



Williamson County Elections – August 5, 2010  
Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Eric Welch

Office/District: Williamson County School Board, 10<sup>th</sup> District

1. What is your motivation in seeking election to the Williamson County School Board?  
How will your background and/or experience qualify you to hold this position?

As a parent of children enrolled in Williamson County schools, the only candidate with school age children, I've been negatively impacted like many other parents and home owners by the lack of communication, leadership, and advocacy on behalf of the 10th district on the Williamson County School Board. Our district is amongst the smallest in size but among the most sliced up by school zones. We are divided into three different high schools alone with many neighborhoods bussing their children to the other side of town or the county instead of schools just a couple miles away.

2. Are you currently, or have you previously been, a licensed educator? If so, for how long?  
What subject area(s) did/do you teach?

I am not a licensed educator. I am a concerned parent that has attended every open house, parent teacher conference, sporting event, award show, and recital possible. I've also served the children of our community as a WCSA soccer coach, an assistant coach for the Franklin Cowboys football club, and currently help coach at the Williamson County Wrestling Club. Additionally, I was a founding member of my college's Alumni Advocacy Network that advocated on the University's behalf to the state legislature.

3. If you have children, to what extent do/did they attend public schools?

I have two boys and both attend public schools in the county. My youngest will enter the 4th grade at Johnson Elementary this year and my oldest will be a freshman at Centennial High School. We are directly impacted by public school issues every single day. My wife and I are also products of public schools and public universities.

4. What should be the top priorities of the Williamson County School System over the next several years? How would you address and/or fund these priorities?

The board's top priorities should be correcting the zoning issues that currently exist in the county and improving coordination between the cities, county, and school board/home office in planning to accommodate for the county's growth. If handled properly, these initiatives pay for themselves.

In 2011 the board will vote on a new zoning plan and for the first time will have access to computer software that uses students geographic distance to schools, projected growth in the county, transportation routes, school capacity and other quantitative factors to draw school zones. A sensible zoning plan that treats all neighborhoods and children equally will reduce costs like transportation and the need to purchase temporary facilities for overcrowded schools when nearby under capacity schools exist.

Smart growth, that matches the development of new communities to the ability of the school system to handle the influx of new children, can best be accomplished by city and county governments and the school board and home office working together. Growing Williamson County is a goal worthy of the support if it is done in a manner that increases property values and the tax base. Officials should encourage developers to include resources for new facilities in their submitted plans that would be needed to accommodate an influx of new students as new communities are added.

5. Williamson County has achieved tremendous success over the past several years in terms of economic development and corporate recruitment. This success can be partially attributed to the attractiveness of the County's public education system. What role, if any, could the Williamson County School Board take to continue and/or enhance these efforts?

Great schools and successful students are the engine that drives economic growth in our county and attracts new residents. It is the reason my family moved to Williamson County several years ago. While the number one indicator of a child's success is an involved parent(s), the school system can also take steps by ensuring teachers are qualified to teach in their subjects, administrative staff handle their jobs in an effective manner and that the curriculum taught within schools properly prepares students upon completion for functioning within society and either enter the job market directly or continue their education at the next level.

6. Several education-oriented organizations have recently advocated for local school districts within Tennessee to be granted separate taxing authority by the Tennessee General Assembly. Do you support this effort? If so, what limits, if any, would you place on this authority if granted?

Having previously worked in the advocacy arena for many years, I've seen how numerous groups looking for just a little bit more of their share of the pie can quickly add up. I would need to see specifics and analysis of any separate taxing authority plan before pre-judging. I believe the best way to grow revenue is by encouraging private sector growth thereby growing the tax base.

7. In your opinion, is there a specific trigger or frequency that should determine the need to conduct a major or county-wide rezoning of the school district? Please explain.

Having grown up as the son of a Marine Corps Infantry Officer, a "military brat," I experienced changing school systems 7 times from kindergarten to graduation. I'm sympathetic to children being forced into new schools and away from established friends having done it numerous times myself. The upcoming zoning, if done properly, should put in place a plan sustainable for several years and eliminating the need to rezone immediately afterwards. County-wide rezoning

should be done when one or more schools become so overcrowded as to make the whole system less efficient, as is the case now.

8. How would you balance the leadership roles between the Williamson County School Board and the Superintendent of Schools?

The school board should function as the corporate equivalent to a Board of Directors to the Superintendent's role as CEO. The board should leave the day-to-day operations to the Superintendent and be focused on more macro policy issues. They should be a resource for the parents in their district, but not as the first contact overriding the authority of local school officials.

9. Should the Williamson County School Board promote or implement initiatives aimed at improving sustainability and energy efficiency within the district? If so, where should these efforts be focused?

The school board should encourage efficiency and sustainability in all school aspects, including energy policy. These efforts should be focused within the individual schools by the administrators best able to carry them out.

#### 10. Other Comments

10th district residents deserve school zones have been drawn fairly and sensibly and to be kept informed about important issues before the school board. If you think we could and should be doing better and expect more from your representative to the board, then I ask for your vote in the August 5th election. You can learn more about me and the issues I'll fight for at [www.VoteEricWelch.com](http://www.VoteEricWelch.com).

## Contact Information

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