

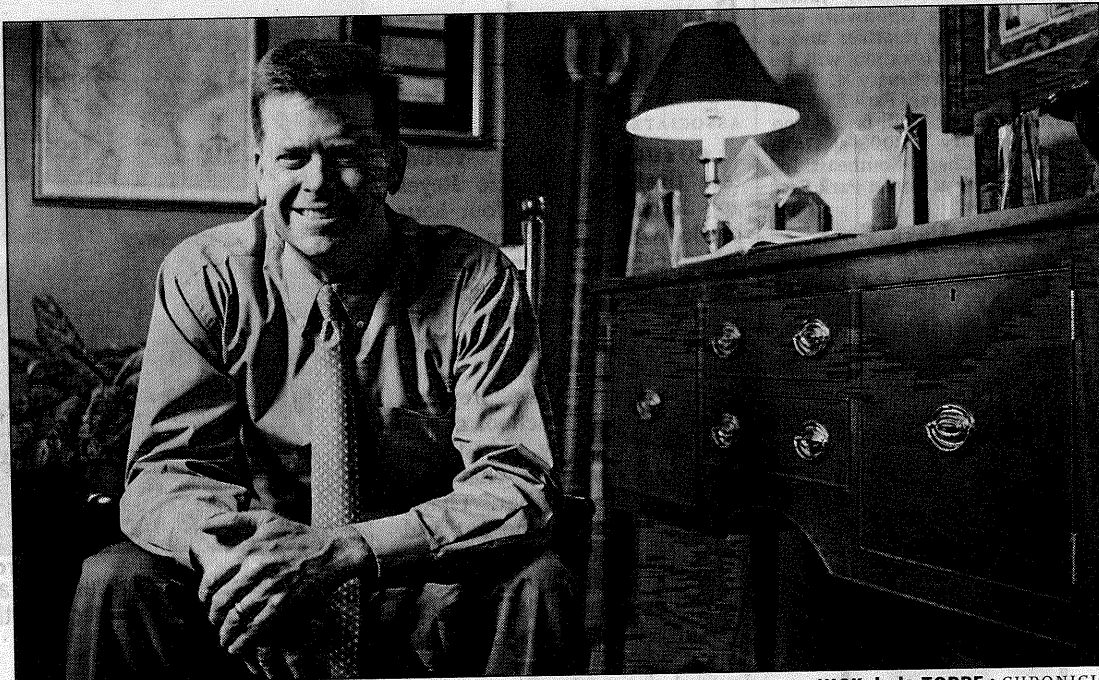
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THE JUMP PAGE

SUNDAY CONVERSATION

Board leader's vision for HISD

Harvin Moore got the nod in mid-January to serve as president of the Houston Independent School District board of trustees. A senior vice president of a Houston aerospace company, the 43-year-old father of two grew up in the Briarcroft neighborhood and attended public school until enrolling in a private high school. He took time to talk about his 2008 priorities for HISD with Houston Chronicle education reporter Jennifer Radcliffe.



NICK de la TORRE: CHRONICLE

Q: You have a very full plate. Are you worried about having time to serve as board president?

A: I'm going to make the time to do the job right, but it's one of those things you can do best by focusing on simple strategies, a clear vision and good delegation. . . . You can be at your best if you're at your busiest.

Q: How hard do you think it will be to politically manage a school board that's just come off a controversial bond election, has two brand new members and has another member who has announced his candidacy for state representative?

A: As anyone who's tried it will agree, you can't politically manage a school board. We have nine people — all independently elected by different parts of town that have different backgrounds. Frankly, that is our strength. This school board has had a reputation for years now for getting along well.

Q: You recently dubbed this the year of human resources, communications and collaboration in HISD. What do you mean?

A: The piece we haven't really touched yet is

LEADERSHIP: "We have to develop great principals who are organizational leaders and who know how to attract and retain the very best teachers," said Harvin Moore, president of the HISD board of trustees.

leadership development. This organization operates in 300 locations. They're called schools, and they're led by principals. The traditional model has been that the best teachers are promoted to principals. They rose to that position a lot of times because they were good at teaching. We have to develop great principals who are organizational leaders and who know how to attract and retain the very best teachers. And we're going to have to do it cooperatively.

Q: HISD took a lot of heat last year, especially during the bond election, for not listening to constituents. Is that what prompted your goal of improving communications?

A: You've got to listen to people, No. 1, because you learn from them. You may not agree with them, and you may not tell them what they actually want to hear at the end. If you don't listen or you listen too

late, I think you deserve to be criticized. That can't keep happening.

And it's not that hard. To me, the hard stuff is often what we're good at. It's the easy stuff we can't get right, like communication. Not that communication is easy, but it's easier than breaking the cycle between poverty and low academic achievement.

Q: You have two young children, one of whom attends private school. Do you take a lot of heat from the public school community about that?

A: She attends the same school she attended before I got on the board. The signal I want this district to send is that we embrace choice. We learn from our competition. I attended HISD for 10 years and then private school for three. To me, that familiarity with what's out there is one of my strengths.

Q: Speaking of family: Your grandfather was a well-known architect, and your father was a lawyer who ran a multimillion-dollar real estate company. What was it like to grow up in a family where such high levels of success are the norm?

A: It's not really success. It's high levels of effort, but they go through failures and successes. I've known failure. . . . That is a blessing. If you don't know failure, you don't know yourself. You almost feel sorry for someone who's never had real adversity.

Q: Harvin is such an unusual name. And you're Harvin C. Moore IV. Any idea where it came from? And did you make your son No. 5?

A: Actually, his name is Quinn. He's actually the seventh Harvin — the fifth with the same middle name. We do know that the first Harvin fought in the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812. He survived. That's the big deal. He was a foot soldier.

I did decide to carry it on with my son. I just don't need to be visited by my great-grandfather late at night asking what happened to the name.

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