

**Clear Creek Independent School District  
2025 Board of Trustees Election  
Candidate Questionnaire**

**Jessica Cejka**

CCISD School Board, Position: District 1

**My occupation is:** Real Estate Agent

**How many years have you been a resident of CCISD?** 20 years

**Why are you running for a seat on the school board?** We are fortunate to live in such an exceptional school district that offers a world-class education to all students. These past three years, I have helped shape policy that strives to fulfill our district's vision: empowering every student with a world-class education that ignites passions and fuels endeavors.

**How have you contributed to CCISD in the past?** Prior to serving as a Trustee, I was actively involved with CCISD. I have 3 children who attend CCISD. I volunteered at their schools and have served on the PTA. I supported the Clear Creek Education Foundation and their teacher grants as a community member. I am also a member of all 44 Clear Creek Community Council PTAs.

**What experiences do you have in serving on a governance board or in another capacity that would qualify you to be a trustee?** I have served 3 years on the CCISD Board of Trustees. I dedicated 15 years to the field of education and hold a Master's in Educational Administration. I have also served on the Ed White Elementary PTA Board, HOA boards and the Bay Area Moms of Multiples Board.

**What are the most important issues that CCISD and its Board of Trustees must address in the next three years?** Budget, aging schools, teacher retention and declining enrollment. All of these are addressed in other questions.

**What are the most important issues facing public education in Texas?** We need the State to fully support public education. The state has not increased the basic student allotment since 2019. We receive \$6160 per student and this makes it challenging to balance a budget. Also, with school safety a priority, CCISD spends \$7 ½ million on security each year but only receives \$1 million from the state. I would like to see an allotment increase this year as well as additional funds for security.

**On a scale of 1 (Terrible) to 10 (Fantastic), how would you rate CCISD overall? Explain.** 10 out of 10. CCISD has excellent leadership. Success starts at the top and Dr. Engle demonstrates people, purpose and promise in every decision she makes. We focus on profile of a learner, the 8 c's: creator, creative thinker, collaborators, contributors, communicators, connectors, compassion and confident. These are skills needed to be successful in the future and we are instilling on our students every day in the classroom. Even though CCISD is doing a fantastic job, there is always room for improvement and we are striving to continue to provide a world-class education to all CCISD students.

**What, if anything, might CCISD do to improve student achievement to ensure students who graduate are prepared for work, college, or the military?** We are always focused on improving student success. Part of Vision 2030 is to become a Leader in Me district by 2030. The Leader in Me program creates a culture of empowerment for students, staff, and community through character development, academic goal setting, and leadership while incorporating The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. We are fortunate to have community commitment and funding support for this program. We have also added a 6th grade Launch course. Launch further develops the 7 Habits to help students navigate the transition to intermediate and prepare them for academic success. College, Career and Military Readiness (CCMR) prepares students for post-

## Clear Creek Independent School District 2025 Board of Trustees Election Candidate Questionnaire

graduation and over the last 5 years, we have increased our CCMR scores over 20% and are projected to be close to 90% this year. The Board also revised the GPA policy to allow students to take extra electives in high school without negatively affecting their class rank. This policy change allows students to succeed academically while pursuing their passions.

**Teacher retention is a significant issue across the State of Texas. What are your recommendations for CCISD to keep its best teachers?** CCISD is the #2 best teacher workplace in Houston, and we need to continue showing our teachers we value them. We have considered teacher input when developing the school calendar. We also added professional learning and exchange days for teachers to have more time in preparing for our learners. As a district, we place value on National Board Certified teachers. We currently have 14 and another 77 in the pipeline. This certification provides training for teachers, encourages them to stay in the classroom and includes salary increases that count towards their TEA retirement. Making teachers feel valued is key to keeping them in our classrooms and finding ways to listen to their needs and address them. Kindness and respect go a long way. We need to show our teachers the respect they deserve.

**What is your vision for public education?** As part of the district's strategic team, we developed the CCISD vision. My vision for public education is CCISD's vision: empowering every student with a world-class education that ignites passions and fuels endeavors. We are shaping the future and it is our responsibility to ensure every student is prepared for the next steps after graduation.

**Like many Texas school districts, CCISD has faced a budget crunch. Explain. a. What recommendations would you make to CCISD to maintain a balanced budget? b. Where should CCISD invest more resources? c. What budgetary items should be cut or eliminated?** The basic allotment has remained the same since 2019, which proved challenging to balance a budget, but we have remained fiscally responsible. We earned community support with the passing of the VATRE and Bond Propositions in 2023 and were able to update schools, add additional security and technology while lowering taxes. I served on the district's Budget Sprint Team comprised of district officials and community members. Through the work on this team, we instituted innovative ways to cut cost for the district. We are also seeing declining enrollment not just in CCISD but across the state. We need to continue to strengthen our schools and programs we offer so CCISD remains a destination district. We have looked at limited open-enrollment and hope to consider online options in the future. The district is "right-sizing" based on next year's enrollment projections and has been proactive in budget priorities to anticipate declining enrollment and staffing appropriately.

**Many say that public education has become polarized. Name one controversial issue facing CCISD and state your position on that issue.** School bonds are always controversial. No one wants to pay more in taxes but unfortunately, with the current state funding formula, we can't update schools without a bond. We were fortunate in 2023 to pass a bond without raising taxes but we still have more work to do. We have aging schools needing upgrades in the near future. Due to the state funding formula, this must be done through a bond. I would encourage the district to continue to evaluate facility needs and determine when a bond could be passed without increasing taxes for our citizens.

**If elected, what would you want your legacy to be?** That I made decisions based on what was best for the students of CCISD.

**Why should someone vote for you?** I am a mom of 3 CCISD students and have dedicated my professional career to education, not only as a classroom teacher but a school volunteer. I am running for re-

**Clear Creek Independent School District  
2025 Board of Trustees Election  
Candidate Questionnaire**

election to ensure our district continues to offer a world-class education to all CCISD students. Our board has worked cooperatively to make decisions and policies in the best interests of our students and community. We successfully passed a bond without raising taxes and are a finalist for Board of the Year. I know I can make a difference and would be privileged to continue to represent the CCISD community.

**What additional information would you like voters to know about you?** I am honored to represent the students, parents, teachers, staff, and community in CCISD as a Trustee and it would be a privilege to serve another term.

**Clear Creek Independent School District  
2025 Board of Trustees Election  
Candidate Questionnaire**

**Joe Machol**

CCISD School Board, Position: District 1

**My occupation is:** Professional Sports Official, WWII ETO Tours Owner/Operator

**How many years have you been a resident of CCISD?** 59

**Why are you running for a seat on the school board?** Help students become efficient in reading, writing and arithmetic. Help the teachers instruct the students in reading, writing and arithmetic. Help the taxpayers keep their hard earned money in their own pockets.

**How have you contributed to CCISD in the past?** I have had 8 members of my family attend CCISD since 1966. I have Officiated football and Umpired baseball in the district since 1980. Was heavily involved with my sons education at Bay, Seabrook Int and Clear Lake.

**What experiences do you have in serving on a governance board or in another capacity that would qualify you to be a trustee?** Was the President of the Texas Baseball Umpires Association (TBUA) for 14 years. Past President of the Houston Football Officials Association and a Seabrook City Councilman for 8 years.

**What are the most important issues that CCISD and its Board of Trustees must address in the next three years?** Getting the Student efficient in Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. More efficient with spending the taxpayers hard earned money. Helping the Teachers to achieve the students goals.

**What are the most important issues facing public education in Texas?** Distractions in the classroom and getting the students the help they need in reading, writing and arithmetic.

**On a scale of 1 (Terrible) to 10 (Fantastic), how would you rate CCISD overall? Explain.** Six CCISD ranks 27th out of 900 districts. I think this should improve into the top 10.

**What, if anything, might CCISD do to improve student achievement to ensure students who graduate are prepared for work, college, or the military?** Go back to the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. College prep courses and military prep course. Have industrial arts courses that work in conjunction with local businesses.

**Teacher retention is a significant issue across the State of Texas. What are your recommendations for CCISD to keep its best teachers?** Incentives to Teachers when the students achieve the best scores in reading, writing and arithmetic .

**What is your vision for public education?** Go back to the basics Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

**Like many Texas school districts, CCISD has faced a budget crunch. Explain. a. What recommendations would you make to CCISD to maintain a balanced budget? b. Where should CCISD invest more resources? c. What budgetary items should be cut or eliminated?** Look into wasteful spending with thorough audits. Teachers who are focused on reading, writing and arithmetic. I would know that once a thorough audit had been conducted.

**Many say that public education has become polarized. Name one controversial issue facing CCISD and state your position on that issue.** I didn't create the issue of schools going away from

**Clear Creek Independent School District  
2025 Board of Trustees Election  
Candidate Questionnaire**

reading, writing and arithmetic, however when we go back to the basics we will solve the education issues in CCISD the State and the Country.

**If elected, what would you want your legacy to be?** That I helped CCISD become one of the best districts in Texas and help each and every student become the best that they can be in reading, writing and arithmetic. The taxpayers keeping their hard earned money in their own pocket.

**Why should someone vote for you?** I listen to and work for the citizens of CCISD. I have a proven track record of this in the city of Seabrook.

**What additional information would you like voters to know about you?** I struggled as a student here in CCISD, I never knew why until my son was diagnosed with dyslexia. I understand the parents with those learning issues. I was told in high school "you are to stupid to fly a airplane" I have had a private pilots license since 1984.

**Clear Creek Independent School District  
2025 Board of Trustees Election  
Candidate Questionnaire**

**Rebecca Lilley**

CCISD School Board, Position: At-Large B

**My occupation is:** Director of Community and Physician Engagement, Memorial Hermann

**How many years have you been a resident of CCISD?** 35

**Why are you running for a seat on the school board?** I have a passion for public education and making our community the best it can be. I want the students of CCISD to have every opportunity for success and desire to advocate and support the students and educators of CCISD. My entire career and personal life have been spent in some form of community and public service. As a mother I have walked in parent's shoes. I want to work for the students and educators of the district to keep this as a District of Choice for families looking to move into the area. To me, every student, teacher and staff member of CCISD is family and family deserves the best. I understand the legacy of world class education that CCISD has established and am passionate about ensuring every classroom is a place of opportunity, every educator is supported and every child is given the tools to succeed.

**How have you contributed to CCISD in the past?** My commitment to the students and educators of CCISD started when my son, Trent, began kindergarten at Ed White. From being room mother, taking field trips, FFA Booster Club president and joining PTA I have supported the district for many years. In addition, I have served on the Board and Executive Board of the Clear Creek Education Foundation. I have recently returned to the Board. I been a member of the CCISD Citizens Finance Advisory Committee and the District Education Instruction Committee. I am currently a member of the Clear Lake High School PTA and SEPTA (Special Education PTA).

**What experiences do you have in serving on a governance board or in another capacity that would qualify you to be a trustee?** I have served on multiple boards, gaining extensive experience in board dynamics, decision-making, and strategic planning. I understand every board faces tough decisions and every board member brings a unique perspective. Through collaboration, trust and respect, we have successfully worked through challenges that serve the best interest of the organization. My board experiences have prepared me to be an effective and solution driven trustee who prioritizes student success, educator support and the long term success of our district.

Experience includes:

- Chairman of the Board of the Clear Lake Area. Friendswood, League City and South Belt Ellington Chambers of Commerce.
- Currently Treasurer of the San Jacinto College Foundation Board. Board member since 2019.
- 2024/25 President of the Galveston County Aggie Moms. Vice President of Fundraising 2021/22
- Secretary of the Clear Creek Education Foundation Board 2018, 2019
- Past Board member, Adult Education Center, Pearland, TX
- Multiple trips to Austin to advocate for health care and public education

**What are the most important issues that CCISD and its Board of Trustees must address in the next three years?** 1. Funding of public education. 2. Declining enrollment 3. School safety including classroom behavioral issues

## **Clear Creek Independent School District 2025 Board of Trustees Election Candidate Questionnaire**

**What are the most important issues facing public education in Texas?** Texas education faces challenges including school funding issues, teacher retention and shortages, and concerns about student performance and preparedness, as well as debates around testing and school choice.

**On a scale of 1 (Terrible) to 10 (Fantastic), how would you rate CCISD overall? Explain.** I would rate CCISD a 9. CCISD has done a good job evaluating student needs and providing for a variety of pathways for success. Whether a student is pursuing a career in the military, trade school, college, or entering the work force, the district offers strong programs to support their goals. In addition the district has a strategic plan for 2025-30, Vision 2030 and the board sets goals annually. The district also does a great job of engaging parents and the community and asking for input

**What, if anything, might CCISD do to improve student achievement to ensure students who graduate are prepared for work, college, or the military?** 1. Strengthening career and college readiness programs. 2. Enhancing accountability and program evaluation 3. Supporting educators with the resources, training and support needed to deliver high-quality instruction.

**Teacher retention is a significant issue across the State of Texas. What are your recommendations for CCISD to keep its best teachers?** In a 2024 Teacher poll by the Charles Butt Foundation 78% of teachers stated they are seriously considering leaving the classroom. Teacher retention is key. Listening to teachers – establish regular forums for teachers to share ideas and concerns. Ensure their feedback leads to tangible practices that show their voices matter. Competitive Salaries and Benefits – ensure that CCISD remains competitive in teacher pay and benefits, including health care, retirement contributions and incentives for experienced educators. Respect & Support for Teachers– foster a culture where teachers feel valued by publicly recognizing their contributions, reducing unnecessary administrative burdens and ensuring they have a voice in decision making. Addressing classroom challenges – provide more support for teachers dealing with behavioral and discipline issues. Professional growth and Leadership Opportunities – Offer clear pathways for career advancement, mentorship programs and high quality professional development to help teachers grow. Retention is more than just pay – it’s about where teachers feel respected, supported and empowered.

**What is your vision for public education?** My vision for public education: I envision a system where every student, educator and parent takes pride in their schools - a system that provides the foundation for lifelong success. Every student should graduate fully prepared for their future whichever pathway they take.

**Like many Texas school districts, CCISD has faced a budget crunch. Explain. a. What recommendations would you make to CCISD to maintain a balanced budget? b. Where should CCISD invest more resources? c. What budgetary items should be cut or eliminated?**  
a. Continue the work that is currently being done to prioritize the priorities of the stake holders for the budget cycle. b. Every dollar spent should be spent in a way that directly benefits students, supports educators and directly enhances overall performance. c. Comprehensive evaluation of all expenditures to ensure funds are allocated to the highest priority needs - those that directly impact student success, teacher support and district operations.

**Many say that public education has become polarized. Name one controversial issue facing CCISD and state your position on that issue.** CCISD has addressed the issue of book bans head on. The district has put measures in place to encourage parent input and involve key stake holders (teachers, librarians, administrators) to collaborate towards mutually beneficial solutions. I support this approach because when

## Clear Creek Independent School District 2025 Board of Trustees Election Candidate Questionnaire

students read about characters and stories that reflect their backgrounds, cultures and identities, it fosters a sense of belonging. It also helps build empathy and understanding.

**If elected, what would you want your legacy to be?** I want it to be evident that I brought my experience to the board and strengthened the ability to work collaboratively and effectively for the best outcomes for students and educators. Most importantly I want to know that every student felt empowered to pursue their dreams.

**Why should someone vote for you?** I have the experience, passion, and dedication to serve the students and educators of CCISD effectively. For 35 years, I have been deeply involved in the district in many capacities – serving on committees, advocating for students and working alongside educators. This firsthand knowledge gives me a well-rounded perspective on what makes our schools successful and where we can improve. I have a proven track record of tackling tough issues on boards and finding solutions through collaboration and leadership. I understand the importance of working with all stakeholders – parents, teachers, administrators, and community members to keep CCISD strong and forward thinking. The relationships I have built over the years enhance my ability to serve as a board member and ensure that CCISD remains the district of choice in Texas. I am dedicated to working for, and advocating on behalf of the students, educators and parents of our district. Every decision I make will be guided by their best interests ensuring that CCISD remains a place where students thrive, educators feel valued, and parents are engaged in their children's education.

**What additional information would you like voters to know about you?** I am ready to get to work for the students and educators of CCISD! With my experience, passion, and deep commitment, I will work tirelessly to ensure our schools remain safe, well-funded, and academically strong. I believe in collaboration, listening to all voices and making informed decisions that put students first.



**Clear Creek Independent School District  
2025 Board of Trustees Election  
Candidate Questionnaire**

**Scott Bowen**

CCISD School Board, Position: At-Large B

**My occupation is:** Chemical Engineer

**How many years have you been a resident of CCISD?** 31 years (except time in college)

**Why are you running for a seat on the school board?** We've improved a lot over the time I have been on the board—since I was elected we have started having real discussions and debates over the issues we face. I now have the experience to continue driving real improvement and to guide the district through hard decisions we may face in the near future.

**How have you contributed to CCISD in the past?** I've served on the Board for the past 6 years. Additionally, I am a member of several PTAs and volunteer for student events when I can make a positive impact. I'm also a current taxpayer and a graduate of the district, as are most of my family.

**What experiences do you have in serving on a governance board or in another capacity that would qualify you to be a trustee?** Two terms serving on the board have taught me an incredible amount about overseeing an organization as large as the school district, and the distinction between oversight and management. During that time we dealt with difficult policy questions such as reopening after COVID, budget challenges, and hiring a Superintendent (Dr. Karen Engle). I've learned how to use this role to initiate improvement, not just approve of what is put in front of me.

**What are the most important issues that CCISD and its Board of Trustees must address in the next three years?** Declining Enrollment – Demographic projections show CCISD losing about 3,500 students over the next ten years. This is because the district is largely built out: older neighborhoods have fewer children, and new subdivisions are being built outside the borders of the district in Santa Fe and Dickinson ISDs. We need to offer better, competitive programs to ensure parents still want to enroll their children in CCISD. Also, I wrote a new open enrollment policy that will allow students outside the district to fill empty spots—we need to be sure this is faithfully implemented. Funding – While a lot depends on the legislature and enrollment, absent additional funding we are showing significant deficits in the next few years. We need to rebuild the program audit process to trim ineffective and underutilized programs while ensuring our core instructional programs and beloved extracurriculars are not impacted by cuts. Also, any additional funding needs to be spent in the classroom, on pay for teachers and staff, not on administration and waste. We need to avoid wasteful bond projects and continue lowering taxes, as we have for the past six years I have been on the board. Discipline – Post-COVID, student behavior has gotten worse and it is impacting the classroom environment. There are a lot of causes for this, including device dependence and social media, but in the immediate term we need to ensure bullying is addressed quickly and that we take a zero-tolerance approach to drug use (especially vaping). Reading – We have already returned phonics to reading education and we are seeing good results. We need to ensure students are reading actual physical books—not excerpts. A classical literary canon like the one we grew up with is essential for passing along American culture to the next generation and needs to be brought back. We also need to bring back reward programs for elementary students who go above and beyond reading books in their free time.

**What are the most important issues facing public education in Texas?** Regardless of what happens in the Legislature, the reality is that parents have more options than ever both within and outside of public education, and those will continue to expand. We as a district need to compete and ensure our programs and culture are world-class so that our parents continue to trust CCISD with their children's education.

**Clear Creek Independent School District  
2025 Board of Trustees Election  
Candidate Questionnaire**

**On a scale of 1 (Terrible) to 10 (Fantastic), how would you rate CCISD overall? Explain.** While there are always things that can improve, I rate us a 10. I've been to many statewide conferences and met trustees, administrators, teachers, and parents--while some have unique ideas, and we should always seek to learn from anyone we can, most of them are far behind us both in their programs and the way their boards operate. Some people may disagree with that, but I would ask if the grass is really greener on the other side--I have never encountered a district that I felt was operating better than we are in a comprehensive way.

**What, if anything, might CCISD do to improve student achievement to ensure students who graduate are prepared for work, college, or the military?** We are already improving this considerably and you will see it in our next round of accountability results. The key is individual attention for each student--keeping track of where they are on their path in high school and ensuring they take the right tests to qualify for college (even community college), enroll in CTE classes, or whatever else best sets them up for a solid future beyond graduation.

**Teacher retention is a significant issue across the State of Texas. What are your recommendations for CCISD to keep its best teachers?** Competitive pay is key. We have increased pay for several years in a row and will continue as long as budgets allow us to. Beyond that, we need to ensure that teachers feel supported in their classrooms. That means administrators need to support them when it comes to student discipline, and also offer good opportunities for professional growth.

**What is your vision for public education?** I was one of the board members who participated in writing our vision statement: "Empowering every student with a world-class education that ignites passions and fuels endeavors." I agree with every word of it. The future of education is that we will offer more and better opportunities for each individual student to grow and succeed. Public school should be an environment where students are encouraged to try new things, rewarded when they succeed, and supported when they don't. We have to innovate constantly or we will fall behind.

**Like many Texas school districts, CCISD has faced a budget crunch. Explain. a. What recommendations would you make to CCISD to maintain a balanced budget? b. Where should CCISD invest more resources? c. What budgetary items should be cut or eliminated?**  
a. Aside from what the Legislature does, enrollment is key. Funding is based on enrollment, and our enrollment has been dropping. The more we can fight that or even turn it around, the better off we will be, and I think it involves doing all of the above (in the previous answers) and attracting students through our new Open Enrollment program. b. In keeping with (a), we should invest in new and innovative programs that give students a reason to stay with us. We should invest our resources strategically in programs that continue to make us better. c. Any programs that see limited use or are not effective. In order to determine those, we need to return to comprehensive program audits (something we lost during COVID and administrative turnovers during that era). We won't know what is there until we start looking.

**Many say that public education has become polarized. Name one controversial issue facing CCISD and state your position on that issue.** The true divide on school boards is not partisan or even political--it's rubber stamps vs people who actually want to change things, initiate ideas, and respond to parents. I'm solidly in the latter camp. One issue that gets a lot of attention is library books, but I look at it from a different angle. My concern is that children everywhere aren't reading as much as they used to, and nobody seems to be encouraging them to. We need to return to required reading lists and eliminate "reader-writer workshops" that seem to allow too many students to slip through without ever reading anything from the classical literary canon we all grew up with.

**Clear Creek Independent School District  
2025 Board of Trustees Election  
Candidate Questionnaire**

**If elected, what would you want your legacy to be?** I get to watch thousands of students graduate every year. If I'm doing my job, they will learn more, achieve more, and experience more than they otherwise would have, and always remember their time in CCISD schools as positive and challenging. Buildings will be renovated and policies will change; our students and graduates are the only legacy that actually matters.

**Why should someone vote for you?** For the same reason I'm running--I have the experience and vision necessary to keep innovating and also hold our district accountable to student success and parental input. This is a position that requires active effort and constant attention. It's not enough to just sit in a seat and vote--you need to constantly be bringing new ideas and new views to the table in order to keep us moving forward, and I'm the only one in this race who does.

**What additional information would you like voters to know about you?** I am a true product of CCISD schools, having attended and graduated from Ward Elementary, Webster Intermediate, and Clear Lake High School. My five siblings and I participated in the WAVE program. I went on to graduate from Texas A&M and returned to Clear Lake to make a home and career as a chemical engineer, later receiving a Master's degree from Rice University. I am a member of Clear Lake Baptist Church, an Eagle Scout, and an avid runner.