

**Candidate Gwenn Burud for State Senate District 9  
Responses to Keller ISD Council of PTAs 2018 Candidate Questionnaire**

**1. Recent events have put a focus on school safety and security. If elected, what criteria would you use to prioritize safety recommendations? What will be the funding source for these measures?**

I believe that we must take action against gun violence, whether it occurs within the school or outside of the school. There are several measures that should be taken immediately because they help law enforcement do its job, without shifting additional responsibility to our educators: 1) introduction of a red flag law to help prevent those experiencing moments of mental instability obtain a weapon; 2) implementation of a statewide database to identify persons with a violent or volatile record who are legally prohibited from owning a gun and providing access to that database to gun dealers; and 3) providing access to a state database to those who are conducting private transactions so that someone who cannot buy a gun in a store can be prevented from buying the same gun in the parking lot. To help curb violence inside the schools, I know that there are many different approaches that can be taken. I believe that providing additional funding to mental health services, whether they are conducted inside or outside of the schools can not only save our children from being victims, but also save them from being aggressors as well. The funding needed to provide mental health services could come from the Medicaid expansion that has been rejected by Abbott several times as well as returning school funding to its pre-2011 levels.

**2. The A-F campus and school district rating systems are complex as well as controversial. How do you respond to the critics of this system? Elementary, Intermediate and Middle Schools rating are based solely on the STAAR exam. What changes would you make to the rating system and the STAAR exam? What other indicators do you think are relevant to evaluate a campus or a school district?**

The school rating systems that are based solely on testing results will always be flawed and will favor those schools that have the most economic resources at their disposal. We need to consider the entire community the school is serving as well as teacher evaluations rather than relying on a test score to provide us with a quick answer about school performance. Keller ISD has an excellent school system, but even the most dedicated teacher will find it difficult to counteract low test scores caused by a child being hungry, or not being read to every night, or not having access to outside tutoring. The idea of weighing the entire school on the performance of its students on one day is a foolish exercise. A classroom should be focused on the education of each child, rather than each child's focus on one measure of an education.

**3. Texas public school revenue per student was \$8,755 for 2017-2018 according to the Texas Education Agency's PEIMS Budgeted Financial Data. Do you think this is sufficient for Texas's 5.3 million students? What changes do you think should be made to the current tax structure to fund public schools?**

The amount of funding coming from the State has dropped from 51% to 37% in the last 8 years. The school districts have been forced to raise property taxes to make up the difference because the State legislature has focused spending on private charter schools, and shifting blame to local officials. The State has not taken appropriate steps to provide services to its increasing population, instead pointing to economic growth as its only indicator of success – the growth must be accounted for, and local taxes will continue to rise as long as the State refuses to do anything about the school funding formula. We need to overhaul our state tax system to provide adequate funding to all schools and prevent continued tax hikes while property values are climbing.

**4. What is your position on vouchers and other methods to use tax revenue to fund private education?**

I am opposed to using vouchers to take money from public schools to fund private educational institutions. I can understand a school district deciding to open a charter school or an online school to provide services to students who may not be able to attend one of the public schools. In those circumstances, I support the use of funds to provide the education for the students through the school district because it maintains the accountability of the education with local officials. The continued diversion of funds from the school districts to private companies reflects a continued push from the State to shift the responsibility of educating our children to those who cannot be held accountable by elections, but only by their return for investors. We need to return public school funding to public schools, and stop the continued diversion of funds.