

USD 232 Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire: September 2023

Name: Chad Philhour

Position: 1

1. Please list any previous elected or appointed offices you have held.
As an owner of an architecture firm, I am a shareholder and director. As a member of the executive board, I run the organizations' daily operations which include management of staff. This is my first effort at running for an elected local school position.

2. What is your current occupation and where are you currently employed?
I am an Architect at bcDESIGNGROUP. My title is Partner | Director, Entertainment Studio - My primary role as Partner is to focus on business development, securing project opportunities and cultivating client relationships. I have a demonstrated history of working in the architecture/planning industry with a highly specialized skill in the leisure entertainment, hospitality and retail sectors. As Director of the Entertainment Studio, I lead our team to bring design and innovation to clients around the world.

bcDESIGNGROUP is a medium sized firm that employs Architects and Interior Designers. We have three studios or sectors we focus on: Wellness (hospitals, medical office buildings), Community (libraries, fire stations) and Entertainment (Family Entertainment Centers, bowling alleys, cinemas, restaurants).

As a small business owner, I understand the importance of leadership and communication. Being an entrepreneur, I am continuously learning. As an Architect, I think there are numerous skills that will translate to help the board – strategic thinking, problem solving and team building. My background as an Architect will bring a unique skill set to the district for future growth, building retrofits, facility upgrades, building energy conservation, building safety and construction budgeting.

3. Please list the school(s) where you completed your secondary and any post-secondary education.
I attend Maranatha Academy from Kindergarten thru 8th grade. My parents built a house in Woodland Park, and I transferred to De Soto and attended 9th grade at the old Junior High, 10th and 11th grade at what is now Lexington Trails and was the first graduating class from the new De Soto High school in 1996. After High School I attended the University of Kansas.
4. What degree(s) do you hold?
At the University of Kansas, I obtained a Bachelor of Architecture degree and a minor in Art History.



5. How long have you lived in the district? Do you have school-aged children living at home? If so, what school(s) do they attend?
I first moved to the district in 1993 and lived here for four years during High School. Throughout college I lived in Lawrence during the school year and in the De Soto district through the summers. My wife and I moved our family back to USD 232 in 2016 and built our home in the Preserves at Clear Creek. We did this so our daughters could attend school in the De Soto School District. We have four daughters, three of which attend Mize Elementary. My youngest will be in Pre-K at Trinity Lutheran next year then Mize for Kindergarten. All four of our daughters will be in Mize Elementary together in 2025 before we start the season of multiple De Soto schools!
6. Please describe your community involvement and activities.
We are licensed foster parents through KVC Health Systems and focus on PPC (Police Protective Care), respite (fostering for other foster families) and short-term care. We are supporters of RiseUp KC, Restoration House of Greater KC, American Heart Association, The Down Syndrome Guild, De Soto Food Pantry, Johnson County Christmas Bureau, Red Bag KC, House Captain for Christmas in October and a volunteer for Habitat for Humanity. We lead a bible study at our church LifeChurch. I coach my daughters' sports (t-ball and soccer for multiple years and age groups). My wife volunteers her time weekly at our children's school assisting the teachers. We are both involved in the PTO at Mize, she is the Vice President and I am assisting with the Mize garden project.
7. Why have you chosen to run for the USD 232 Board of Education?
Every student deserves quality education, including additional help and resources for those in need. A sense of belonging at school means feeling a sense of acceptance, respect and support in a learning environment. I am vested in public schools and in particular, De Soto as an alumni and parent of students in the district. My family will be attending the district schools for the next fifteen years. I believe school is for everyone and the mission is to ensure they get the highest quality education. I have a servant's heart and a willingness to open myself up to something new to create value for others.
8. What will you do as a board member to ensure you have adequate knowledge and information on which to base your decisions?
Wise board members come prepared having thoroughly reviewed board packets prior to meetings. I will listen carefully, ask pertinent questions and dispense advice sparingly. A good board member makes decisions based on input from the superintendent balanced with what is best for students, families and teachers. The board should have a purpose driven culture focused on commitment, equity and respect for those impacted by the work.

9. How would you foster collaboration between the board, parents/guardians, school staff, and community members to ensure everyone's input is considered in decision-making processes? Create a positive environment, respect everyone's perspective, allow everyone to be heard and have emotional intelligence. The board must model the behavior that is expected of all involved to safeguard respect.
10. When funding becomes critical, what do you see as priorities for our school district?
When monetary resources become limited, I think one should focus resources on key metrics – students and teachers. With any business in slim times, you focus on key front-line contributors to ensure they can continue to produce at a high level to maintain your goal as a corporation. Teachers are the direct conduits to the success of our students.
11. If funding becomes more abundant, what do you see as priorities for our school district?
On the flip side of this, when funding is in surplus, I think we should stay hyper-diligent and focus on areas that need improvement. Each dollar spent needs to create the greatest impact for the district to move everyone forward. School spending should ensure equal access to core educational services to raise student achievement.
12. What do you view as opportunities for improvement in USD 232?
Administration must wholeheartedly support staff so they can succeed. Our current turnover rate over 10% is not healthy for the district; retention of staff creates great culture. Support and good environments are where excellence occurs. Transparency to parents on everything is critical to fostering a healthy and supportive culture for students, staff and parents.
13. What do you view as USD 232's main areas of strength?
We are a highly ranked district that has a healthy student-teacher ratio. The college and career readiness are far above the State average. Test scores exceed State average. We have a great Special Education Center Based Program.
14. Is there anything else that you would like to share with our members?
The work you do as a group is inspiring. I am extremely grateful that you selected a career in service to enrich our most prized possession, our children. No words can thank you enough but please know you make a difference in so many lives.