



Hays County Tejano Democrats
School Board Election May 7 2024
Candidate Questionnaire: Hays CISD

Ray Chávez

Candidate for District 3

<https://www.facebook.com/ray4schooltrustee>

<https://ray4schooltrustee.com/>

Current Member of the State Tejano Democrats

Why are you running for school board?

I believe I have the passion and wealth of experience to address challenges for continued quality education in our district. I've been an educator for over 30 years, having won teaching awards locally and nationally. I've also fulfilled many duties as an administrator, manager, department head, coach, and grant writer. HCISD is experiencing tremendous growing pains and will continue to do so in the near future. With this exponential growth comes a variety of concerns, including but not limited to higher enrollments, class size, increased transportation woes, infrastructure, expanding resource needs, and teacher and staff recruitment, retention and overdue compensation. In addition, school safety concerns include the need for more School Resource Officers and security measures, plus expanding plans to address mental health problems and the Fentanyl crisis. My advanced degrees and professional experience are well suited to meet the coming challenges. And my allegiance to public education is personal. My three sons and six grandchildren have all been successful beneficiaries of public schools.

What steps will you take to address the achievement gap and other disparities faced by students of color and those from low-income families?

In order to give voice to diverse communities, you have to create an environment that welcomes those opinions. I plan to reach out to those communities to create that welcoming environment. My extensive experience in working with diverse communities will be a great asset. For example, I was the Development Director of Denver's Five Points Media Center, based in an economically depressed Black neighborhood. I ran the Oklahoma Institute for Diversity in Journalism, working with the poorest of the poor, American Indian students and their families. I served as a grant writer and coach for Run Free Texas, a non-profit organization that worked with at-risk youth in Travis and Williamson Counties. My diversity programs were all inclusive and included participants across economic, gender, ethnic, racial, and religious lines. I will be an engaged advocate for more equitable distribution of services to low-income residents of our school district by being the liaison to convey their concerns to the District administrators and the Board of Trustees. This means that I will reach out to encourage resident participation in District related events and organizations. I would like to facilitate more attendance by citizens at PTA /PTSA meetings and citizen committees. But more importantly, I will go where they live and will speak their language, both literally and culturally, to increase their representation in District matters that affect their children. I will use my professional communication skills to open up convenient means for participatory governance over their schools. And I will connect those area residents with the help of civic organizations that are eager to provide aid to our lower income neighbors and friends.

What is your position on school bonds, and what factors do you believe are most important to consider when deciding whether to support or oppose a bond measure?

Public school funding is complicated. Texas public schools, for example, are funded in a two-pronged manner, based on tax rates. The Maintenance and Operations (M&O) budget, which funds the General Operating Fund, covers day-to-day operations such as teacher and staff salaries, supplies, utilities, and insurance. The largest source of these funds come from property taxes. The second expenditure is for Debt Service, better known as Interest and Sinking funds, or I&S, which can be used for a variety of special purposes. For example, I&S funds may finance infrastructure such as new schools and renovation projects, land acquisition, or the purchase of capital equipment and vehicles, such as school buses. I&S money comes from school bonds. The Board of Trustees authorizes bond elections, with the State of Texas granting the Board the authority to sell bonds. Voters must first approve a school bond, which then allows the school district to borrow funds in a manner similar to a loan or home mortgage.

I believe a trustee should carefully balance the needs of both M&O and I&S funding. I am in favor of bonds if the need for such funding has been carefully scrutinized to make the most efficient use of tax dollars for publicly stated purposes. This involves accurate projections for future needs and within voter approved spending and investment limits. Citizen approval is critical for this process.

Hays CISD trustees receive input from an appointed Facilities and Bond Oversight Committee. Each trustee appoints four people to this committee. Trustees should put in place trusted people who are connected to the community. The committee determines priorities from the superintendent, the trustees and the FBOC itself. I would like to see greater diversity in District 3 members on the FBOC. That includes geographic diversity with more representation from central and southern neighborhoods as opposed to current domination by northeast Buda subdivisions such as Sunfield. In broadening this geographic and demographic representation, you're going to broaden the ethnic diversity of the group, including taxpayers from Hispanic and immigrant neighborhoods. In short, bonds should save and protect all taxpayers while allowing for essential, ongoing facilities development and other capital expenses to be funded.