

EL PASO COUNTY REPUBLICAN

2017 School Board Candidate Survey

Thank you for running and for caring about our children and their futures.

We are asking for your thoughts and inputs to the following survey questions so that we may share your perspectives with our community on our webpage, www.gopelpaso.com. Your survey will be posted as a pdf file, and you are encouraged to return the survey in a pdf file format with your last name added in the file name. We plan to post it no later than Oct 16, 2017, the day the ballots are in the mail. Once uploaded, we will be sending an email notice to our community of over 5,000 emails to look at the responses. We will also list all candidates who did not respond to the survey by Oct 9, 2017 so voters will be aware we did not intentionally forget your survey response.

Many answers have a word count limit. We suggest paying attention to the word count as readers will only read for so long and then skip through your response, possibly missing something you consider important.

Reminder: **Return by Monday, Oct 9, 2017, emailing it to homeofthefreeandthebrave@yahoo.com.**

Surveys received later will not be posted on the www.gopelpaso.com website. Please send us your responses in pdf format and add you last name to the file name. Good Luck!

Contact Information:

Name **Tom LaValley**

Address **894 Tari Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80921**

Telephone Number **(719) 651-0916**

E-Mail Address **lavalleyd20@gmail.com**

Website **lavalleyd20.com**

Background Information:

Please provide a brief summary of you personally (family, education, occupation). (100 words or less)

I have been married to Nona for 35 years and we have raised 4 children in D-20. I have a BS in Engineering Mechanics from the US Air Force Academy and a MS in Mechanical Engineering from New Mexico State. I have been on the board of The Classical Academy for the last 3 years; the first year as the vice and the last two as the board chairman. I have been heavily involved in raising our children. I am a graduate of the Leadership Program of the Rockies, am on the El Paso county GOP Executive committee and am on the board of advisors of the Tri-Lakes YMCA.

Have you or any relatives been students or employees in the school district?

Circle one: **Yes** No

My 4 children all graduated from The Classical Academy; a D-20 public charter school. My 2 daughters are currently teachers at TCA.

Have you ever served on a volunteer board? Circle one: **Yes** No

-Church board member for 9 years.

-Chairman of church pulpit committee to select current senior pastor.

-Recently selected to the board of advisors for the Tri-Lakes YMCA.

Survey Questions:

1. Why do you want to serve on the school board, and what do you see as your role as a school board member? (300 words or less)

There is no job more important for this generation than to train up the next. I am passionate about the education of our nation's future leaders. It is vital to our community, state and nation. We need sound, serious oversight on the D-20 board. I want to continue to serve this community and with my experience as the chairman of the board of The Classical Academy Charter school, I believe the board of Academy D-20 is an ideal place for me to do that. The primary role of a school board member is to hold the district accountable for its performance. That includes strict financial accountability, educational excellence and character formation of the students. It is also important for each board member to remember that they are accountable to the parents and voters of the district.

2. What role, if any should other government entities (city/county/state/federal) have in the local school board? (120 words or less)

I do not believe the federal government has any legitimate role in the education of its citizens. I also believe that the state should have a minimal role. I don't object to the state having limited involvement in districts that are truly struggling. After the parents, the primary responsibility for the education of the children in a school district should be that district. And that responsibility ultimately rests with the school board. That is why this election is so important.

3. What is the most critical issue in the district and how would you address them? (120 words or less)

I believe there are several important issues in our district. The suicide problem is devastating and there are no easy solutions. I feel the district has done an excellent job trying to get a handle on this problem and offer solutions.

District 20 has excellent teachers, administrators, parents, and some of the best students in the state. However, a large percentage of our students are not proficient on standardized tests. Is this due to poor tests? High opt out rates? Poor curricula? A combination? I don't know but I intend to find out.

We also have a great opportunity with the passage of a \$230 million bond to build several new schools and upgrade existing facilities. We need strong oversight to insure the money is well spent.

4. What will your relationship be with associations/unions related to school employee? (50 words or less)

There are no employee groups in D-20 that are represented by a union. The Academy Education Association does help with teacher issues. It is important to have a good relationship with the AEA and listen to their concerns.

5. Have you received any campaign contributions from a school employee association/union?
Circle one: Yes No

NO

6. What is your position on school finance/funding? (250 words or less)

This is a very complex problem. For example, there are school districts that are quite poor with suppressed property values. As a result, they get less money for their schools from property taxes. Should children in those districts be punished for this? What about very affluent areas? Shouldn't those districts be allowed to spend more money on their schools if they desire? Should they be forced to subsidize the poorer areas? There are no easy solutions. I believe that all school districts should receive funding sufficient to educate their children and these funds should come primarily from local taxes. I also believe that all districts should be allowed to spend what they desire on the education of their children. TABOR has been an excellent law in Colorado. It not only keeps spending in check but it forces politicians to weigh carefully the implications of raising taxes and makes them clarify spending priorities. If a district wants to raise taxes for their schools, they need to convince the voters.

7. What is your position on public charter schools and their contribution to the district community? (200 words or less)

I believe charter schools are an excellent idea. They allow parents a larger voice in the education of their children. They also allow for more local control because charters have their own boards. Having been a charter school parent and board chairman, I like the autonomy that charters offer. I also like the idea of different schools competing for children. In Colorado, over 13% of children are currently taught in charter schools and

the number grows every year. Public charter schools are here to stay and that's a good thing for education in Colorado.

8. What is your position on parental choice for schools? (200 words or less)

It is parents who know what is best for the education of their children, and parents need options to choose. D-20 has done an excellent job in this regard. Parents have many different types of schools from which to choose in the district. I believe that should continue and even increase if the need arises. I fully support different educational options for parents to choose.

9. What is your position on Common Core? (75 words or less)

Common Core are educational standards or benchmarks for children. These standards are an attempt at national education standards. At first blush, this makes sense; common standards across states. But who creates these standards? What if a state wants higher or different standards? I believe CC has created more problems than it has solved. I believe we should let states and even districts create their own standards. The federal government should not be the entity to create standards for Academy District 20.

10. What endorsements have you received? (100 words or less)

**-Pike's Peak Association of Realtors
-Former State Senator/City Council President Keith King
-County Commissioner and former state Board of Education member Peggy Littleton
-State Rep. Dan Nordberg
-D-20 board member Catherine Bullock
-Former D-20 board member Gary Coulter
-D-20 Charter School Liaison and former Liberty HS principal Tom Weston
-The Classical Academy board chairman Rob Moulton**

Reference Links:

Parental choice. <http://parentschallenge.org/>

School choice. <https://www.edchoice.org/school-choice/what-is-school-choice/>

Common Core. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/factsheetsandfaqs>

School Finance. <https://www.casb.org/Page/433>