



## Plano ISD Board of Trustees Candidate Questionnaire

*Place 1: Tammy Richards*

### What are the top three reasons you want to serve as a Plano ISD School Board Trustee?

First, throughout my business career and my volunteer service, I have worked in support of education. I have worked with school districts across the nation and educators across the globe. I am excited to continue to use my business experience and education knowledge as a partner with our school district leaders and as an advocate for the children and parents of Plano.

Second, Plano ISD is a vibrant, dynamic school district. I will work with my fellow trustees and our administration to provide the very best educational experience for all our children in all our schools and to be a careful steward of our tax dollars.

And third, I have a vision of how we can continue to make our school district a model for other communities. I understand what our students must do to be competitive, both as they graduate from Plano schools and apply to colleges and as they enter the global workforce and compete with students from other nations.

### What do you feel are the most important responsibilities of a trustee?

I believe that trustees should dedicate extensive time to research their community; being an effective listener is critical to understanding the unique needs of Plano ISD. Living in the community for 29 years and having my own children in the Plano ISD for 16 years gives me great insight as to what our broad community cares about.

After completing that due diligence, an effective trustee shapes curriculum, policy, and budgetary goals that must be shared with fellow trustees and with the administration to co-create the very best solutions for our students.

It is critical to create an atmosphere of trust on the board. My colleagues on the board know the areas that I am passionate about in support of our students and our community, and they know that I have done my homework on the issues.

### What do you see as the top opportunities and challenges in Plano ISD?

Our greatest need is to provide a relevant, engaging, and challenging education for all our students. Each child has individual needs that must be met, and they all have individual talents and interests that must be nurtured. We need a robust educational experience for students taking Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses, for students who are in the academic middle, and for students who may need a little extra help. We need to provide choices and support for all our students.

We must close the student achievement gap and provide expanded choices for all our students. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students has increased from 10% to 30% in just a few years. I have advocated for serving the unique needs of our students and aligning our resources accordingly. I have been a leading voice on the board to highlight schools with students who may be struggling so that we may develop innovative solutions to serve them.



## Plano ISD Board of Trustees Candidate Questionnaire

*Place 1: Tammy Richards*

We must continue to expand curricular choices for our students. Over the last seven years, Plano ISD opened the Plano Academy High School, opened the Health Sciences Academy in partnership with Collin College, and expanded the International Baccalaureate program to a four-year experience at Plano East Senior High School. And I was a leading advocate to establish our first elementary academy, an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program at Huffman Elementary.

### **Why are you qualified to hold the position of trustee?**

I have spent virtually my entire professional and volunteer life in support of children and education. I read extensively on the issues facing our children and our educational systems. And I know the Plano ISD community extremely well. I know what our community cares about and I know our issues. And I am dedicated to maintaining our high standard of excellence even as we deal with increasingly larger challenges.

I have devoted hundreds of hours volunteering in our community. I understand the transformative effect that education can have from my own life. I am the product of public schools, and through a great education, hard work, and my working class family's support, I was able to attend two of the finest universities in the world. That's a gift that I want all children to have, particularly the ones in Plano ISD entrusted to the care of our board of trustees.

### **What is the most important thing you want to accomplish if elected?**

While maintaining a rigorous and challenging educational environment for all students, we need to close the achievement gap between low performing students and their peers and between low performing schools and our other campuses.

Our school performance, specifically for our elementary schools, is a bimodal distribution. About 75% of our elementary schools score about 90% or higher on the math and reading STAAR tests. About 25% of our elementary schools score in the 60 to 70% range. These lower performing schools have the highest poverty, the highest number of students learning English, and the highest mobility – three characteristics that make educational attainment more challenging.

Over the last two years, we have taken an intensive look at our bottom 25% schools – an initiative that I spearheaded. We have allocated extra instructional resources for these schools and have reserved money from our fund balance to provide additional educational support. In all but one of our targeted schools, we have seen incremental progress on the math and reading STAAR tests. In my opinion, though, it's not enough and it's not fast enough. As long as I continue to serve as a school board member, closing this achievement gap will be my greatest priority.