



DEVIN WALA

My wife of 24 years, Laurel, and I moved to Payson nine years ago with our two children. We chose Payson because we wanted to raise our kids in a small town where we could make a difference.

I have a B.S. in Computer Science from the University of Iowa, and have worked as a programmer, systems engineer and engineering manager. However, I come from a family of teachers, including both of my parents.

We have been involved with the schools in the same way as many parents—volunteering, fundraisers, sports events, and concerts. Our children attended Frontier Elementary School, Rim Country Middle School, and now Payson High School. We have felt the pain of the difficult times our School District has been through, and appreciated the many great teachers that our children have had.

In 2008, our family volunteered at a school for disabled children in Guatemala. After this experience, we felt that learning Spanish would be helpful for future volunteer work. So, in 2010, we were making plans to spend a year living in Mexico to learn Spanish. Before we had completely committed to this plan, a small group of teachers asked my wife and me to organize a PTO to support the gifted and talented students in Payson. The State had just announced that it was cutting all funding for gifted and talented programs—a big hit to our schools. That night neither of us could sleep, and by the next morning we had each come to the same conclusion—we wanted to oversee the education of our own children, but also help to improve the opportunities of ALL of the area's students before reaching outside of Payson. To that end my wife and I started and have nurtured the Payson Association for Advanced Learners (PAAL), which supports programs not only for gifted and talented students, but also many academic programs for all students, such as Model UN and the Engineering Program.

My primary role in PAAL is as the travel coordinator. In 2011, I led a group of 60 students and chaperones to Washington DC. In 2012, I led a group of 90 on a Pacific Coast Marine Biology tour. I am currently organizing a trip to New York City for approximately 85 students and chaperones. Working with local teachers, I have created these trips to further the learning opportunities of students in the Payson Unified School District.

I am now looking to further serve the students of the Payson School District by seeking election to the School Board. I am doing this for my children and my children's classmates. I have a vested interest in the quality of our schools and have worked hard to support them.

This year you will have many choices when voting for your new School Board members. When considering candidates for the School Board, please ask yourself what each candidate's motivation is, and who has the best interests of our children at heart.