



Questions for Candidates for School Board Trustee from the Conservative Coalition of Harris County

This questionnaire will be posted onto the Conservative Coalition of Harris County website for public viewing (www.cchc-pac.org).

| Candidate Name | Position that Candidate is Running For |
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| Erica Brettell | Katy ISD Board of Trustees, Position 4 |

Candidates please give your answer to each of the following questions and include your rationale with each answer. Please be concise and clear.

1. Why are you running for School Board Trustee? Is there a particular issue that motivates you to serve on the school board? If elected, what will be your priorities?

Answer: As a young working mom, I promised my kids that one day I would be more involved in their learning. I am a 3rd generation graduate of Katy ISD, and when we returned to Katy in 2014, I was thrilled for my kids to have the amazing education experience I had. I wasted no time getting involved, and jumped into every opportunity to help. I quickly realized that I had a unique skill set and perspective that would be helpful in making sure every child in Katy ISD is empowered to take advantage of every resource and opportunity provided to not only succeed, but to excel.

My number one priority will always be our kids. I aim to ensure academic excellence is continued by making sure that every single one of the 93,000+ students in our district have the tools and resources they need as learning climates evolve. From safety and classroom instruction to extracurricular activities and non-traditional technical education, our students are provided amazing opportunities and they, along with their parents, need support for whichever path they choose.

Teachers are a huge component in the success of our school district. We must take care of our teachers and support staff. We ask so much of them and they need to be supported. In addition to better compensation, we need to find ways to lighten and streamline their workload.

Likewise, partnership between parents and the school district is of utmost importance. Education extends beyond the walls of a classroom, so we need to make it as easy as possible for parents to be engaged and involved, from open communication to volunteer opportunities and access to the materials their students are being taught.

2. What experience or skills have prepared you to serve as a board member? What differentiates you from the other candidates and/or board members? In what school district or community activities/organizations have you been involved?

Answer: As a product of Katy ISD, I possess a great understanding of and commitment to the history, tradition and mindset that makes our schools great. My combined background in governance, business, the non-profit world and as a parent give me a unique perspective that would add value to the Board and district.

I am 100% invested in Katy ISD. I currently have 4 children attending district schools (Winborn Elementary and Haskett Junior High), which serves to keep me informed about what happens in our schools, and when decisions are made, they impact my own family. We never entertained the idea of sending our children anywhere else. We believe in Katy schools, Katy teachers and the Katy community.

I have been heavily involved in Katy ISD as a volunteer, both on the campus level and district level. I have been an active PTA member, also serving in a board position. I act as a campus liaison to the district Gifted and Talented program and have participated in various parent and community forums, discussing and reviewing curriculum, legislative priorities and strategic goals. I have served on a Bond and school naming committees and was a student of Leadership Katy, which provided a detailed look into the district's organizational structure and programs.

Outside of the school district, I spent 10 years working for a conservative member of the U.S. Senate in healthcare and education policy, while getting my M.B.A., which provided invaluable experience in budgeting, data analysis, advocacy, governance and shaping policies, particularly within government-set parameters. For the last seven years, I have helped develop and launch the Lindsay's Light Dating Violence Prevention Program, in honor of my sister, speaking with over 6,000 students, parents and educators about dating violence and healthy relationships. Working in this capacity has given me insight into how to adapt programs to specific audiences, leverage community resources and some of the non-academic needs of our students.

3. What are your thoughts on the current and the proposed budget for your school district? What issues do you believe your district needs to address in its academic program and offerings? What changes would you recommend?

Answer: Katy ISD is in a very interesting position. On one hand, it operates as a large business, the largest employer in Katy. With approaching 95,000 students and a budget over \$1 billion, its sheer size requires data-based decisions to be made. However, education, by nature is a very individualized endeavor. There are students from all different backgrounds, learning styles and needs. The challenge for the school district is how to balance those 2 demands, maintaining both excellence in business practice, but also excellence in learning.

Like everyone else, Katy ISD is not immune to recent inflation. The per child allotment that the district receives from the State has been stagnant for five years, at \$6,160, and I am hopeful that the Legislature will approve an increase this session. While Katy ISD has received multiple awards for its financial management and has been able to do so without raising the tax rate, there are always ways to examine and reduce inefficiencies and redundancies and redirect those funds.

Academically, the district must continue to respond to increasing demands, such as those for our non-traditional pathways, Career Tech programs and advanced learning. By partnering with local businesses, colleges and universities, we can foster dialogue and provide opportunities for success in the economy our students will be entering.

4. Is the current funding allocation within district spending categories (between administration, facilities, teachers, etc.) adequate? Why or Why not? If not, what areas of spending can be changed and how do you propose to correct it? Should any resources be devoted to political lobbying?

Answer: Currently, 90.5% of district expenditures are spent on students. If elected, I look forward to taking a deep dive into each spending category and looking for ways the district can be better stewards.

As one of the largest districts in the state, it is important to develop relationships with lawmakers to further understanding of how proposed legislation impacts Texas schools and children. Resource for political lobbying should not be a line item, but rather minimal and pulled from existing funds.

5. What are your areas of concern regarding student achievement in your district? Do you have specific suggestions for improvement? What is your long-term strategy or strategies for improving the quality of education and keeping pace with student growth within the district?

Answer: Since COVID, students in Katy ISD have proven to be very resilient, but some learning loss remains, especially in areas of math and reading. By providing teachers with greater flexibility in the classroom, alternative learning methods can be explored to accelerate learning for some of those students playing catch up. Parents should also play a role to reinforce instruction and maintain continuity outside of the classroom.

As a fast growth district, the continued recruitment of highly-qualified teachers is necessary to keep class sizes small and promote a better learning environment. At the secondary level, using adjunct teachers for some classes may prove beneficial for student learning and college readiness.

6. Is teacher performance adequate within your district? Are teacher's salaries adequate given current state budget condition? What can be done to improve overall teacher performance and morale?

Answer: We have amazing teachers in Katy ISD. Are their salaries adequate? No. Are they above market median for the region? Yes. I have yet to encounter a parent that thinks teachers should not be paid more, but with 13,000+ employees and on a limited budget, the mechanism to do so becomes more complicated. With a more than \$32 billion surplus at the State level, more can and should be done.

Outside of an overall pay increase, there are other ways we can better support our teachers. Incentivizing targeted professional development in high demand areas and examining the pay structure to ensure that teachers feel their knowledge and experience is valued are good places to start.

The KISD Education Foundation does great work engaging the community to fund teacher grants that foster more creative instruction. Part of what makes the program successful is that the funded projects are teacher-led and inspired. We need to listen when teachers tell us what would make the biggest difference. Do their other benefits, such as health insurance, meet their needs? Would first year teachers benefit from more targeted mentorship to find a cadence and get systems established in their classroom? Is there a way to further streamline paperwork and reporting? Do they need more specific guidance or support in managing classroom behavior and disruptions? Our teachers are the experts on what they need because each classroom has its own culture and needs, and they are in the trenches every day.

7. What type of teacher evaluation system and administrator evaluation system do you support?

Answer: Any system used to evaluate teachers and administrators should be campus-based and well-rounded. Just as it is flawed to evaluate a student based on one test score on one day, it is flawed to evaluate performance based on a single factor. Varied components, such as student grades and test scores, peer reviews, observations, continued education efforts, classroom culture and other student progress measures should all play a role to get an accurate reflection of a teacher's effectiveness.

8. Is your superintendent's and other high-level administrator's compensation in line with job performance? Why or Why not?

Answer: Katy ISD's Superintendent's compensation is 9th in the State, far from the top paid and when compared to district size, much lower per student than a lot of his colleagues. One of the roles of the Board of Trustees is to evaluate the superintendent, which is no small task. All administrators are and should be evaluated regularly. While performance is a major component in compensation, the district also has to remain competitive in order to attract and retain highly qualified administrators, particularly in a district as large as Katy ISD.

9. What is the public relations role of the board? How can the board be accessible to the community? How can a board of education best communicate with its constituent groups? Should Homeschool students be allowed to use publicly funded facilities and equipment?

Answer: A school board should work alongside a school district to ensure that the systems and processes in place effectively accomplish the goals set by the district, while maintaining accountability to parents and stakeholders. A large part of this is facilitating ongoing feedback and communication with the community. The best way to be accessible to the community is to be in the community – attending school functions, hosting forums and listening to parents. Every channel of communication should be leveraged, including social media, email and print. With a widely multi-cultural student population like Katy ISD, this also means addressing any language barriers that may exist.

Katy ISD should facilitate a conversation between homeschool families and the board about how to balance use of facilities and resources with school priorities. I believe there's a compromise to be found between the resources these families provide and balancing needs of the district.

10. What is the proper role of TASA and TASB with respect to independent school boards? Do you believe there should be mask or vaccine mandates in public school? Where should these mandates originate, if at all?
- Answer:** Similar to trade associations, TASA and TASB are both entities that serve to provide resources and support to a school district, such as risk management and best practices. As an independent school district, Katy ISD has both the right and responsibility to make decisions based solely on the needs of its parents and students.
- These types of mandates should be determined by stakeholders, primarily parents and the school district.
11. How do you define Critical Race Theory and do you support its implementation?
- Answer:** While I am aware of the ongoing dialogue related to CRT, the public school system should continue to teach fact-based curriculum.
12. What do you believe about natural/biological male students competing with natural/biological female students in publicly funded athletic programs? Would you support or oppose such programs?
- Answer:** I would oppose these programs. Biologically speaking, males and females are fundamentally different. As such, I would support decades of tradition by continuing separate programs for male and female athletes.

BY RETURNING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE, THE CANDIDATE ASSUMES FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL ANSWERS TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. THE ANSWERS ON THE FOREGOING REFLECT THE CANDIDATE'S BEST EFFORTS TO ANSWER THIS QUESTIONNAIRE HONESTLY AND DIRECTLY.

Once this questionnaire has been completed, please email it to: alex@cchc-pac.org.

Please note: You **must** return your questionnaire from the email address to which it was sent. Questionnaires returned from any other email address will be considered fraudulent and will **not** be recorded and no answers will be published in the voter's guide. CCHC deems a return from the proper email address as authentication of the correct respondent.