

2026 SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

St. Tammany Federation of Teachers and School Employees • Local 3952

PURPOSE

The Federation uses this questionnaire, candidate interviews, public records, and other relevant information when considering endorsements. We value responses that are specific, candid, and grounded in the responsibilities of a School Board member. Candidates need not agree with the Federation on every issue but should explain the principles and evidence that would guide their decisions.

Candidate information

Candidate: Jesse “Bert” Stephens

District: 11

Campaign email: jalbertstephens@gmail.com

Campaign phone: 504-236-7255

Campaign website: None at this time.

Submission and endorsement request

☒ I am seeking the endorsement of the St. Tammany Federation of Teachers and School Employees.

☐ I am not seeking the Federation’s endorsement, but I am returning the questionnaire for member information.

☐ I am seeking consideration for an eligible political contribution.

Return by: Friday, August 28, 2026, at 11:45 p.m. **To:** union@stfed.org

Response guidance

Please keep each response to 200 words or fewer. Specific examples are encouraged. It is entirely appropriate to acknowledge that a question involves an area you would like to learn more about; if so, please explain how you would become informed and what principles would guide you in the meantime. The Federation may publish responses in full or in substantially complete form, with only formatting corrections.

Candidate certification

By typing my name below, I intend for my typed name to serve as my signature and certify that these responses reflect my own positions. I understand that the Federation may also consider my public record, candidate interview, and other relevant information.

Typed Signature: Jesse Stephens **Date:** 9/7/2026

Background and priorities

1. Priorities and Preparation

Why are you seeking election to the St. Tammany Parish School Board? What are your three highest priorities, what experience or preparation do you bring, and how should voters judge whether you have been successful?

Response:

I am running for STPSB because I feel that the most important thing that we can give our children is a strong education. I think that my diverse experience in education and business makes me uniquely qualified to bring value to the board. The areas that members of the board primarily deal with are budgeting and policies. As district manager, change agent and manager of commercial training and development I have extensive experience in both of those areas. My top priorities are to ensure that the money that we have in our budget is spent in the best way possible, ensuring that we are meeting the needs of not only our college bound students, but those who are going into the trades as well as the arts and focus on campus beautification. I will leave it up to voters to determine whether or not I have been successful.

2. Record or Readiness

NEW CANDIDATES: What have you done to learn about the St. Tammany Parish Public Schools? What have you learned that most influences your decision to run?

INCUMBENTS: What are three important votes or actions from your current term? What promises have you kept, what work is still unfinished, and is there a decision you would make differently today?

Response:

As a STPSB retiree and husband of a retiree and father of two Slidell High graduates I am very familiar with St. Tammany Parish Schools. Since I have decided to run for the board I have met with each of the principals at the respective schools I would represent as well as the current District 11 representative. I have also familiarized myself with the CBA.

Governance and employee voice

3. Parliamentary Procedure

How familiar are you with Robert's Rules of Order and the use of fair and consistent rules during Board meetings?3-Working Knowledge

If elected, would you be willing to participate in training on Board governance and parliamentary procedure?Maybe

4. Collective Bargaining

Do you support collective bargaining in St. Tammany Parish Public Schools? Yes

Compensation, finances, and working conditions

5. Employee Compensation

Do you believe compensation for certificated and support employees is competitive? Need to learn more.

6. District Finances

Rate your knowledge of STPPS finances and budget. 3-Working Knowledge

7. Recruitment, Retention, and Working Conditions

What do you believe affects the district's ability to hire and keep good employees?(Examples might include workload, planning time, duties, class sizes or caseloads, administrative support, career growth, morale, and professional respect.)

Response:

I believe the ability to hire and keep good employees include many factors. All of the factors above are included. I would add feeling valued, especially by your administration. As someone who worked in Leadership Development in the pharmaceutical industry, I understand that people want to feel valued, seen and heard. They want clear direction and expectations as well.

Teaching, learning, and school climate

8. Professional Autonomy and Instructional Decisions

When a school uses a scripted curriculum, how much freedom should educators have to adjust the lesson, pace, or teaching methods to meet their students' needs?

Response:

I haven't been in the classroom for several years, so I need to find out more about the current laws. Having said that, I feel teachers should have the freedom to adjust the lesson or teaching methods to meet students' needs.

9. Safe and Supportive Schools

How should the district handle violence, threats, bullying, repeated behavior problems, and other behavior that makes it hard to learn or feel safe, while also protecting student rights and giving students the help they need?

Response:

We should have zero tolerance for violence, threats, bullying and repeated behavior problems. The safety of our children is paramount.

10. Educational Opportunity and Student Success

What school programs and opportunities for students should the district improve or add? (Examples might include reading, math, job and career programs, advanced classes, libraries, special education, English language support, gifted programs, art, music, sports, clubs, and other activities.)

Response:

My judgment on this question is based on my experience most recently working at Northshore HS and Lakeshore HS. From that experience I think that we do a wonderful job in each of the above areas. We should continue to strive to improve them even more. As the Career Coach at Lakeshore the past 2.5 years, my eyes were opened to the need to continue to help introduce students to what jobs and careers are out there as well as to continue to offer increasing opportunities for training in High School for jobs in the trades.

11. Artificial Intelligence, Technology, and Screen Time

How should the district approach AI, technology, student devices, and screen time? (Consider topics such as instructional value, age-appropriate limits, academic integrity, AI literacy, student data privacy, cybersecurity, and the role of educators and parents before new technologies or requirements are adopted.)

Response:

This question is extremely hard to answer in 200 words because it is so broad. AI and technology are both rapidly unfolding and evolving. That is both exciting and scary. In general, I believe that we cannot ignore the increasing use of the new technology as the students will certainly be using them in jobs and careers. I do believe the development of critical thinking skills is very important and that we need to look at the amount of time the students spend on using devices in the classroom. I believe that the Central Office and School Board need considerable input from educators and parents before adopting new technologies or requirements.

Accountability

12. Accountability and Accessibility

If elected, how will you stay available to employees and the public, communicate with Federation representatives, and protect employees' right to speak up about workplace concerns? If you make a decision that is different from what you said during your campaign, how will you explain that decision to the public?

Response:

I will be available to employees and the public, as is any other board member, by being available through phone, email or meetings. I will meet with the Federation representative at each school and discuss the best way for each of them how they would like for us to communicate. If I make a decisions that is different from what I said during the campaign, I will explain the reason for my change. Usually, if I change my mind on something, it is because I discover information that I was not aware of or that the facts or situation has changed.

