for 2012-13 indicates that \$329 million is currently owed on bonds. While it is never favorable to raise taxes, there may come a time when the need exceeds the reservation.  If and when that time comes, the district will have to be able to balance the concerns of PISD residents with the district needs. The district will need to be able to support and validate the efficient and effective use of bond money previously approved. Also, how current operations are being continuously monitored for improvement and actions are taken to realize those opportunities.  The items considered most critical at this point would be space, safety, technology, and energy management. If the residents of PISD determine a bond package not feasible at this time, alternatives to consider would include flexible schedules, virtual class rooms, dual-use facility arrangements and possible re-zoning.</p>	<p>We are opening a new middle school this fall and have modified school boundaries at almost every middle school to balance populations and maximize facility usage at that level for the next several years. We are opening our 20<sup>th</sup> elementary school in 2014, our last school covered by the 2007 bond. As the economy improves, Hendrickson HS will be exceeding capacity within 2-3 years. We will also have several elementary schools, like Murchison and Rowe Lane, which will be over capacity soon. While we may be able to stretch our resources for a few years by adding portables, portables don't add space to cafeterias, hallways, restrooms, etc. and are a short-term solution to a long-term problem. PISD cannot not raise the tax rate to pay for a bond as we are capped by state law at the current rate, so the cost must be covered by long-term growth in property values. PISD taxpayers understand the direct relationship between school quality and community quality and know we have been excellent stewards of their taxpayer dollars, so I am confident that they will continue to make the investments necessary to keep our district and community a destination location for Central Texas families.</p>	<p>PISD growth will require the need to develop and move forward with a bond package initiative within the next fiscal year. One of our three district high schools is nearing capacity in the short term. Additional school facilities as well as infrastructure and technology requirements must be addressed. I am a big proponent of the committee process of involving administrators, teachers, and parents within the community to collectively address all needs within the district as we move forward with a bond initiative. While creative financing options have been employed in surrounding districts, it seems they have actually left those other districts in worse shape. Any non-traditional option would need to have a track record of success before I would be willing to risk our district's bond rating. We have to take a hard look at the projects being considered and provide a digestible analysis to the citizens of our community, balancing a payment schedule and district facility needs while maintaining a favorable tax rate.</p>	<p>#1. Facilities: The demographers presently provide updates quarterly with info on new home starts, foreclosures, apt. with student projections out to 2023. All campuses of previous bonds are accounted for with 20 elementary, 6 middle, 3 full HS. HHS will be exceeding capacity by 2016. It takes 2 yrs to build a HS campus. HS#4 Options:*build another traditional campus (consideration of site/location/ infrastructure) *realign school boundaries(not popular with homeowners/students) *construct additional classrooms at HHS *consideration for alternative and flexible student/teacher schedules such as early or late start times and even summer schedules which would use already existing facilities longer periods of time during the day and the year. *I am against capital appreciation (toxic) bonds and elaborate design. Support practical, moderate, sustainable, functional, efficient and effective facilities affordable to the taxpayers. #2.Any safety/security upgrades following evaluation of each campus #3. Essential technology which is proven to be effective, efficient, user friendly with results.</p>

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Question 4	Mario Acosta – Place 3	Tony Hanson – Place 3	Carol Fletcher – Place 5	Lance Sandlin – Place 5	Vernagene Mott – Place 4
<p>Currently the board does not video the public board meetings for live video streaming or posting recordings for on-demand viewing like other school districts and cities. What is your position on investing funds to record and stream video of Board meetings to increase transparency and accountability to the public?</p>	<p>I'm all for transparency and accountability to the public. If video streaming is an avenue that would be utilized by stakeholders on a consistent basis and it would justify the funds, I would be for it. I would like to see an analysis on what the return has been for the districts that currently use the video streaming.</p>	<p>Government that is of the people, by the people, and for the people should be transparent. I'm not sure why this has not been done already. The City of Pflugerville video tapes their meetings. The district should consider partnering with them or another local government to realize possible savings to complete this project. Another option is to record the meeting and provide a copy for on demand viewing.</p>	<p>The PISD school board is known around the state for its <b>professionalism</b>, focus on <b>putting kids first</b> and <b>fiscal discipline</b>. When I was board president in 2010, the board was <b>honored as one of the top 5 school boards</b> in the state. I hear regularly from <b>visitors</b> to board meetings that have been in other school districts about how <b>refreshing</b> it is to see a board operate so clearly <b>without personal agendas</b> that <b>sidetrack</b> the operations of many other districts. We have discussed the possibility of videotaping board meetings a couple of times over the years as we are proud of this professionalism and see the benefits of giving more residents the opportunity to see how decisions are made. Essentially however, this boils down to money and how we prioritize our limited funds. Our estimate was that taping all board meetings for on-demand or streaming would require an investment of about \$50,000 annually, or about the cost of a classroom teacher. As such, video-taping board meetings has fallen into the "nice-to-have" but not our highest priority category and trading a teaching position for video-taping isn't a trade-off I am willing to make unless the cost is significantly reduced.</p>	<p>This as an opportunity to improve the communication to all stakeholders within the district. Currently, our city council meetings are televised and I know of smaller neighboring districts have recently made the decision to televise their school board meetings. Allowing timely access to information to parents who could not attend due to work schedules or other commitments would increase awareness and knowledge throughout the community to issues impacting the district. Excellent communication is at the core of nearly all successful organizations. I support this initiative and believe there are options through technology (webcasts, providing indexed content thru the PISD website) would increase transparency and accountability to the public.</p>	<p>Consistently and traditionally for decades, the 2 meetings a month are workshop/first Thursday and regular meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday (citizen participation permitted) with posted agendas (by law). The board should consider requesting the existing process be evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness with recommendations for diligent and timely postings on the web/listserv and other suitable sites to reach stakeholders. Having experienced the significant underfunding last session; the drastic cuts PISD proposed and those actually initiated, I was committed to keeping essential \$ closest to the student and the classroom. One teacher makes a difference to 22 elementary or 150 HS students. PISD has been recognized for getting more done with less\$. Possible consideration of an economical proposal which perhaps is a shared partnership with another entity or even a student opportunity in a career class can be presented. In today's world of instant messaging and instant news, this is likely an expectation; however, like many other programs there is a fiscal impact so the student and classroom take priority.</p>

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<b>Question 5</b>	<b>Mario Acosta – Place 3</b>	<b>Tony Hanson – Place 3</b>	<b>Carol Fletcher – Place 5</b>	<b>Lance Sandlin – Place 5</b>	<b>Vernagene Mott – Place 4</b>
<p>The Texas legislature is considering changes to testing standards and their impact for students. What is your position regarding standardized testing? What do you believe are appropriate testing approaches?</p>	<p>I see a train wreck coming at the high school level with 15 end of course (EOC) state assessments currently mandated. What do you believe are appropriate testing approaches? I would favor one for mathematics, science and social studies and 2 for English/Language Arts (one for reading and one for writing).</p>	<p>It is my belief that testing is a necessity, but we all must keep in mind that we should meet each student where they are in their education journey. Therefore, the testing should not take a cookie cutter approach. It's my understanding the testing will drop from 15 assessments to 5. The discussion now is to ensure that the changes are not to the detriment of a student's future. The legislature may have to tweak it for students desiring to pursue a higher education.</p>	<p>First, we must stop <b>waterboarding</b> our children with endless high stakes tests. As a school board member and university researcher, I fully embrace the need for <b>consistency and accountability</b> but clearly the combination of far <b>too many tests</b>, confusing <b>cumulative</b> test score requirements, constant <b>re-testing</b>, and an overly <b>rigid graduation</b> plan is <b>counterproductive</b> to our goal of graduating students who are prepared for a <b>world beyond HS</b> where <b>skills that can't be measured on multiple choice tests</b> will separate the best from the rest. I have spent countless hours and many a personal vacation day advocating for changes to the testing and accountability system. I've personally met with Senator Dan <b>Patrick</b>, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, Rep. Jimmy Don <b>Aycock</b>, Chair of Public Education in the House, our own representatives Dawnna <b>Dukes</b>, Mark <b>Strama</b> and Donna <b>Howard</b> and <b>testified</b> at the Legislature. All of this hard work is paying off as bills moving through the Legislature include <b>reductions in testing</b> very much <b>in line</b> with what PISD has endorsed. If I am re-elected, I will continue to provide the leadership PISD has become known for in this area and continue to <b>advocate for what is best for PISD kids</b>.</p>	<p>It is my opinion that the state places far too great an emphasis on standardized testing. The time and effort extended at the district level to implement and adhere to state testing requirements is excessive and expensive. Texas leads the nation in the number of standardized tests it requires. Our goal as a district should focus on insuring that college or career bound students are proficient in areas that will insure their success and develops an environment of independent thinking.</p>	<p>First and foremost, public schools have to operate within and by the laws established. So what is dictated from Austin or D.C. is what all stakeholders live by. The 4x4 was meant to "raise the bar". Having been in the HS math/chemistry arena for 3.5 decades, I have experienced the evolving changes in expectations, assessments and grading. Realistic goals must be set by the state, by districts, by teachers, by students. That's what coaches do! All stakeholders are players responsible for the outcome. All students will not achieve the same standards at the same time. In this age of technology, a better system must be developed to provide online opportunities for learning and assessment at individual's rate. Look at history a century ago when the grade level a student was classified as was determined by their current reader. Specifically, if EOC remains a mandate; move the test to the end of May to serve as a Final Exam with students having skin in the game so some designated % of the test score is averaged into the grade (a present practice in midterm/final exams). To administer any test (whether EOC, SAT, ACT) without accountability of the student is ludicrous (compare to athletic event...performance if the score didn't count?). Why would a taxpayer invest in a test that is not taken seriously?</p>

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Question 6	Mario Acosta – Place 3	Tony Hanson – Place 3	Carol Fletcher – Place 5	Lance Sandlin – Place 5	Vernagene Mott – Place 4
<p>What is your position on the Domestic Partnership insurance benefits that the District chose to offer in 2013? Do you agree or disagree, and why or why not?</p>	<p>I supported the recommendation and will continue to support it if re-elected. We have excellent staff at PISD that work extremely hard on a daily basis to provide each of our students the best education. I value their commitment to our district and respect the systems and processes we have implemented to allow for collaboration from all our stakeholders in PISD. I believe the democratic process was followed and the stakeholders of PISD were given an opportunity to express their views. They will have another opportunity with the upcoming board of trustee's election.</p>	<p>The PISD Board made its decision. So my position at this point is really not important. It's done. My desire has never been to be the one to exclude anyone, especially since I have been profiled, called names, told to leave an establishment based only on the color of my skin, but to ensure that the district as a whole is held harmless - legally and financially - from the decisions made today for the future.</p> <p>When I signed the application for candidacy for a place on the school board, I had to swear under oath that I would support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States and of the State of Texas. Throughout this entire process, all I'm trying to do is keep myself, as well as the district out of trouble.</p>	<p>We teach our students that every person, without exception, has value and should be treated with respect. The greatest asset we have in PISD is our exceptionally dedicated staff. I supported the recommendation of our staff because this aligns with our core values and will allow PISD to compete, at NO COST, with numerous Texas employers that also offer domestic partner benefits. Regarding the claim by some that this is a violation of the Texas Constitution, I'd like to share actual testimony from Rep. Warren Chisum, the co-author of the provision related to marriage in the Texas Constitution. These are his exact words "This amendment to the constitution would not negate or set aside any contract that an employer wanted to make with his employees. It does not stop them from providing health benefits to same sex partners. It does not – it is not intended to do that." I understand this is a sensitive subject for many residents. I believe good people of faith can have differing opinions on the issue and I respect that. I do take issue with anyone who would seek to punish PISD by withholding state funding simply because their opinion was not in the majority.</p>	<p>This program is in place and currently being offered. That makes my opinion of small importance at this time. There is much discussion within the community on this topic that is divisive and has pulled focus away from the education of our students. It is clear to me that this is an issue that should have been addressed in the community earlier. At the point that it jeopardizes the education funding to our students or encroaches on any legal concern, it would need to be revisited. In its current state, with state opinion pending thru the Attorney General, I would not have supported.</p>	<p>I abstained from the Dec. vote due to *lack of transparency of the internal process and communication *the issue of DPI should be in the domain of the law/court, not the school board * the distraction caused by the excessive attention and time to confront this issue with the result that the board was diverted from other priorities * This issue remains unsettled and divisive within the staff, the community, the churches, the courts *PISD is branded/labeled</p>

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<b>Question 7</b>	<b>Mario Acosta – Place 3</b>	<b>Tony Hanson – Place 3</b>	<b>Carol Fletcher – Place 5</b>	<b>Lance Sandlin – Place 5</b>	<b>Vernagene Mott – Place 4</b>
<p>Pflugerville is known for its fantastic family environment and involvement in education. What efforts will you make to increase communication with the community and parent participation in schools?</p>	<p>I would vote to make this one of the goals for our board of trustees and superintendent. As a goal, it becomes a priority to develop a plan that will be used as an evaluation for the superintendent.</p>	<p>There was a saying in the neighborhood I grew up in, “Each one, reach one.” This meant that everyone had a part to play in bettering our community. Individuals in the community usually got involved through personal contact. I understand we live in the day of Facebook and Twitter, but face-to-face is still the best method. During a recent PTO meeting a teacher suggested that teachers should introduce themselves to their students at their homes before the first day of school. It’s not the words that an individual says, but the actions performed that will cause individuals to take interest.</p>	<p>One thing the board can do is select school designs that promote parent involvement. Something that always frustrated me as a parent at the elementary level was that there was never enough room in the cafeteria or gym for an event where parents were invited. A few years ago, I visited a school in Northside ISD that was designed with a cafeteria and gym that could be opened together so that they could accommodate a very large crowd. At my specific urging, we are now using a similar design in Elementary #20. In addition, our schools all have listerves. Some of those are used more effectively than others and our principals could learn from the most successful examples. The Board has also promoted implementation of a climate survey that will be administered not only to teachers and staff, but to parents and students as well to assist the district in constructing a 360 degree analysis of employee and community satisfaction. This three-tiered survey will be used to identify specific areas in need of improvement as well as areas where we are finding success. Results will be incorporated into district and campus level improvement plans.</p>	<p>As a parent, I've had students on all three levels of our education system and next year will experience that again. Each campus utilizes a different vehicle or variety of options for communicating events and topics to parents. Communication is key to driving involvement and we will need to embrace social media outlets (Facebook, twitter, school sites) especially toward the younger parents that have grown up using technology as way to stay informed and involved. Providing video on the web of board meetings is one example I support.</p>	<p>To increase communication with the community examine present practices for reliability, accessibility and response being certain to reach all pockets and stakeholders in our diverse (ethnically/economically/new/established) district. From this review, consider expanded technology, existing and future means to connect on a regular basis (effective website, listserv, all media with all stakeholders). Continue to offer special forums or programs such as the recent “Night of the Child” event at CHS which targeted families with young children 3-5yrs providing a safe venue; over 1,200 attended. Likewise, the Education Power Hour at CHS was an open forum with a moderator &amp; elected officials on state legislative issues. During the past budget reduction, 3 forums were held on different evenings at different locations providing multiple opportunities for input. Participation can be improved with campus leaders creatively providing opportunities, i.e. scheduling programs in the early evening so working parents can attend; strengthen volunteer groups with renewed vigor, sustainability and assist parents to reach out to other parents. Networking and relationships will thicken the fabric which will ultimately benefit the students and staff. The past 2 years I have joined the board president in a “Grand Tour” each summer for a brief visit with each campus principal on each campus.</p>

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<b>Question 8</b>	<b>Mario Acosta – Place 3</b>	<b>Tony Hanson – Place 3</b>	<b>Carol Fletcher – Place 5</b>	<b>Lance Sandlin – Place 5</b>	<b>Vernagene Mott – Place 4</b>
<p>What are your top priorities for safety in the schools? What is your position on teachers carrying concealed weapons on school premises? How would you decide its merits in our community?</p>	<p>Student safety is a first priority. Campus safety and emergency plans should be continually, reviewed, practiced and evaluated for effectiveness and awareness.</p> <p>What is your position on teachers carrying concealed weapons on school premises?</p> <p>I would not be in favor of it. Instead, I would support the addition of staff (community caseworkers and counselors) to support mental illness and create staff awareness on recognition of potential dangers. The fidelity of campuses to conduct safety drills, evaluations by central office staff of campuses and awareness created from students, parents and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Every school is secured. Every student, educator, administrator and staff person feels safe. Systems for safety and communication throughout the district are efficient and monitored. My first desire is that schools would be adequately secured and safety plans are reliable, so that only licensed police officers are needed in the district. However, schools are not always secured properly, and safety plans do fail. I would be open to working with experts, the board, administrators, and the community to develop the best safety measures for this district.</p>	<p>PISD has invested about \$3 million over the last several years in upgrading our security systems, installing video surveillance, a proximity badge system, a visitor background verification system, and redesigning 21 school entrances to increase security. These are just a few of the proactive approaches we have taken to making our schools safer. We have a PISD police department with officers on duty at every secondary school who also make rotating visits to every elementary school. We conduct regular, documented training on every campus in emergency preparedness. Even with all these precautions, our best investment in keeping our children safe is students, staff, and community members who feel a personal connection to and responsibility for the well being of everyone in the PISD family. Arming teachers, who already wear the hat of surrogate parent, social worker, nurse, and educator is not an effective use of resources in our district and as a parent, would not make me feel safer. Since it is teachers who would be asked to take this responsibility, I would listen to their advice on this topic. At this time, no PISD teacher has indicated to me they support this idea.</p>	<p>Providing for and securing a safe learning environment for our students, faculty, and administrators is of utmost concern. It must be a planned, documented, strategy that assesses the needs of the district as well as those encountered at the campus level. My position on teachers with guns is one that would be formulated with input from local law enforcement, a citizens committee, and school administration. Have we explored all options for controlling access points across the campus? Do we need additional security cameras or card ID access to confirm identity to visitors entering our schools? As a trustee, I would seek continuous assessments and input from our administration, teachers, and parents to insure that we are exploring every option to insure the safety of our students.</p>	<p>Through the leadership of Jo Moss and PISD Chief Edwards a detailed safety and security plan for each campus have been developed and scrutinized. Through their work and training with each principal and staff, we are doing the best with resources available. In recent weeks following numerous tragic events around the country, I have refocused on some of the key issues.</p> <p>#1 Each campus is being re-evaluated by experts with recommendations</p> <p>#2 I support professional development time at the beginning of each year for ALL campus and district personnel to be involved and focused on updated processes and procedures and the seriousness of such training.</p> <p>#3 I do not support all teachers having concealed weapons. Study and attention to legal, training, physical and mental issues must commence before such a decision is considered. I will be attending a related seminar in Ft. Worth in June. I do believe the conscious awareness of the entire community (students, parents, business folks, all PISD employees) with their eyes, ears and brain be part of the safety and security effort in our schools, in our neighborhoods, as well as the places we go.</p>

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Pflugerville Council of Neighborhood Associations**

<b>Question 9</b>	<b>Mario Acosta – Place 3</b>	<b>Tony Hanson – Place 3</b>	<b>Carol Fletcher – Place 5</b>	<b>Lance Sandlin – Place 5</b>	<b>Vernagene Mott – Place 4</b>
<p>Public schools have focused heavily on college prep for all students, yet a recent trend is to provide a dual track that also focuses on career or trade-based training and education. How do you view this type of career education?</p>	<p>I believe that the current graduation plan (4by4) does not allow the flexibility to select another avenue. I will like to see this requirement amended to give students a choice to select a career sequence of courses that would lead to a trade certification.</p>	<p>Each child, Their future, Our World is PISD's motto. Because each child is an individual, he/she may not be college bound for various reasons, but they can be career ready for our world. While some learn best by reading text books, others learn by applying what was read from a book. Just as PISD starts promoting going to college at the elementary level, it could also encourage career focused stories and field trips at this level. At the middle school level, after school exploration options could be developed and courses and real-world application at the high school level. Here's another opportunity for the district to partner with local businesses, school district departments and city government to give those not pursuing higher education a head start.</p>	<p>I think describing Career and Technical Education as if it is targeted only for those not on a college pathway is inaccurate. In PISD, there are about 5,500 students enrolled in CTE courses. Some of these students will earn industry certifications upon graduation from high school, some will have earned articulated credit that will go toward an associate's degree, and others will use these real-world project-based courses to catapult their university careers in areas such as engineering, medicine, and information technology. My own son, who is in advanced mathematics, will be taking the Geometry in Construction course next year, not because he necessarily wants to go into construction trades, but because he will benefit so much from seeing how math applies to the world outside of school. We have hundreds of students in programs like culinary arts, Project Lead the Way, digital media, film production, game design and welding, all of whom are engaged in meaningful learning that is customized to their unique talents and interests. These courses prepare students for the jobs of THEIR FUTURE rather than OUR PAST, and should be expanded.</p>	<p>I support a dual track type environment with the understanding that college is not the only option for our students. If focused only on pushing all students thru the funnel toward a college environment, we are not truly addressing the needs and direction that many students are encountering. Career and Technical Education programs play a vital role and allow for hands on, practical application of a marketable trade. Whatever path is chosen, regardless of plan, formal or informal, trade or otherwise, we want to make sure this path addresses the strongest possible education.</p>	<p>My experience as a classroom teacher for 35+years and grandmother of a dozen little Texans makes evident that individuals have different talents and different ambitions. A highly skilled workforce is essential for our community as well as our nation. I support the CATE/College Readiness program; however, the success of any program is dependent upon a fully equipped facility with a trained and motivated professional instructor. This is challenging and needs focus to make it happen in an efficient and effective manner among our high schools. Recent programs such as the JROTC program at HHS, the culinary program at CHS, the Geometry project and others are best practices; but more work is needed. Students who progress thru these programs have skills that will be valuable should they desire to pursue a future degree or enter the workforce.</p>

**Questionnaire – PISD Board Candidates  
Pflugerville Council of Neighborhood Associations**

<b>Question 10</b>	<b>Mario Acosta – Place 3</b>	<b>Tony Hanson – Place 3</b>	<b>Carol Fletcher – Place 5</b>	<b>Lance Sandlin – Place 5</b>	<b>Vernagene Mott – Place 4</b>
<p>With reductions in the budget, teachers have to do more with less. What is your plan to attract &amp; retain excellent teachers in order to improve academic achievement?</p>	<p>I believe that teachers like to teach in a safe, positive and caring environment. I believe that we as a board have created the systems and processes that create these types of environment. I would like to continue to support these systems and processes that are currently in place.</p>	<p>During discussions with teachers, teachers reiterated that they just wanted to be appreciated. A few of the ways to show appreciation to teachers would be for PISD to partner with local and regional businesses to provide discounts for teachers in the district. Teachers would receive discounts for such things as purchases from department stores, restaurants, car dealerships, homes, auto repair, and others. Another way to show appreciation for teachers would be for administrators to spend a day in the class room, while the teacher takes time off away from the class room. The district should also reach out to retired educators to assist as teacher assistants, as well as ensure a strong mentorship program is in place.</p>	<p>There is no doubt that PISD employees have been carrying a heavier load than their counterparts in other districts for many years due to the systematic underfunding for PISD schools since 2005 and even more so recently due to budget cuts. While salaries are mostly competitive, our teachers and staff have far less support from other components of the system because we operate with comparatively fewer people outside of the classroom. To counter this, we have committed ourselves to building a culture of professional respect and, due to both philosophy and necessity, have worked to engage and empower our staff in the decision-making process at every level. Our Professional Learning Communities provide a structure for every employee to be engaged in analyzing our performance, planning for improvements (at a classroom, school and district level) and holding each other accountable for results. PLCs are our vehicle for building a collaborative culture that views all decisions through the lens of what is best for students.</p>	<p>This question is more geared toward a superintendent's responsibility, however, in my experience, our administration must promote a competitive pay scale, a collaborative and safe environment where a teacher feels supported and open to share concerns and challenges within the classroom and the opportunity to contribute toward the policies and procedures of the district.</p>	<p>I am optimistic that the state will restore some of the underfunding from the last session providing resources to remain competitive with salaries of surrounding districts. The board is considering tapping fund balance to hire instructional coaches and professionals to assist with immediate needs of our special subgroups. Title I campuses as well as the bilingual programs need support in preparing each child to reach their potential. The teacher: student ratio is critical. The Pflugerville Education Foundation accepts donations which are channeled through teacher-grants back to the classroom. Business partnerships and grants also contribute to additional revenue and services. To attract and retain excellent teachers requires a fair salary and benefits, an interactive classroom environment in which teachers can teach and students can learn with the necessary tools; with focus on content for the course and not "teaching to the test". It is vital to maintain a "Pfamily Pfeeling" so every teacher is a team player in the Professional Learning Community and maintaining high academic standards that makes PISD a destination teachers are attracted to. It's a great place to live and work with our growing business and retail community offering shopping, restaurants, etc. with exercise on the extensive hike and bike trails.</p>

Please see the video of the Candidate Forum hosted by PfCONA on April 22, 2013 at <http://pfcona.org>.