

Phil Brown's Responses to the A+ Coalition Questionnaire
Natchitoches Parish School Board Candidate, District 4

1. What experience do you have with complicated budgets? When you are given a very lengthy budget for the district, what will be your process to determine if it is a good budget for the system?
 - A. Experience: I have had occasion to create and defend budget requests for projects and organizations where I had direct responsibility, e.g.
 - a. United States Air Force
 - i. at Hill AFB, Utah: I was the commander of the Bioenvironmental Engineer's Office. I worked to identify a significant number of personnel needed to meet requirements placed on the Office. I was successful in increasing the number of personnel within the unit;
 - ii. at the Air Force Logistics Command Headquarters, Ohio: I created and obtained a five-million-dollar program approved by Congress for developing what became the Command Core Occupational Health Data System. The system maintained occupational medicine and industrial hygiene data on both military and civilian workers. After I left the Air Force the Data System was modified and expanded across the whole Air Force;
 - b. Eastman Kodak: Assembled and helped defend the Health, Safety and Environment Organization budget. It exceeded thirty million dollars annually. Additionally, while working at Kodak I created, defended, and had approved a business case for creating an electronic medical record system for maintaining the medical records of Rochester, New York Kodak employees. The business case reduced the number of employees being used to maintain the medical record system by 25 personnel while causing no one to be fired.
 - B. Lengthy Budget: Generally, I will approach the budget from the perspective of a zero-based budget. In using this method, one assumes there is no justification for any fund request until needs have been identified and justified. I will work to understand a defined requirement for inclusion of any item in the budget, the rationale and calculation of the quantification of the requirement, identification of alternatives for meeting the need, the rationale for exclusion of alternatives and the selection of the preferred alternative. Items for inclusion in a budget are generally categorized as required (legal mandated or by regulation) or optional (best practice, quality improvement or other). Are the expenses recurring or one time? Any program must include any associated expenses, e.g. training, equipment, memberships or other fees. When requested funds exceed available resources, a prioritization process is used to define a cut-off point, i.e. expected expenditures will not exceed

expected resources. I would expect the school board to execute the prioritization process. If a proposed budget after scrubbing and prioritization exceeds expected available resources, I would expect the school board to identify any additional funding needs and look for resources. Generally, the last resort is the Natchitoches community. This would require the board to define the additional requirement and propose, defend and argue the need before the Natchitoches Parish community.

2. In an era of more limited financial resources, how will you enlist support for bond issues or public-school spending from conservative voters or taxpayers with no children in the public schools? How can the school board prove itself accountable to those citizens?

A. No Children in Public Schools: One needs to discuss financial requirements in terms of several benefits to the community at large. Based on my experience in New York State, in part because of high quality schools, my **property values** held their current value or increased. Additionally, in part high quality schools attracted **new businesses** to the local area or encouraged **local employers to grow their investment in the community**. New businesses or growth of investment in the local community **allowed local area students to stay in the local area**. Rather than evaluating public schools as an expense, conservative voters and taxpayers need to value public schools as investments from which they will derive benefit.

B. Accountability: The School Board needs to provide a narrative that is associated with its actions which reflects the development and execution of annual budgets. The narrative will not only describe the costs of the public-school system, but also describe the benefits accruing to the students and the community. For example, one can argue all the A+ Coalition goals for 2025-2026, when achieved will drive direct benefits to the Natchitoches community, e.g. increased wages.

3. In your view, what has the district done well over last five years? What has the district done poorly that you would change? Please provide specific examples.

A. Done Well: My direct efforts with the Natchitoches Parish School Board began in 2011 when I assisted the School Board in obtaining a \$50K grant through Project Lead The Way (PLTW) from American Electric Power for implementation of the PLTW high school **Engineering** program at Natchitoches Central High School and the PLTW **Gateway** program at Marthaville Junior High School. The grants were for \$35K, spread over three years, and \$15K, spread over two years, respectively. The School Board actively participated in obtaining training of teachers and obtaining required equipment, software, and manipulatives. Continuation of the grants required annual reports. In the first year, the School Board had difficulty in obtaining

and providing required financial and demographic data to PLTW for the 2011-12 progress report. I worked with the School Board Office to extract necessary information from their data files and assisted the School Board Office in providing the necessary documentation to PLTW. PLTW templates were provided to the District for the remaining outyear reports.

B. Would Change: Unfortunately, the Natchitoches Parish School Board Office was unable to provide necessary documentation to PLTW for the remaining two years of the grant, which resulted in loss of those funds, \$5K. Knowing what I now know, I would work with the School Board Office to put in place the necessary data collection process to assure continuation of the grant funding.

4. You represent a specific part of Natchitoches Parish – how will you balance the needs of your specific constituents with the needs of the overall school district?

Based on my current understanding of the configuration of the Natchitoches Parish Public School system, it is my assumption that all teaching and learning configurations are consistent throughout the system. However, should I learn my assumption is incorrect, I would work to assure consistency throughout the system. Our, the Board's, emphasis should be high quality schools for ALL our children. Should an out of balance situation be identified, I will actively work to bring balance within all districts within the Parish.

5. If a parent or a principal comes to you regarding, for example, a maintenance issue at a campus or a situation involving a particular teacher, how do you see your role as a school board member in resolving that issue?

I would first listen to the concern being discussed. Then I would inquire if the discussant had examined the Natchitoches Parish School Board 2017-2018 HANDBOOK, page 39, Public Complaints/Grievance Procedure in the case of a maintenance issue. In the case of a teacher there may be more than one section of the handbook which would provide possible insight to their concern, e.g. page 29, Parent and Community Engagement Plan; page 3, School Attendance; or page 21, Electronic Telecommunication Devices for Students. My intent here would be to assure there is policy outlined in the Handbook which is useful for their concern. If the handbook seems to be silent on the concern or guidance cannot be found, I would ask the Superintendent to identify an appropriate authority within the Natchitoches Parish School Board system to address the identified concern and then refer the discussant to the identified authority. Upon follow-up, if there was lack of policy guidance, I would work within the Board structure to create necessary policy guidance.

6. Consider the goals of the A+ Coalition, listed on the attached cover letter; do you believe those are achievable goals? Why or why not? Are any of particular importance to you? Why?
- A. Achievable Goals: Yes, assuming the School Board and the Natchitoches Parish Community agrees to achieve them. Identification of resource requirements, level of funding, degree of plan execution and proper documentary evidence are key to realization of the A+ Coalition goals. Is there a rationale document created by the Natchitoches Parish Chamber of Commerce which outlines these goals, the resource requirements necessary to achieve them, and the willingness of the Chamber to support the execution of the developed plan?
 - B. Why or Why Not: Has the School Board and Natchitoches Parish Community agreed to achieve these goals? If agreement has been obtained, then resourcing requirements should be the next order of business. If such ground work has not yet been done, then the question of Why or Why Not is apropos.
 - C. Particular Importance: All the goals are of importance. But in my view, they may not be sufficient. The goals appear to be based on the idea that if we improve the current educational process, everything will be OK. I am not convinced this assumption is correct. When elected I will work to achieve School Board goals, be they the A+ Coalition ones or other ones agreed to by the Board and the Community.
 - D. Why: The lack of emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) is of concern to me. I do not know how other candidate School Board members view this concern. In my opinion, if Natchitoches is to grow economically, to increase employee income, and to create a tax base supportive of infrastructure needs, then enhanced STEM curricula placed within our educational system will result in better outcomes for the educational system. In my view STEM is key to the realization of a better economy, better pay, and better living wages for future Natchitoches Parish residents. The Board and the Community can create the necessary bridge to this future and I want to be part of the planning and execution of the plan.