

Matthews: Will fight for every child

Publisher's note: Lake Tahoe News asked candidates for South Lake Tahoe City Council, Lake Tahoe Community College, Lake Tahoe Unified School District, Douglas County School District, South Tahoe Public Utility District and Lake Valley Fire Protection District a series of questions. We are running the responses in the order received. All profiles may be found under the Special Projects listing and then the 2106 November Candidate Profiles category.



Troy Matthews, while running unopposed for the Lake Tahoe Unified School District's Area 4 board seat, asked to answer the questions for the public to get to know him.

Name: Troy Matthews

Age: 32

Job/profession: Nonprofit management

What boards, commissions, or other experience, including volunteering, do you have?: I am a graduate of the Leadership

Lake Tahoe program and sit on the board for the Tahoe Regional Young Professionals, the Progress For Tahoe Steering Committee, and I am project director for the South Tahoe Drug Free Coalition.

Why are you seeking this position?: I am running to fight for every child, regardless of background, because I believe a good education is a human right.

Why should voters vote for you?: I don't have an axe to grind as I don't have children in the district and I have never worked for the district. I am a fresh young voice. I love this community and am the best choice to fight for every child, because I am only running to serve all youth and families to the best of my ability.

What distinct experience or competency makes you uniquely qualified to lead effectively as an elected official?: Education is in my blood. Both of my parents were teachers and my mother was a high school principal for 14 years. I grew up going to school board meetings with my mom. I was a substitute teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District and then got a permanent teaching job in an inpatient treatment center for adolescents. From my very first day of teaching, I fought for students that traditional schools had given up on. I got my Master's Degree while teaching full-time. Currently, I work for Tahoe Youth & Family Services. I have dedicated my life to working for disadvantaged and at-risk youth. Fighting for quality educational opportunities for all youth is my life's passion, and this is what I carry with me to the LTUSD board.

Public agencies have been under scrutiny the last few years for lack of transparency and accountability. What will you do to ensure both?: The Brown Act goes a long way to ensure transparency. Public schools belong to the community. I will make sure that the LTUSD continues to be an open book that seeks positive constructive feedback from the entire community. I want to be an open pipeline for parent and

community contact with the district. I will always be available to discuss new ideas and hear concerns.

What stands out for you in the current budget that you support and that you would change?: I support CTE programs and AVID. I would like to see more support from the district for local pre-K and after school programs as well arts education for younger students.

Do you support current legislation for \$15 minimum wage? Please explain: I do support the \$15 minimum wage. I understand why people are opposed to it, but the fact is wages have not kept up with inflation over the past 30 years. According to research from Pew Charitable Trusts, 80 percent of Americans are in debt. It's not a mystery as to why: the cost of living is way too high and people don't earn enough income. South Lake Tahoe exemplifies this issue even more than most locales, unfortunately. It is simply not possible to live on \$9 per hour in this community. A wage of \$15 per hour for 40 hours per week means a yearly salary of about \$31,000 before taxes. Even that is not enough to support a family of four in California. Many parents cannot take an active interest in their child's schooling because of the amount of hours they have to work to make ends meet, and this negatively impacts student performance, and, at last count, nearly 250 youth in our district were homeless. Higher wages means more discretionary spending which boosts the economy, and that means we all benefit. At the same time, local regulatory agencies have got to make life easier for our small businesses. We have to create an environment where paying employees more does not amount to an existential threat to local businesses.

Do you support Proposition 55? Please explain: I do support Prop 55. Prop. 55 is an extension of Prop. 30, passed in 2012, which is set to expire in 2018. South Lake Tahoe schools greatly benefit from this measure at no cost to the vast majority of people who live here. Prop. 55 will prevent

billions of dollars in cuts to California schools while ensuring local control of funds.

Describe three attributes for a successful board: Compassion, transparency, and cooperation

What are your thoughts about public employee defined benefits?: Public employee benefits are essential to attracting and retaining qualified teachers and administrators. Teachers are often unfairly scapegoated for economic issues in the state due to their benefits. Teachers deserve every benefit they receive and the success of Prop. 30 proves that there are solutions to protecting funding for schools besides cutting wages and benefits for public workers.

Please explain your position on contracting out work normally done by staff: I do not support contract work that undercuts the wages and benefits of regular staff.

What is your 10-year vision for the school district?: I would envision that we have one of the highest graduation rates in the state; work with Douglas County and Placer County and Washoe County schools to promote lakewide educational cooperation and success; continue to grow CTE, AVID, and college readiness programs; continue to enhance the LCAP to include student wellness programs; promote civics education and the humanities to develop well rounded citizens of the nation and the world; develop environmental science and fire science programs utilizing the amazing natural resources all around us; become a hub for arts education with award winning music, culinary, studio art, and theater programs; become a hub for athletics, physical fitness, and sports science programs to fit our recreation destination and athletic community; have the majority of LTUSD students fluent in another language by the time they graduate; be known statewide as a community with some of the best schools in the country; continue to promote STEM education and integrate "STEAM" education adding an arts component; establish a K-14 education

culture in Tahoe; work to promote a four-year university in Tahoe and develop a strong partnership between the university and the LTUSD to keep local students local.

What one vote in the last four years that the current Board made do you disagree with and why?: While not every board decision has been perfect, I support the current direction of the board. I don't have a specific decision that I strongly disagree with. I do think the board needs to be more proactive in its governance and, as a board, establish a clear vision for the district moving forward.

How many meetings have you attended this year for the board you are running for?: Three meetings, including the most recent LTUSD board retreat.

What do you know about the strategic plan, finances, debt, goals of the school board?: I support the current direction of the district to foster growth of the whole student as well as provide continual educational opportunities to EL students and disadvantaged youth. The vast majority of funding for all California schools comes from the state level, which is why Prop. 55 is so important. School district budgets in California are incredibly complex, but the gist is: we need to increase spending per pupil to compete with other states. California is well below average in per-pupil spending despite the high priority the state puts on public education.

Being on the school board means working as a team. How will you work with the next board for the greater good of the community?: Myself and other members of the board will without doubt have disagreements, but the students of the district must always remain the focus for the board. I will do what I can to voice my opinion and fight for what I believe in, but once the board has voted, that is the decision of the board. I will support it even if I voted against it.

What should be the three main priorities for the board?:

Increase parent involvement, attract and retain great teachers, increase graduation rates.

What do you know about Common Core? What is your opinion about it?: Common Core is a new set of standards for K-12 English and math competency established by the U.S. Department of Education. States may choose to opt in to these standards. California is one of 46 states to have opted in to Common Core. My thoughts are: the jury is still out. Teachers in LTUSD are still transitioning to Common Core, so it may take a couple years to know if they are successful or not. I believe the intent behind Common Core is good, but I also believe in local control of education. Every school district is unique. I will oppose Common Core if it proves to be a detriment to our students. I will oppose any test score requirements tied to school funding.

How can the school district partner with the city to improve high school graduation rates?: The city and the LTUSD can work together to increase parent involvement in the schools, and that means creating an economy where parents aren't forced to work three jobs and never see their kids in order to feed their kids. The 61 percent poverty rate for our students is a tragedy. I do not accept it. The city should also focus on fostering the growth of available and affordable housing in our community. The LTUSD can hire great teachers, but that won't matter if they have to leave Tahoe because they can't find a place to live.

What is your opinion about career and technical education at the high school level?: I strongly support it. I believe CTE has transformed education as we know it and made South Tahoe High a unique success story in California. Our students have learning opportunities few in other districts have.

Do you support the expansion of charter schools? Why or why not?: I support heavily regulated charter schools with identical standards to regular public schools. I believe

charter schools that go unchecked pull money away from public schools while not necessarily providing their students with a quality education. They can be essentially private schools that receive public funding. However, I do support innovation in education, and this is where charter schools can be very successful.

What are your thoughts on the accreditation status at STHS?: It is an unfortunate situation that needs to be remedied quickly.

Tell us something about yourself that people may not know: I'm terrified of flying, I love to cook, and I am a huge fan of the Los Angeles Lakers, unfortunately.