1. I paid into social security for 20 years before teaching. How can I best utilize S.S. and TRS?
   
The Windfall Elimination Period (WEP) may affect you. This rule from the Social Security Administration may reduce the amount you receive from Social Security because of your TRS pension. For Social Security benefits and WEP, the Social Security Administration should be your primary source for information. You should contact your local office and/or schedule an appointment to discuss your specific situation.


2. How can I pay a parent loan quickly?
   
   Avoid forbearances/deferments as much as possible. Refinance if possible with a lower interest rate. Pay more towards principal, but let the loan servicing company know that you would like the extra amount applied to the principal.

3. Student forgiveness loans process and implications
   
   There are various forgiveness programs. Some Teachers may qualify for the Teacher Loan and could receive up to $17,500 in forgiveness. Others may qualify for a Public Service Loan forgiveness this program considers the size of your loan, income, and your family size.

4. What other retirement plans are available for teachers?
   
   403B primarily but depending on the District, a 457 plan as well. At McAllen ISD, only a 403B option is currently available.

5. I have 2 Visa credit cards that I rarely use. Does not using existing cards hurt one's credit? Should I just cancel both cards?
   
   Not using the cards will not hurt you. Closing the accounts could likely hurt your credit scores.

6. How can I help improve my credit, and how long before results are evident?
   
   Pay your bills on time, and keep revolving debt at 30% or below credit limit.

7. What is the earliest you can retire and receive TRS benefits?
   
   Members can retire when they have five years of service and have reached age 55. Members who have earned 30 years of service can retire regardless of their age, so it is possible that someone who is only 49 years old may be able to retire. Retiring at the earliest opportunity may result in a reduced (early age) service retirement. TRS should always be your primary source for TRS information. https://www.trs.texas.gov/Pages/active_member_faq_mytrs.aspx

8. How can I open a 403B plan?
   
   Select the investment provider from the approved vendor list available from MISD Employee Benefits, open an account with the provider and submit a Salary Reduction Agreement (SRA) to McAllen ISD through the District’s 403b Administrator, National Benefit Services (NBS). Contact NBS at 1-800-274-0503 https://www.nbsbenefits.com/non-erisa-403b-forms/
9. As a school district employee, when I retire, will I be able to claim Social Security pension?

The Windfall Elimination Period (WEP) and/or Government Pension Offset may affect you. These rules from the Social Security Administration may reduce the amount you receive from Social Security because of your TRS pension. For Social Security benefits, WEP and GPO, the Social Security Administration should be your primary source for information. You should contact your local office and/or schedule an appointment to discuss your specific situation.


10. What is the proper credit score to be approved for a credit card?

Every creditor has a different underwriting criteria. Usually a 650 FICO is considered good with creditors, but the higher the score the lower your interest rate will be.

11. How can I transfer my retirement fund from another ISD to McAllen district?

Assuming the fund is in a 403B, there are transfer documents that are required by your provider and McAllen ISD’s Plan. Contact the Districts 403B Administrator at 1-800-274-0503 for procedures to initiate a transfer. Note: The other ISD’s Plan must allow for transfers out of their Plan.

12. What are my options when the mortgage company is constantly calling and sending registered letters about foreclosure when I am current on my payments?

You can dispute the delinquency, you can also request that they stop calling you.

13. Can I refinance a parent loan for a lower interest rate?

Yes, there are private lenders in the market that do refinancing of federal student loans. You need to be careful since you may lose some entitlements.

14. Is there a tax benefit for teachers when purchasing a home?

Mortgage interest is a tax deductible item for all homeowners together with property taxes paid on a home.

15. Of the retirement plans for teachers, what is the best plan that do not affect the interest in case of a financial devaluation?

In general, there are three types of 403b investments. They are annuities, mutual funds and equity indexed annuities. By contract, annuities exist with guarantees but as all investments risk still exists. You should consult with a financial advisor to discuss your specific situation.

16. Identity theft, in what can I get affected by?

Thieves can use your information to obtain credit and opening accounts under your name and SSN. They will likely charge up the accounts and default on payment. This will ruin your credit.

17. What are the pros and/or cons of pulling out TRS retirement early?
18. If you decide to retire early can you get a lump sum paid to you with a penalty?

Per TRS, early age retirement, regardless of Tier, is not eligible for Partial Lump Sum Option (PLSO) with or without reduction (penalty) for early age retirement. Please refer to TRS website for PLSO eligibility criteria. TRS should always be your primary source for TRS information.

19. If I enroll in a 403B plan will I be able to roll over my current IRA money into it?

Yes, if you a distributable event such as separation from service or attainment of age 59 1/2. You should contact the Districts 403B Administrator at for additional information on rollover procedures.

20. How long does information stay in your credit report?

Negative information will remain for up to 7 years. Good credit will remain for 10 years. Some bankruptcies will remain up to 10 years.

21. How can I work at getting a higher credit score?

Pay your bills on time, and keep revolving debt at 30% or below credit limit, maintain a good mix of trade lines, do not open too many new accounts. Monitor your credit regularly for errors.

22. What are the benefits offered for educators who are first-time buyers, or plan to upgrade one's current mortgage?

Educators have access to a down payment assistance grant available to them through the State of Texas whether they are first time home buyers or not. So if they have owned a home in the last 3 years and wish to purchase a new home (upgrade into something larger/newer etc) they may be eligible for this grant. Further information is available at http://www.tsahc.org/.

23. At what age can I start pulling out money from a 403b plan?

With no IRS penalty, 55 and retired or age 59 1/2. Surrender penalty period with your provider may still apply. You should contact your investment provider for contract specifics.

24. Can you borrow from your TRS?

No. TRS should always be your primary source for TRS information refer to https://www.trs.texas.gov/TRS%20Documents/benefits_handbook.pdf

25. What are the pros/cons between banks and credit unions?

The primary difference between a bank and a credit union is that banks are in business to pay their shareholders, and credit unions are non-profit organizations and are member owned, thereby in business for their members.
o As a bank “customer” you have no say so (no vote) in the operation of the institution, unless you are a shareholder.

o As a credit union “member” you have a vote on items that come up for discussion or vote at the credit union’s annual meeting.

o Each member, regardless of deposit level, has one vote.

o After all expenses and managing retained earnings, Bank’s may choose to pay bonuses to staff and even more so to their shareholders.

o After expenses, most credit unions pay out bonus dividends to their members.