

OTHER TAKES

## **Maxwell: Elect qualified school trustees**

### **Earl Maxwell, BOARD MEMBER, E3 ALLIANCE**



Friday, May 11, 2007

I've been involved with education in Central Texas for over two decades. As a parent, community volunteer and business leader, I have seen firsthand the strengths and weaknesses of our regional education institutions. Though we have many excellent schools and hardworking teachers, the system as it is today often isn't preparing our children for the work force needs of the future. There is a tremendous need for change.

But systemic change is hard to come by. It depends on an array of strong education and business leaders and, specifically, school board trustees. There is no more important job in our community. School board trustees have a direct impact on generations of children and the future of our region yet they are among the least understood "jobs" around. Though this "job" doesn't pay, it comes with huge responsibilities.

School board trustees are responsible for determining policy; employing and evaluating the superintendent; measuring district effectiveness; approving the budget and capital improvement plans; and setting the tax rate for our school districts.

To create high outcomes and meaningful reform in our region's education system, we must identify, recruit and elect school board trustees who are qualified to meet the challenges facing their districts. We'll vote for our new trustees in districts across our region this week, and it's one of the most important elections we can take part in.

The question is, what kind of person makes an effective school board trustee? As Central Texans, what values and attributes do we want our school board leaders to share?

I am very pleased to see that we now have some much-needed answers to these questions.

The E3 Alliance — a collaborative effort of the Austin Community College District (ACC), AARO, the University of Texas and others to align Central Texas' education systems — designed and distributed thousands of copies of the "Attribute Profile of an Effective Central Texas School Board Trustee." The document, which represents the work of more than 60 leaders from 25 community organizations, lays out a set of attributes based on national best practices and local expertise that should be shared by school board members across the region.

If you didn't receive the "Attribute Profile of an Effective Central Texas School Board Trustee," visit [www.e3alliance.org](http://www.e3alliance.org) to get a copy in English or Spanish.

Many who run for school boards do so through a love of children, a specific concern about a school or a single area of interest. But they may or may not have the breadth and depth of leadership qualities really needed to effectively guide policy for our schools. As you consider the ballot choices, gauge the candidates in your district against the attributes in the profile.

If we work as a region to elect school board trustees who are equipped to meet the challenges of a 21st Century education system, we will have made an important first step — a first step on the road to building a stronger, healthier, more economically vital Central Texas for us, for our children, for our grandchildren and for generations to come.

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