



League of Women Voters  
of Plano/Collin County  
[www.lwvcollin.org](http://www.lwvcollin.org)

Nonpartisan

# Voters Guide

May 11, 2013, Local Election  
Allen ISD

Early voting: April 29 – May 7

Election Day: May 11 – Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

## About This Voters Guide

This *Voters Guide* is published by the League of Women Voters of Plano/Collin County to help citizens prepare to cast an informed vote. The League of Women Voters encourages informed and active participation in government. The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate.

This guide lists candidates for Allen Independent School District offices, as shown in the table of contents. The City of Allen will not have a City Council election since none of its offices are contested.

This *Voters Guide* is available online at [www.lwvcollin.org](http://www.lwvcollin.org), along with separate guides for City Council and/or ISD in Frisco, McKinney and Plano, and for Collin College. Candidate responses for all races are also available at [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org), including an "On Your Ballot" feature that allows voters to enter an address and review races specific to that address.

Questionnaires were sent to all candidates who will appear on the ballot for the Allen ISD Local Elections, even those who are uncontested. Candidate replies are printed without editing or verification. If a candidate did not respond by the deadline, "No response received" is printed. Responses were limited to 600 characters.

Candidates were asked to avoid references to their opponents. Photos are included for candidates who provided them.

This *Voters Guide* is organized by office, with candidates listed as they appear on the ballot.

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## Qualifications for Voting

To vote, you must be a U.S. citizen, registered to vote, a resident of the county, and at least 18 years old on Election Day. You must not have been declared mentally incapacitated by a court of law. If you have been convicted of a felony, you may register to vote only after you have completed the punishment phase of your conviction, including any terms of incarceration, parole, supervision, or period of probation ordered by the court.

## Where to Vote

During **early voting April 29 – May 7**, you may vote at any early voting location. Early voting is open to all voters, no excuses necessary.

On **Election Day May 11**, you must vote in the precinct in which you reside. Your precinct is listed on your voter registration card.

For polling locations and sample ballots, visit [www.co.collin.tx.us/elections/index.jsp](http://www.co.collin.tx.us/elections/index.jsp) or call the Collin County Elections Office at 800-687-8546 (toll-free).

To enter your address and see all races for that address visit [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org).



*The LWV never supports or opposes candidates for office or political parties, and any use of the League of Women Voters name in campaign advertising or literature has not been authorized by the League.*

# Allen ISD Board of Trustees

## Description

3-year term, elected district wide. Must be at least 18 years old, a United States citizen, a qualified voter and a resident of the District. The Board of Trustees makes all final decisions regarding school district priorities, policies, personnel, textbooks, expenditures and growth management. Trustees adopt a budget, levy taxes and submit bond issues to finance construction projects.

## Questions

**Finances:** What has been the impact of reduced state funding on this school district? What solution do you propose?

**Vouchers:** How would vouchers and/or an increase in charter schools affect this school district?

**Students:** What is this district doing to meet the needs of students who are not college-bound? Should anything else be done and, if so, how could it be funded?

**Growth:** What issues does the district have as a result of population growth, increased number of homeless children and/or changing demographics? How would you address them?

**Accountability:** Do you favor the current system of state achievement tests? Why or why not? What changes would you recommend?

**Teachers:** What is the best way to attract and retain good teachers?

**Other Issues:** What are the most important issues you think will come before the school district in the next few years? What are your views on these issues?

## Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 4 Candidates (3):

### Amy Gnadt – Candidate for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 4



#### Contact Information

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**Education:** Amy graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a Bachelors of Science Degree in Civil Engineering. **Experience:** Amy is currently in her second year as the PTA President for Evans Elementary School in Allen. She has served on the Board of various non profit entities to include the Junior League.

**Finances:** The impact of reduced state funding has been devastating on Texas Public School Districts. In 2011 the Allen community and I supported a Tax Ratification Election that offset the reduced funding impact for Allen ISD. This funding allowed Allen ISD to continue under moderately strained conditions. We are in hopes that the 2013 Texas Legislature will restore funding that was cut the last session.

**Vouchers:** I do not believe that vouchers are the answer for the Texas Public School System. Using tax dollars for private vouchers does not support the basic intent of the public school system.

**Students:** Allen ISD is current developing their long range strategic plan. They will be conducting aggressive evaluation of opportunities for non-college bound students. This may include recommendations for a vocational graduation plan that includes industry certifications. The ADA (Average Daily Attendance) student funding will be used to meet the needs of these students.

**Growth:** The Allen ISD enrollment has grown steadily since the early 1990s. The district is currently growing at a rate of about two percent. Regardless of enrollment increases, Allen ISD is committed to maintaining acceptable student-to-staff ratios and class sizes through the hiring of additional staff. Extra state funds would allow for this growth with minimal disruption to the individual campuses.

**Amy Gnad** – Candidate for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 4

**Accountability:** I support the reduction of end of course (EOC) exams. Currently, students are subject to multiple competency tests for the same course. This could include the EOC, AP(Advanced Placement), IB (International Baccalaureate) , Career Certification, Dual Credit and PSAT, SAT exams. It is currently a drain on our instructional resources. I support at least 6 EOC exams to include English II (reading and writing), Algebra I, Biology, U.S. History and a High School upper Math such as Statistics.

**Teachers:** Allen ISD is continually growing which requires a diligent approach to teacher recruitment, training and development. The Allen ISD retention rate is 7.7% which is below the 9.0% average for the area schools. My goal as a Board of Trustee would be to ensure that the teacher hiring and development program results in a positive outcome for our students.

**Other Issues:** Campus Security-There has been some discussion regarding designating a school administrator as the trained armed school Marshall. The key is the definition of a 'trained'. Most responsible gun owners have participated in a formal concealed handgun training to obtain a handgun permit. The school marshals would have to be trained in active shooter response tactics which includes the mental, tactical and understanding the temperament necessary to meet these emergency situation. For professionals this skill takes multiple years of training and would not fit the job skills of a school administrator

**Ken Lento** – Candidate for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 4**Contact Information**

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**YouTube:** In progress

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in Business Services, Major in Accounting - University of Toledo, Ohio and Associates Degree in Law Enforcement, Owens Technical College, Perrysburg, Ohio **Experience:** 30 plus years of business experience that includes all aspects of business operations. I also have experience with safety, security, law enforcement and environmental programs. I am the President of Allen Gifted, Inc, a non-profit organization.

**Finances:** Reduction in number of teachers, larger classroom sizes and cuts in programs. Allen ISD spends \$7,071 per student which is less than the state average. It appears that some of the state funds may be re-instated and if so, Allen should consider increasing the cost of spending per student to expand needed programs and expand teacher professional development. I want to see additional school security measures implemented to insure that Allen schools are the safest possible and to prevent anything like what happened in Newtown. Digital conversion of textbooks, ROTC and technology are options.

**Vouchers:** Allen ISD has great schools with student performance above the state levels and with a 98% graduation rate. I cannot see any reason for parents to want other options in education. In a recent survey, Allen ISD ranked extremely high in community opinion on topics around the education, fairness and quality of programs. Allen has excellent opportunities for students to be in extracurricular programs (sports, band, clubs) which are often one of the biggest complaints of charter school parents. Vouchers to allow parents to send their kids out of Allen ISD doesn't appear necessary.

**Students:** There is much emphasis placed on college prep, AP (Advanced Placement) education programs and paths in Allen with over 1,422 students in these programs. Allen also offers other college prep programs and education paths. A new strategy item being considered is to focus on technical programs and training. Programs for a career path to become a certified plumber, diesel mechanic or air-conditioning and heating technician would be great for those not planning to attend college. I think Allen ISD should expand career and technology options for students to allow alternative opportunities.

**Growth:** Allen ISD just went through an emotional re-drawing of the school boundary lines in order to balance attendance at the 24 Allen ISD schools. Allen has 19,722 students with an estimated 1.9% population growth and for now the new balancing looks good. If other pieces of land in Allen open up to re-zoning for residential, Allen ISD would have additional challenges. The nice thing about public education is all students are able to attend and have access. Allen ISD needs to monitor demographics and communicate with the

**Ken Lento – Candidate for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 4**

community if things change before additional boundary changes are needed.

**Accountability:** There has to be some form of assessment to measure how districts are performing and for now it is the STAAR. What I would like to see is measurements in place to insure students are "learning" how and not just practicing for a test. I am not sure having to pass 15 exams to graduate high school is right for all students and this should be evaluated. Graduation testing should be consolidated to areas of preparation for the students next steps in education or life - specific for college, technical trades, or other. If STAAR remains, Allen ISD needs to make sure learning occurs!

**Teachers:** The school district needs to have a good reputation and show high performance levels so that teachers will want to be in Allen ISD. There has to be professional teacher development, good working conditions, not being overloaded with students and compensation packages that are attractive. 43% of Allen teachers have over 11 years of experience, and it is important to retain talented teachers. Allen ISD has 1,215 teachers and low turnover which says the programs in place are working. The question I would ask is what do the teachers want as a way to improve their experience in Allen ISD?

**Other Issues:** Allen has some issues with bullying and this needs to be promptly addressed. I believe there is much work to do in properly securing our schools. Implementing the strategy 2013 items to add programs like technology based training. Professional teacher and staff development, conversion to digital textbooks, and maintaining the quality of Allen ISD programs. Making sure the fiscal performance is maintained, starting up the bus service center and new elementary school are important activities already planned. It would be good to also see improved communications efforts from Allen ISD.

**Vatsa Ramanathan – Candidate for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 4**



**Contact Information**

**Campaign Phone:** (214) 733-7044

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**Education:** Bachelor of Engineering in Computer Science **Experience:** 20 Years of experience in Information Technology 18 Years of experience in School Management Serving on Strategic Planning Team of Allen ISD Serving on executive committees of several Non-profit organizations in DFW Leadership Of Allen Graduate

**Finances:** Impact: 1. Reduction of staff 2. Increasing class sizes 3. Reduction in budget (2011-12 about \$4.5 million was cut) 4. Lower maintenance contracts 5. Reduction in non-campus administration, bus routes, crossing guards, grounds keeping. etc 6. Freeze on all salaries Solutions: Increase Local Funding: - Advertising - Facility rentals - Outsourcing select functions/ work - Energy conservation - Inventory control - Refinancing bonds and other long-term debts

**Vouchers:** Vouchers concept could be kind of detrimental to the public school system. I say that because the students who are pulled out of the public school will take with them the funding that is given to the school district for those students. At this point of time, when the funding is scarce, this could be a negative for the ISD. On the other hand, increase of charter schools can be looked at in a positive perspective as well. This will put pressure on the public schools to be more competitive.

**Students:** I am an active member of the strategic planning team for Allen ISD. One of the most important things that have been seriously discussed is the plan on how to help the kids who are not opting to go to college. The team has come up with a plan to introduce vocational certification courses during the high school years with which the student learns trades and can be easily employable for a higher salary than the minimum wage. Taking a step further, AISD is also planning on employing the students with an automobile engineering trade certification in the new bus service center.

**Growth:** Population growth: Whenever there is a growth in population, the school system has to work on balancing the enrollments in different campuses and maintain adequate space for additional growth. For this to happen rezoning/re-redistricting will be one of the measures that can be used, however, the important thing to consider would be to minimize the changes and maintain stability for the children in their learning

**Vatsa Ramanathan – Candidate for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 4**

process. A thorough study of next 5-10 years growth projections will be a good step to address population growth. Homelessness: Very small percentage and not an issue now.

**Accountability:** In my personal opinion, a child should be able to choose to take end of course in about five subjects that align with the further education path he or she would like to pursue. Each of these subjects should be falling under a certain category - Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Language and writing. For example: Algebra, Biology, History, English and writing. A child, who is opting to go on a career path, should also be given a choice to take an alternative which can be a vocational certification course.

**Teachers:** I come from a family of teachers and educators and I have been in the school administration for years. I have closely observed the teachers and I have seen most of the teachers work for their love towards kids and to give the kids the best education; they seldom do whatever they do for fame or fortune. Here are some things I think would help in attracting and retaining teachers: Small class size, Leadership opportunities, collaboration, seek and respect feedback, better work environment and competitive compensation.

**Other Issues:** The important issues are: •State Funding formula: Due to which Allen School district has been getting the lowest per student funding based on the target revenue system. This formula is implemented in 2006 and has not been revised since. •Testing and accountability system: Number of test should be determined for optimum student achievement. The students need to have some flexibility in choosing their path yet rigor should be maintained in the teaching and testing process. -Security and safety measures in all schools:

**Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 5  
Candidates (2):****Michael S. Myers – Candidate for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 5****Contact Information**

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**Education:** PhD in Business and Organizational Management; Masters of Science in Telecommunications Management; Bachelors of Science in Computer Science; High School Graduate with the American Community Schools of Athens Greece

**Experience:** I'm a 25-year telecom executive and an adjunct professor at Collin College. In addition, I am a disabled veteran of the United State Army Intelligence Community. My wife Tina and I have been married for 20 years and have six beautiful children.

**Finances:** We should realize by now that State funding will always be a source of frustration. We must promote our willingness, and capability, to remain fiscally responsible with any decisions the board has to make. We cannot control the State on its ultimate decisions. The State looks at funding on a statewide view. We have to look locally and when looking locally we have to listen to the residents who ultimately fund our initiatives through tax dollars.

**Vouchers:** Charter Schools are publically funded private schools. Typically charter schools are created to address student issues such as crowding, bullying, gangs ,etc.. I don't believe we have gotten to that level yet. But, having one High School with 5600+ kids does indicate we are getting close. I would encourage the use of private schooling in our district, but I don't see the necessity to elicit Charter Schools with taxpayer money. The current board has demonstrated that it has issues with just funding the schools we have now, why would we introduce publically funded private schools?

**Students:** The three basic priorities of safety, education and development will be the cornerstone to all our student body. Focusing on the development part it is essential to note that we have just as much responsibility to teach our children about the success in the trades as much as their potential to go to higher

**Michael S. Myers – Candidate for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 5**

levels of education. What's more important for them to understand is to develop their own sense of understanding of how their decisions impact their future.

**Growth:** I believe we have a constrained problem of overcrowding within the elementary schools funnel up to a blockage at the high school. We need to address class size by looking at possibly building a few new elementary schools as well as a new high school. In order to alleviate the issues associated with underachieving male students, increase number of homeless children and the changing demographics will be a daunting task. But we need to start somewhere.

**Accountability:** I believe that my children's education starts at home and is fostered through our local schooling. We as parents need to stay involved in our own children's life and can't always take the "easy way out" when addressing their needs. It's necessary to understand where they stand in any given area of development. If there is a testing solution that enables me to help my children develop, then I invite its use. But if the solution doesn't provide any real value to my children's education, then I believe it needs to go, or at least be revisited and/or corrected.

**Teachers:** I believe that teachers teach because they want to be a part of, and help develop, our children's lives. You don't see any teachers getting rich off teaching at an elementary school. After all I don't teach because I think I'm going to make a lot of money doing it. I teach because I believe it's my responsibility to teach others what I know, else what good is it to know it? Teachers are attracted to the environment. We need to foster a safe and attractive environment that anyone would want to work in. This needs to include the administrators as well, not just the teachers.

**Other Issues:** I see our expansion requirements, our ability to communicate effectively and our ability to stay focused on the priorities as the biggest hurdles. There is no reason why we should have 25 students per class, 5600+ students in a high school and 1500+ students in an old dilapidated building. Yet, as residents have pointed out, we find time to build a \$60 Million football stadium and a \$40 Million dollar bus barn while at the same time our teachers have to setup fundraisers to buy library books for our elementary schools. There is something very wrong with this picture.

**Gary Stocker – Candidate for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 5****Contact Information**

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**Email:** [gary@garystocker.com](mailto:gary@garystocker.com)

**Education:** Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a major in Management Science and Computer System and a minor in Computer Science from Oklahoma State University **Experience:** Allen ISD Trustee (2004-present) TASB Legislative Advisory Council (2008) City of Allen P&Z Commissioner (2002-2004) AISD Strategic Planning (2007-9, 2011-2013) AISD Project Kids (2002, 2003, 2008) More than 12 years of volunteer

**Finances:** Allen ISD lost \$12M in revenue due to a reduction in school funding last biennium. Allen ISD implemented numerous programs including a voluntary reduction in staff, an increase in classroom sizes, an electricity conservation program and delayed the opening of Lindsey Elementary. Thankfully the citizens approved a tax increase to partially replace some of the lost revenue. Based on current legislative action our current plan is to reduce classroom sizes, restore elementary art and open Lindsey Elementary in August.

**Vouchers:** Allen ISD would be not be significantly impacted by vouchers or an increase in charter schools. Allen ISD provides a quality education for all of our students at all grade levels. A new charter school recently opened in an adjoining district resulting in less than one-half of one percent of AISD students transferring to the charter. Of those students, 20% returned to AISD within a semester.

**Students:** The district is currently expanding focus on non-college bound students. We are adding Jr. ROTC at the high school beginning in 2013-14 school year with additional curriculum to possibly include traditional careers in the trades, cyber-security and other subjects. We are looking at industry leaders, local businesses and area community colleges in the area to partner with and provide funding, educational opportunities

**Gary Stocker – Candidate for Allen ISD Board of Trustees, Place 5**

and/or work-experience for our students.

**Growth:** Our priority is to always hire the best highly-qualified teacher for every classroom. We continue to watch the changes to our demographics as Allen ISD grows and approaches build-out. The number of homeless in AISD is extremely low and we work with local agencies to provide any assistance this small number of students may need. We are currently reviewing the demographics of our student populations to determine if any change in hiring is needed to more closely align teacher demographics to student demographics.

**Accountability:** Our current system causes our students to take too many tests; it is more focused on student testing and should be focused on student learning. We should be focused on the application of the knowledge students' gain. The new testing system greatly over tests our students and will be significantly changed based on current legislative action. I have discussed my concerns with the legislature in Austin and am pleased to see changes to the new testing system. Testing needs to be flexible enough to challenge our college bound students as well as those directly entering the work-force.

**Teachers:** We must continue to provide a competitive salary structure, safe and well maintained facilities and a positive and supportive environment for our teachers to work. Strong support for education in the community, beginning with the campus PTA's, campus and central office staff and business and civic community support are equally important. Allen ISD continues to be an excellent place to teach because of community support across all areas in the district.

**Other Issues:** Funding, growth and a renewed emphasis on the non-college bound students will be issues that AISD will face the next few years. AISD needs to carefully ensure money is first spent on classroom learning. Enrollment has more than doubled since 1989 and growth will continue for the next few years. As neighborhoods mature the student populations will drop resulting in potentially excess capacity. The district must be careful to not over build facilities based on short-term needs. We will be expanding the CTE center to include more traditional career based curriculum to meet non-college based needs.

**Student Voters**

Students may use either their parents' address or their college address for voter registration, whichever they consider to be their permanent address. Students cannot be registered at both places. The general rule of thumb is that wherever students claim residency is the place where they should be registered to vote. Students who will be away from their address on Election Day and during early voting may request ballots by mail.

You may bring this *Voters Guide* into the voting booth! In 1995, the Texas law prohibiting use of printed materials, such as this *Voters Guide*, in the polling place was ruled unconstitutional (*Texas Election Code, Section 61.011*)

**This *Voters Guide* and guides for Frisco, McKinney, Plano and Collin College are available on the League's website at [www.lwvcollin.org](http://www.lwvcollin.org) and at [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org)**

**Your vote is your voice. Be heard.**