

Platform
Johnny Flores
Candidate for Hays County ISD School Board Trustee District 2

Preamble

As a citizen of Hays County, Texas, I am aware of the challenges and obstacles that our children, parents, and educators face going forward. Nearly three years ago, we were all affected by a pandemic that took an enormous toll on our teachers, students, and our institutions of learning. In Hays County, schools in district 2 have been especially impacted by these negative effects of the pandemic, and many school children in my district now lack the basic skills necessary to achieve success in the classroom. Yet, even as these challenges lie before us, I have a deep seated optimism and a determination to build a bridge between our community and our schools, so that we together can overcome the challenges that have hindered the performance of our students.

In Hays County, our school board has not provided resources necessary for schools in district 2 to thrive, and to give our teachers, students and administrators the tools needed to achieve academic success. In addition, the fact that the school board has voted unanimously on roughly 99% of the legislation that has landed on their desks shows that there is a clear absence of ideological diversity, and little discussion on how the board's decisions affect all of the schools in Hays County. It is time for a new direction for our school board. I, as a candidate, have a plan to help our students, parents, and educators achieve their goals, and to produce not only exemplary students, but outstanding citizens.

Safety: I will push to strengthen the Hays ISD Safety and Security Department created in 2018, and push to increase the number of officers patrolling school grounds from 15 to 26 so that any and all occurrences in our schools can be addressed promptly.

The number one job of any educator or administrator is to make sure that our children are returned home safely from schools. I hope to add to a collective vision of ensuring that all precautions and procedures are being followed by school staff and faculty regarding school safety. It is my mission that all doors, entrances and exits of these schools are properly secured, and that any shortcomings regarding safety are quickly addressed and rectified. In addition, I will advocate for a year-round anti drug campaign that warns of the dangers of drugs like fentanyl, which has become a serious concern in our community. Such a program should be tied to the decline of mental health among teenage students, and what could be done to remedy underlying issues associated with the use of this drug.

Support: I will advocate for an increase in learning resources for all district 2 schools by adding staff to intervention teams, increasing the number of paraprofessionals, and Americorps members on campus to support literacy in elementary and middle schools.

According to recent data, students in Hays County have fallen behind in reading proficiency since 2019, and this is especially true in district 2 schools. Such a drop calls for an increase in the level of support district 2 students currently receive. I will also bring attention to the urgent need to manage the difficulties associated with the rapid growth around FM 150. The growth of this area threatens to create an impractical student teacher ratio for district 2 schools.

Sustainability: I will encourage a teacher pay raise of 5% in Hays County. I will also propose a revised schedule for the 2023-2024 school year that adds a one week Fall Break and a two week Spring Break to the calendar. I will also advocate for the requirement that any mandated professional development for teachers be given on Friday's between 1pm and 4pm. Students will also be given half days every Friday, so teachers can complete required professional development hours. Teachers will also be given a half day one Friday per month.

The sustainability of teachers is essential to the success of our school district. The continuous allowance of time off for educators will help sustain the retention of teachers and avoid burnout. Such breaks throughout the school year will also help teachers maintain their own mental health and spend time with their loved ones. In addition, the consolidation of professional development within school working hours will be effective in preventing fatigue, by allowing teachers to complete lesson planning, meetings, and grading while on campus.

Community: I will champion a revitalization of the partnership between Hays County Schools and the Community In School (CIS) program, so that every student has access to these resources for guidance, counseling, and crisis prevention.

Students, educators, and administrators can only achieve success if there is a robust partnership between our community and our institutions of learning. Unfortunately, the erosion of community involvement has had detrimental effects on our schools, and contributed to the mental health struggles of our students. I will push for new mentorship programs between members of our community and students. I believe increasing exposure to various professions in our community will allow students to discover new trades, learn from skilled workers, and participate in charitable activities. I believe programs focused on hands-on community action allows students to build character, establish self worth, and help combat the ongoing mental health crisis that negatively affects students.

High Expectations: I will promote the need for both rigorous instruction and maintaining high expectations for our students, teachers and administrators.

Accomplishment can only be gotten through constant hard work and dedication. Productive struggle should be embraced, and the ability to overcome that struggle should be procured by teaching our students habits of excellence. Maintaining high expectations for our students and teachers allows all to progress, to build character, and to gain the mental toughness necessary to achieve greatness in all areas.

Equity: I will promote a renewed focus on the need for more resources directed at the schools of district 2, which have been mostly ignored in recent bond proposals that have largely benefited schools west of I-35.

Only through a more equitable approach to the distribution of resources, can the achievement gap between schools in our district be closed. Schools in district 2, given the demographics of their students, must be approached based on specific needs for success. I will advocate that more attention be paid to our students in district 2, so they too can have a chance for academic achievement.