

Candidate Name: Sam Wellington

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Tell us a little about yourself and why you've decided to run for a school board position:

Both my children are learners in the district. My eldest, who attended Wilson's DLI program is now at North, making the best of the advantage this has given him by accelerating his High School Spanish while still in Middle School. My youngest is in first grade at Wilson also at the DLI program.

I grew up in Brazil and attended a DLI school from K-12, which offered the International Baccalaureate at the high school level, allowing me to go the United Kingdom for my degree and my Masters in Aerospace Engineering. This is my second stretch living in Coppell. My company sent me on two expatriations to South America and Europe between the first stretch we lived in Coppell and when we returned about 8 years ago. We came back because of the opportunities that CISD offered our children and the value of this community.

I am running because I am concerned about the current operational deficit of over 7M\$ that the district is facing. The upcoming budget constraints will challenge cost drivers throughout the district and may thus challenge the perpetuity of key programs. Several of the projects that are currently being assessed to address this deficit would impact programs that I believe make Coppell ISD uniquely successful. I believe that the IB, DLI and New Tech High must be preserved in order to continue to deliver the quality of learning that the district is known for.

There are hard decisions facing the district in the upcoming future. We must make the right choices as we optimize our budget. We must also make sure that we transition in the most effective way possible back to face-face learning for all; and we must make sure that we are quick to identify and rectify any gaps in learning that the current situation may have caused some children. My children are still young and have many formative years ahead of them in the district. I want to take every opportunity to make sure that the District I came back for, continues to provide the exceptional learning experience and attract the top quality talent that it has done so far, for the next decade and beyond.

What unique qualities would you bring to the school board?

I work as the Director of Transformation at the US headquarters of a multi-national group in the aviation industry. Our whole industry has been dramatically impacted by the pandemic, and we have had to reassess how we work to ensure that the company is able to continue in the new economic reality that the pandemic has brought. This necessarily required coordination with every department, working closely with them to review every process, challenge the teams to seek improvements and define more efficient and lower cost ways of delivering our services. Through the teamwork and dedication of my colleagues, we have successfully managed to optimize our costs without degrading our services.

I believe that my background in industry, in particular as a transformation specialist, could bring a fresh outlook in challenging how the district addresses its costs. CISD is experiencing a transformation. For a years, the district has known predominantly revenue growth, as Coppell continued to build out and this was compounded by strong value growth in real estate. The outlook always showed revenue growth. This was the period where we introduced many of our outstanding programs and grew our exceptional talent

base. Currently, as most of Coppell is built out, our revenue base is now stabilizing. This is a different phase and requires different outlooks and a different decision making processes. The district will need to carefully manage trade-offs and challenge processes and decisions to optimize its cost and continue to be successful.

How have you been involved with Coppell ISD prior to running for school board?

I am fortunate to now have moved to a position with my company requiring dramatically less travel than ever before. In the past as I travelled around the Americas and Europe helping my company I was not able to commit to dedicating the time onsite that would have allowed me to help. I have finally reached a point where I can take what I have learned and use it to help this district that means so much to me.

What do you see as the biggest challenges for the district in the next five years?

I have spoken a lot about the budget and about the change in the growth pattern of the district in the paragraphs above. These are key elements, because adapting to this reality will define many of the challenges to the district.

Another major axis is post COVID schooling. Our educators have been asked to do their jobs in a way they were never trained for, and the entire system was asked to turn on a dime. Our educators should be applauded for what they did in the time that they did so and how quickly they developed and pivoted to it. Further into the crisis the schools were given a new challenge to accommodate both students returning to class and catering to those who remained virtual, and again they delivered, and an entirely new way of delivering content emerged. But not all students adapted equally. As students return to schools, and the educators identify gaps or losses, the schools and the district will have to assess and understand the needs, develop and deploy content that addresses these gaps. This will, again, be a team effort between the educators with their understanding of what their students need, and the board's duty to empower the schools to deliver in a financially responsible manner.

Another key point will be how we make sure we optimize the student/teacher ratios and the utilization of our school buildings as growth patterns shift to the south of the district while balancing the impacts to our students and our budget of additional bus distances. Despite the recent redistricting there is still an imbalance.

How important is serving the needs of gifted learners in Coppell ISD? Why?

Every learner in the district deserves the best opportunity that we can give him or her to be successful. Whether we are talking about serving our gifted learners, serving those with special needs, serving our ESL/LEP students or any other learner the answer has to be the same, are we challenging these children to ensure they all progress in a continuous manner and can be as successful as possible.

How does Coppell ISD currently serve gifted learners and how does that compare to other districts?

I believe that CISD has continuously improved its ability to serve the Gifted and Talented children in the district, and to me, the existence of the Gifted and Talented Association here is a proof that there is a community based approach which supports this effort. I think, as is the case for much of what CISD does, that there is a coherent approach across the district which is adapted to the needs of Elementary, Middle

and High School students respectively. All Elementary Schools, for instance, serve their Gifted and Talented students within the same parameters and yet they are able to customize to the unique needs of each individual school's Gifted and Talented population.