

USD 232 Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire – 2025

Name:	TJ Finan
1. Please list any previous elected or appointed offices you have held.	
Answer: I have not held any previous elected positions.	
2. What is your current occupation, and where are you currently employed?	
Answer: Intensive Needs Specialists at St. James Academy.	
3. Please summarize your educational background.	
Answer: Bachelor's degree in Criminology from Kansas State University. Master's degree in Special Education from Pittsburgh State University. Hold both Low and High Incidence licensures.	
4. How long have you lived in the De Soto School District? Do you have school-aged children living at home? If so, what school(s) do they attend?	
Answer: 2008. I have four children. One is at Mill Creek Middle School. Two are at Mize Elementary school. And one is still Pre-K	
5. Please describe your community involvement and activities.	
Answer: I have worked as a teacher and coach at Mill Valley High School since 2013. I have coached multiple youth athletics in the district. I have helped during classroom parties for elementary schools. And I have served on a special education school improvement committee, attending seminars and conferences to gain information to bring back to the district.	
6. Why have you chosen to run for a USD 232 Board of Education position?	
Answer: I want to give back to a district that has given so much to myself and my family. I want to be the voice of all students, teachers, and community members in this district.	
7. How would you foster collaboration among stakeholders, including the Board, parents/guardians, school staff, students, and community members, to ensure that everyone's input is considered in the decision-making process?	
Answer: Establish clear communication channels. Create advisory committees and focus groups. Strengthen school-community partnerships. Encourage shared leadership. Build relationships, prioritize transparency, and trust from all sides involved.	



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8. When funding becomes limited, what are the highest priorities for USD 232?

Answer: 1. Whole child supports. (Academics, Social/emotional), 2. Staff needs (retention, recruitment, and targeted professional development). 3. Efficient facilities.

9. What do you see as opportunities for improvement for USD 232?

Answer: A culture of continuous improvements. Always looking for better. Targeted professional development and student-centered environments to use all resources possible to make gains for all.

10. What ideas do you have for hiring and retaining high-quality staff?

Answer: I would love to build a brand for employees. Pipeline leadership, community voices, culture testimonies from experienced educators to new educators. I want to promote from within the district. Engage and encourage classified staff to become certified and help them through the process. I want the next principal to be a current teacher. I want the next superintendent to be a current principal. Culture is a thing and we need to all love what we do, where we do it, and how to continue to make it great.

11. What could USD 232 do better to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all students?

Answer: Establish clear policies and expectations. Promote school culture. Train and support staff. Create safe physical environments for SEL learning and inclusive classrooms,

12. What will you do as a Board member to ensure you have reliable information on which to base your decisions?

Answer: Use data when making decisions. Consults experts and make sure all policies, regulations, and legal requirements are met. Engage in professional development. Maintain transparency and accountability. And avoid bias and personal agendas.

13. Is there anything else you would like to share with voters?

Answer: I would love for everyone in this district to understand what an **honor** it was for me to work and serve in it for so long. I **respected** every single staff member and student I ever came in contact with. My **love** for this community and district goes beyond the walls of the schools, and I want nothing best for everyone involved. Education is my **passion** and I want to make sure every student is supported, every teacher is valued, and every community is heard. I will pour my **heart** and soul into this position if elected because that is my goal, and that is my mission to make not only this district great, but ELITE.



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