



SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

MARILYN TOLBERT

Candidate for EMS ISD, Place 1

Please provide any personal background information you would like to share with the employees of the district.

I have been in education for over 30 years. I have a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a specialization in Early Childhood, a Master's degree in Educational Administration and a Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership – all from Texas Christian University.

I have taught in Fort Worth ISD, Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD at Bryson Elementary and was an Administrative Intern, was Director of Education at River Legacy Living Science Center, and recently retired from Texas Christian University as the Director of Laboratory Schools at TCU (KinderFrogs and Starpoint Schools). In addition, I taught at the undergraduate level at TCU for many years. Courses included Play and Creativity, Families, Introduction to Early Childhood, Introduction to Special Education, and Global Education. In addition, I served on several treatise and doctoral committees.

I have been married for 26 years to my husband, Dan Tolbert, who taught at Eagle Mountain Elementary for almost 20 years and has been retired for five years. We have no children; however, we have had numerous nieces and nephews as well as many friends who have attended and graduated from the Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD system. I am a champion for people with Special Needs, as I have a niece with Down syndrome that graduated Boswell High School 18 years ago and has had many successes due to her education and involvement in the community.

My passion for ALL students, my love and respect for teachers, and my desire to give back to the Saginaw community are the reasons I ran for the Board in 2018 and continues to be the reason I am seeking re-election. I am a strong advocate for students, teachers and public schools.

We have lived in Saginaw for 20 years and have been involved in community activities and school activities throughout our time here.

I retired in 2019 and am now spending time in Board Service, being an Educational Consultant/Advocate, Accreditation Evaluator, and Grant Reviewer as well as enjoying some volunteering, travel, reading and gardening.

What qualifications do you have that would make you an effective trustee?

I have served on and currently serve on numerous local, state, regional, national and international Board of Directors organizations. I have held offices of President, Vice President and Treasurer of several of these. I was selected in 2020 as one of 27 School Board Trustees throughout Texas to participate in the Leadership TASB (Texas Association of School Boards) Master Trustee training due to my experience and interest in furthering my board development.

My board experience includes:

- Master Trustee Training – Leadership TASB – 2020 to 2021
- Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD – 2018 to Present
- Eagle Mountain-Saginaw Education Foundation Board of Directors – 2018 to Present
- National Down Syndrome Congress Board of Directors-Past President-12 years of service – 2006 – 2018
- International Association of Laboratory Schools Board of Directors-Past President – 2009 – 2021
- Down Syndrome Partnership of North Texas Board of Directors – Past President – 2005-2012
- European Teacher Educator Network – Treasurer, 2017 to Present

I have many qualities that make me an effective trustee. I am a visionary, goal-directed and a risk taker. I have experience setting policy priorities as well as proven organizational, fiscal and leadership skills. In my current role as a trustee, I am committed to equity and access to a quality education and achievement for all students. I am able to build consensus and work to achieve collaborative outcomes. Diversity and equity are values I incorporate when making decisions. I understand how to identify and interpret data to establish accountability for all students. I understand the roles of a trustee and do my best to represent the population served by our district. I am a strong advocate for public education and have extensive knowledge in curriculum, learning disabilities, early childhood and special education. I understand and support the need for alignment from early childhood through college and career success and that there needs to be a continuum of success for students. I strive to exhibit personal qualities through my words and action that provide a positive role model for our children and community



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How have you been involved in the district in recent years? (e.g., attended district meetings, served on committees, volunteered)

I currently serve on the Eagle Mountain-Saginaw ISD Education Foundation Board of Directors as well the EMSISD Board of Trustee since 2018. I have attended board meetings, served on the Strategic Planning committee and other committees as needed.

I have been involved in the district for many years – both as an employee, as a spouse to an employee, and as a volunteer for fall festivals, EMSEF golf tournaments and securing gifts for fundraising auctions and opportunities.

What three issues do you think are the most important issues facing the district? Please explain.

Fast Growth of EM-S ISD and School Finance – EMS ISD is growing at a rapid pace and it is going to be important for us to do our best to anticipate where the growth is taking place, ensuring we have the infrastructure to support new schools as well as meet the maintenance demands of the existing schools in the district and rebuilding of Saginaw Elementary. Hopefully, the legislature will protect the Fast Growth Schools allotment, which is especially important for fast growth districts to have the necessary resources to provide for new students. The school finance reform law that passed in 2019, House Bill 3, provided increased per-student funding and money for teacher pay raises and cuts to local property taxes as well as a variety of other positive initiatives. Hopefully, the legislature will preserve and increase the funding for House Bill 3. While House Bill 3 was historic the continued funding for the programs outlined will become more and more expensive. It will be important to monitor what the legislators do regarding continued funding for House Bill 3. This funding as well as property tax values and our fast growth are issues, we will monitor closely in the coming months.

Recovering from COVID – Returning to In Person Learning – While there were no right or wrong answers as we began to face the Pandemic last March and plan for the safety and well-being of all of our stakeholders, there was considerable and deliberate conversations to develop a system that would hopefully meet the needs of everyone involved. Looking forward to 2021-2022 school year, there will be much work to be done to begin in person learning. In all likelihood, there will be students who will have experienced “COVID-slide” and plans are already in the development stages to address this. Students, teachers, administrators and families are going to need assistance in re-booting and will take some time to rebound. We will all need to extend grace, empathy and care as we begin to get back to a more normal routine.

Hiring and Retention of Qualified Teachers, Staff and Administrators – Hiring and retaining qualified teachers, staff, and administrators is one of the MOST important things on which we need to focus. Prior to the Pandemic, we all know that teachers were over-worked, oftentimes stressed, exhausted and underpaid. The Pandemic has increased the stress and exhaustion a thousand-fold. The district leadership will need to work and think creatively to assist our current teachers and our future teachers with the tools they need to not only take care of their students’ needs but their own needs as well.

How important is it for the district to provide competitive salaries and benefits for all employees including veteran teachers?

It is one of THE MOST IMPORTANT things the district must do. Our employees are the lifeblood of our schools. They are teaching and preparing our students for a future many of us will not see. This is such an important pillar of Academic Excellence as well as Excellence in Personalized Opportunities, that the Strategic Planning Committee for Aspire 2025, of which I am proud to say I was a part, identified. Recruitment and Retention of Quality Staff as well as Staff Engagement as areas of focus and importance. Both of these areas include strategic objectives and strategies to ensure our salaries, benefits, and teacher growth and satisfaction are achieved.

How will you use input gained from district employees, community members, parents, and students to inform decisions made by the school board?

As a board trustee, we are the link between the school system and the public. As an advocate for EM-S ISD and our stakeholders, it is important to be an active listener and respect all perspectives and input to inform decisions. As a board trustee I must listen to the community and maintain trust. Ultimately, referring back to the district’s vision, mission and goals assist in helping make so many tough decisions. My goal is to engage the community in promoting continued constructive discussion as well as generate positive community interest in our efforts.



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Please discuss any other issue you feel is relevant to your election to the Board of Trustees

I would be remiss if I did not mention State Testing and Accountability as an important issue for EMS ISD. Any of you that know me, know that, in my humble opinion, the role of standardized testing should be a diagnostic tool rather than being overemphasized and the value of a teacher, school or district should not solely rely on these test results. Of course, we have to be held accountable for students' learning. Of course, we have to ensure that the curriculum is being taught. But I am hopeful that the Texas Education Agency will focus on developing a new accountability system for Texas public schools that will address many of the shortcomings in the current accountability system.

My experience and passion for those students who struggle due to learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities or other extenuating circumstances help me bring a unique perspective to the Board. This perspective combined with my knowledge of curriculum, advocacy, leadership and board experience all add to my qualifications ensuring continuity and stability.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all of the teachers and staff of EM-S ISD for their dedication, commitment and hardwork during these trying times. I appreciate you so much and will continue to advocate and work hard on your behalf. In addition, with all the issues facing the district over the next several years (returning to in person learning, closing the student achievement gaps, the fast growth of the district, testing, accountability, etc.) it is important to have a stable and experienced board as we continue to foster a culture of excellence.

Thank you for your time. If you have questions or concerns, I encourage you to reach out to me. And, please vote on May 1!!