

Collier School Board – June 9 Candidate Forum Position Grid

This forum summary was generated by Otter.ai from the audio recording and transcript of the June 9, 2026, school board candidate forum. It is provided as a reader aid only and should not be treated as an official record or as a substitute for the audio. Candidate statements quoted or summarized in my post were checked against the audio.

| Issue / Theme | Kelly Lichter Mason (D3, Incumbent) | Jeff Donaldson (D1, Challenger) | Tim Moshier (D5, Incumbent) | Ford Dalusma (D5, Challenger) |
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| Background / Lens | Former high school teacher; founder and long-time volunteer board president of Mason Classical Academy; prior and current CCPS board member. ([0:06:30–0:08:34]) | Pastor and former executive pastor with large budget/operations experience; former board member of a growing K–12 private school; parent of five. ([0:08:38–0:10:24], [0:15:11–0:16:10]) | 30+ years in transportation; became active in school politics during COVID; one term on CCPS board with frequent focus on Immokalee. ([0:10:27–0:12:30], [0:14:16–0:15:07]) | Graduate of CCPS; from a family of educators; active in church and as a translator; outreach in Immokalee, especially around elections. ([0:12:34–0:13:55]) |
| Academics & Programs | Prioritizes academic achievement and led a district-wide return to explicit phonics for reading improvement and remediation; supports robust CTE/paths via Lorenzo Walker. ([0:19:05–0:20:07]) | Focuses on early literacy (K–3) and ESL students, plus strong support for Lorenzo Walker and I-Tech as trade/technical paths for non-college-bound students. ([0:21:09–0:22:14]) | Emphasizes Collier’s high state ranking and highlights dual enrollment and CTE (Lorenzo Walker, Immokalee programs) as major success stories. ([0:20:11–0:21:09], [0:51:28–0:53:03]) | Stresses maintaining the district’s A rating while increasing the number of graduates with industry certificates and dual enrollment credentials. ([0:16:10–0:17:12], [0:18:21–0:19:01], [0:51:28–0:52:00]) |
| Teacher Pay (Level & Approach) | Cites board-approved raises of 9%, 12%, and 11% + \$1,000 bonus, tying them to higher morale and improved recruitment/retention. ([0:24:44–0:25:37]) | Says the board has done well improving teacher pay and wants to keep teacher compensation a central budget priority while ensuring teachers are fully certified. ([0:22:30–0:23:36]) | States Collier is among the top two or three districts in Florida for teacher pay, with many more applicants than openings. ([0:23:39–0:24:44]) | Notes Collier’s relatively high standing within Florida but stresses Florida’s low national rank, arguing pay still needs to rise to avoid losing teachers to other states. ([0:25:37–0:26:27]) |
| Referendum / New Revenue | Does not advocate a new local referendum in this forum; focuses on using reserves carefully, improving ROI on programs, and pressure on Tallahassee for better funding. ([0:34:26–0:35:50], [0:52:04–0:53:03]) | Does not mention or endorse a new local referendum; focuses on internal budget management, prioritizing classroom teachers and planning for future capital needs. ([0:31:26–0:32:29]) | References a past referendum (about two years ago) that shifted capital dollars to the general fund to support teacher pay and says more state funding is needed going forward. ([0:53:03–0:54:15]) | Explicitly supports a new citizen-led referendum to “drastically, dramatically” increase teacher and staff pay and says his campaign “strongly supports” it. ([0:25:37–0:26:27], [0:55:05–0:56:02]) |
| Budget & Fiscal Strategy | Emphasizes fiscal responsibility, creation of a spending reductions group, use of reserves (but no deficit), and cutting low-ROI programs and possibly slowing tech purchases amid state underfunding. ([0:34:26–0:35:50]) | Argues classroom teachers are the front line and should be funded first; notes recent schools were built with cash, and flags potential future capital/operations shortfalls as growth continues. ([0:31:26–0:32:29]) | Stresses funding is largely set by Tallahassee; notes CCPS is debt-free, has cut 300+ non-classroom positions, and relies partly on the earlier referendum while capital millage has been lowered. ([0:30:30–0:31:26], [0:53:03–0:54:15]) | Praises debt payoff but calls for more budget transparency about sources and balances, and wants spending clearly prioritized toward student outcomes, teacher pay, and staff support. ([0:32:36–0:33:21]) |

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| Safety & Security | Highlights post-Parkland measures (door locks, classroom safe locations, drills) and strong partnership with CCSO, including armed deputies in every school who also build relationships and gather safety intel. ([0:26:40–0:27:37]) | Says he is impressed with SROs at every school, automatic door locks, regular door checks, and “safe corners,” and views the district as “really buttoned down” on security. ([0:29:29–0:30:16]) | Describes extensive hardening: single-point entry, ID checks, cameras, deputies on every campus with rapid backup and building access, praising the CCSO–CCPS partnership. ([0:28:33–0:29:26]) | Supports trained, armed deputies in each school and emphasizes that safety also depends on student trust and multiple channels (including anonymous) to report concerns. ([0:27:50–0:28:30]) |
| Student & Staff Mental Health | Supports state-required mental-health programs but stresses parental notification and involvement in services affecting their children. ([0:50:12–0:50:59]) | Strongly supports on-site mental-health counselors working with parents, while cautioning that schools cannot be “all things to all people” and should connect families to outside resources as needed. ([0:48:27–0:49:13]) | Notes district-wide training and services for students and staff (including deputies), with efforts to raise pay for mental-health providers and to identify issues early. ([0:47:31–0:48:25]) | Links safety, bullying, and mental health, calling for more training and stigma-reducing ways for students to share concerns (e.g., methods that don’t single them out). ([0:49:13–0:50:12]) |
| Parents’ Role & Curriculum | Frames parents as “partners in education,” involved via school/staff committees and PTO, with curriculum selected by staff and board under BEST standards, which she says prevent indoctrination. ([0:35:50–0:36:46]) | Emphasizes parents’ primary responsibility for their children’s education and promotes a “trust but verify” approach, urging parents to review curriculum, flag concerns, and meet with teachers. ([0:37:42–0:39:55]) | Urges parents to be highly involved at school and home, stresses open communication with teachers, and sees education as a partnership given many students start school behind in reading. ([0:36:46–0:37:42]) | Says “parents will parent and teachers should teach,” encouraging parents to voice concerns while affirming that professional educators, following state/local law, should teach the full curriculum. ([0:35:00–0:35:50]) |
| Church–State & Religion in Schools | Supports students’ right to pray but says public schools (including her charter) should not push any one religion, instead teaching virtues and history while leaving religion to families. ([0:43:06–0:44:09]) | States he is not running to make schools Christian, is comfortable explaining major religious holidays (Easter, Christmas, Hanukkah), and supports reinstating prayer at school board meetings. ([0:46:20–0:47:16]) | Says he “likes religion” and wants students to be able to learn about multiple religions, while opposing government or schools dictating a particular faith. ([0:45:23–0:46:20]) | Advocates a “full and complete separation of church and state in the classroom,” opposes ideologically biased content like PragerU, and supports teaching religion as history while keeping instruction religiously neutral. ([0:44:15–0:45:19]) |
| Five-Year Vision / Measures of Success | Envisions Collier as a top district in Florida and nationally, with higher academic benchmarks and a balanced, sustainable budget despite state funding challenges. ([0:52:04–0:53:03]) | Hopes to see all B schools become A, Collier in the top five districts in Florida, more students in trade/technical programs, and thoughtful decisions about future superintendent leadership. ([0:54:18–0:54:56]) | Wants continued improvement in academic ranking, maintenance of financial strength and debt-free status, and more state funding to further raise teacher pay. ([0:53:03–0:54:15]) | Defines success as higher teacher retention, sustained strong academic results, fewer bullying/safety complaints, and more graduates with job-ready certificates and dual-enrollment credits. ([0:51:28–0:52:00], [0:55:05–0:56:02]) |