

## Lewisville ISD 2023 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: **Staci L. Barker**

Place or single member district seat: **Place 7**

Occupation/Industry: **Analyst**

- 1. Tell us why you are running for school board. If you are an incumbent, what do you wish to pursue through continued service? If you are a new candidate, what do you hope to accomplish? 1,000 character limit.**

I am passionate about and dedicated to public education. I am a product of public education, and I believe in its power to provide limitless opportunity to students regardless of their background. My mom always told me that education is the one thing no one can take away from you. With a daughter in LISD, I know what a great district it is. As an educator, I know that we can always make things better. That's my goal, to celebrate what is working well in the district and problem-solve around challenges the district faces.

- 2. If elected, what current issues will be your top priorities over the next 3 years? 1,000 character limit.**

My first priority is student safety. I want students to feel like they are safe, in all the definitions of safe, when they walk into LISD buildings, because if they do not feel safe, it is very hard to learn. My second priority is student opportunity. Every student, regardless of their zipcode, should have the opportunity to pursue any life beyond graduation that they desire. This means access to a variety of high-quality core classes, extension and advancement options, career-focused experiences, and extracurricular activities. My third priority is teacher support. We have to recruit and retain the best teaching force to provide students with the best possible education. To do that, we have to think about support from all sides, from pay, to training, to working conditions, to schedules, and so on.

- 3. What guiding principles will serve you in your decision making process as a trustee? 1,000 character limit.**

The first guiding principle serving me in decision making is that students are at the forefront. I want to keep students top of mind with every decision in front of the board, as they are the most important aspect of the district. I will not forget that our decisions at the end of the day affect them. The second guiding principle is research. As a researcher, I plan to do my homework for the decisions that come before me, reading all necessary materials and

synthesizing them to move forward in the best way possible. The third guiding principle is the presumption of positive intent. I believe that everyone working for and with LISD is trying to do the best they can for students, and because of that, I want to make decisions that empower and support people to do that. Finally, in conjunction with positive presupposition, I am guided by continuous improvement. Even with everyone trying to do right by students, we can always do better. I will frame decisions in the mindset of "What will make this district better?"

**4. What will be your approach to closing the social and academic gaps exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic? 1,000 character limit.**

I believe that LISD has made some gains in closing the academic gaps, but of course, more can be done. And of course, I hear from teachers and other staff members the challenges students face socially. I have two approaches to address these challenges. The first is to find ways to provide additional resources to campuses. This could include staff members such as counselors to deal with mental health challenges or permanent substitutes that when not filling in for teachers can assist with doing other tasks or managing classes while teachers provide support for students who are behind. The second approach is to support teachers as they are the most important key to closing these gaps. This means paying them well and providing them high-quality training in the best ways to improve social and academic success.

**5. What do you believe is standing in the way of all children receiving a high quality public education? 1,000 character limit.**

I believe the number one factor affecting student achievement is poverty. This happens because of a range of effects, including lack of resources or limited access to high-quality teachers. I want to make sure that all our students in LISD, regardless of their socio-economic status, have high-quality resources and teachers. We need to take a long, hard look at the disparities in achievement in the district, not just on test scores, but other metrics as well, and really dig into the root causes of those disparities. Are we disciplining one group of students at a greater rate than another? How are we incentivizing putting the best teachers in the highest area of need? Are we equitably distributing resources according to need? These are questions I will ask and continue to ask until we ensure every student gets the education they deserve.

**6. Describe your view of the roles of the school board and of the superintendent. What is the ideal relationship between them? 1,000 character limit.**

The phrase "team of 8" has become a bit cliché, but it is true. It is important that the board and the superintendent are partners in the leadership of the district. However, there is a distinction between governance (what the board does) and management (what the superintendent does). The board sets policy and direction for the district but does not manage the day to day

operations of the district; that remains with the superintendent and her team. Also, though I do believe in the "team of 8" and coming to a united front as a team, I also believe that it is healthy to have differing perspectives and opinions. My goal is not to go along with the majority, but to surface ideas that others may not have thought about, bringing them to the table to make better, more thoughtful decisions.

**7. When you review the district budget, which contains hundreds of pages, what will be your process to determine if you will approve it? 1,000 character limit.**

My strength is data analysis, and I believe that data in isolation doesn't say much. So my strategy for reviewing anything, including the budget, is to do comparative analysis. How do expenditures and revenue compare to last year? How do these expenditures and revenue compare to similar districts? To the state? How do campus-level expenses and distributions compare to each other? If there are significant differences, is there a clear rationale for those differences? Those are the questions I would ask as I review the budget.

**8. How do you identify underserved student populations and what is your strategy to ensure all students are being served? 1,000 character limit.**

As I mentioned above, my strength is in data analysis. Lewisville ISD has a great data team that provides numerous reports to the board on assessment data, college and career readiness data, graduation data, etc. often aggregated by various student populations. I will dig into that data and continue to ask questions until we can determine where the issue is and what we can do about it. For example, while all student groups met the federal targets for achievement and growth in reading, five student groups did not meet those targets in math for either achievement or growth, including African American students, Hispanic students, Asian students, Economically Disadvantaged students, and Emergent Bilinguals. If elected to the board, I would want to see what the district's mathematics team is planning to do to assist these groups in improving.

**9. Share a concrete idea for supporting each of the following groups: 1) district teachers & employees, 2) district students, and 3) district families. 1,000 character limit.**

1. For district teachers and employees, I would investigate how to provide them more time for planning, preparation, and other tasks outside their primary function (i.e. for teachers, teaching in the classroom). I would propose that we analyze all the tasks that are placed on teachers' and staff plates and see what initiatives might be scaled back to provide the room for those that are most important.
2. For district students, I want to ensure that all students are safe, and for me that starts with their own mental health. I would look into the possibility of providing more mental

health support, including additional counselors on campuses, to support student needs and provide training and resources to teachers to support those needs as well.

3. For district families, I would encourage greater communication and a spirit of partnership between families and the school. Right now, our environment has teachers and families often pitted against each other. I want to use communication tools to remind both sides that we are all working for the good of the children in our buildings, and by working together, we can improve the quality of education for every student in the district.

**10. What role should the community play in the district and how do you expect them to hold you & the board of trustees accountable? 1,000 character limit.**

The community does and should have a vested interest in the district. This is why there are board meetings open to the public. I would love to see more involvement from various stakeholders in the district. I wonder if combining events, such as fine arts performances or showcases with board meetings, might encourage greater attendance. Often, PTA meetings at local campuses are paired with such events to provide two reasons for parents and community members to attend. Likewise, I wonder how we might use our buildings and facilities to greater benefit to the community, perhaps by allowing spaces for use by outside groups such as adult choirs using performance spaces to better engage the community. In terms of accountability, elections provide the ultimate accountability. However, I also want to be accessible to the community. I hope they would reach out to me with their feedback, as I would want to hear it.