

The Book-Loving Texan's Guide to the May 2023 School Board Elections

(This is a mobilization tool. Use it to volunteer, donate, and organize in your community.)

Contact: booklovingtexanvotes@gmail.com

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Under Construction:

21. The Book-Loving Texan's Guide to the November 2023 School Board Elections

How to Use This Guide & Color-Coded Designations:

I designed this document as a mobilization tool. In other words, while I hope you find it informative, what really matters is that we use the information here to act. Specifically, I hope this document can help people:

- 1) *Support school board candidates who resist book bans and stand up for all students in their district.*
- 2) *Connect like-minded voters with each other and with groups already working in each district.*
- 3) *Tie extremist candidates to their extreme positions.*

To use this document:

- **Collaborate.** This is a working document, and I want to add updates from people closer to the action than I am. If you know something that should be added, please email me: booklovingtexanvotes@gmail.com.
- **Check back.** Candidate filings were just finalized in late February, and some school districts still haven't updated their webpages with candidate names. Some candidates still don't have websites. Information is going to come in quickly, so check back often!
- **Start with groups on the ground.** One of the most important sections on each page is the "Contacts on the ground" box—these are people who either know a lot about what's going on in a district or have already been working to prop up good candidates and challenge powerful PACs. If you want to organize in a district, start by contacting them.
- **Share.** The more people who see this and use it, the better.

Terminology & Designations:

Candidates highlighted in red are either members of pro-censorship groups (Moms for Liberty, local PACs) or have the support of such groups.

Candidates highlighted in orange echo pro-censorship talking points but don't have documented links to those groups.

Candidates highlighted in green either have a record of standing up for academic freedom, diversity and inclusion *or* have been targeted by pro-censorship groups and thus need support. This is not necessarily an endorsement—in races with multiple candidates, there may be more than one candidate worthy of this designation.

Candidates not highlighted could be great, or awful, or somewhere in between. As I get more information on them I'll add it in the notes and change their designations if necessary.

"Contacts on the Ground" are local resources for organizing and information. If this is you, please let me add your name/group here!

Introduction

Basic Background: The Way to Win

This is the third cycle I've made this document, and I bring you good news: it is very possible to avoid a pro-censorship school board takeover, even in deep red districts in Texas. Look at what happened [last November](#): Of the 38 red- and orange-highlighted candidates I tracked in the last version of this document, 30 lost. I profiled nine districts, and the good guys [won out in seven of them](#) on election day. Seven of the eight Texas candidates [endorsed by Moms for Liberty lost](#). If you care about academic freedom and inclusive classrooms, election night in November of 2022 in Texas was a good night.

(That was a turnaround from [last May](#), when pro-censorship, anti-inclusion candidates won the majority of spots on boards in races they contested. I wrote about the lessons from that [election here](#).)

The rules for defeating pro-censorship candidates are simple: organize and inform. Banning books and attacking vulnerable students are unpopular positions, but candidates who support those positions have won way too many races for three reasons: 1) pro-censorship forces have a massive organization and

fundraising advantage; 2) voters don't know who the book-banning candidates are; and (to a lesser extent), 3) pro-censorship forces have been able to activate partisan instincts in red districts by turning non-partisan school board elections into a fight between Democrats and Republicans.

So what do we do? In the last edition of this guide, I called the path to victory the Eanes/Richardson playbook because of the great groups in those districts that effectively fought off well-funded slates of pro-censorship candidates. But last fall gave us many more examples of outstanding community groups doing great work to combat the better-funded, more-established PACs on the anti-inclusion side. Two very different but similarly effective groups that deserve mention are [Access Education Round Rock ISD](#) and the “StandUp” groups in the Houston suburbs [Tomball](#), [Klein](#), and (post-election) [Conroe](#). If there's a group like that in your community, join it now. If there's not, start one. Reach out to the leaders of successful groups to learn how.

Those groups can help you with the “organize” part of the job. But organization depends on information, and that's where this document comes in. Share what you see here; make it your goal that every voter going to the polls in May knows exactly who wants to ban books from and attack students in your district's schools.

Guiding Principles & Methodology

A few principles guided the construction of this document:

1. Education requires free inquiry and the exploration of diverse topics and perspectives.
2. Educators have a responsibility to the truth.
3. The classroom should be a welcoming environment for all students.
4. Educators are accountable to *all* students and to the parents of all students in a classroom—not just the loudest parents or the ones that comprise the majority.
5. We can and should consider age-appropriateness when selecting texts for libraries and classrooms, but that's not the same thing as calling award-winning literature “pornography” or accusing teachers and librarians of being pedophiles who are “grooming” or “sexualizing” students.

With those guiding principles in mind, I looked for information on candidates' positions on academic freedom, on LGBTQ acceptance in the classroom, and on honest discussions of American history and race relations. I tried to find out: Which candidates are trying to protect academic freedom and which ones are trying to remove books and ideas from schools? Which candidates are scaremongering about “critical race theory”? Which candidates are supporting inclusive classrooms and which ones are sending the message that some students are unwelcome in the district?

For each of the contested races in a district, I went through these steps:

1. I looked at the language on hot-button issues on candidates' campaign websites or Facebook pages. If candidates listed endorsements, I took note of any high-profile supporters.
2. I checked the social media of each candidate (though many have scrubbed or locked their personal accounts).
3. I checked to see what PACs are dedicated to hot-button issues in each district. I tried to discern if PACs have endorsed any candidates yet (not usually) or spent any money to support or attack

anyone in the race. When possible, I checked their donor list and membership rolls, and looked at their social media pages to see if any candidates have been active there or have attended their events.

4. Where possible, I tried to determine if each candidate is a member of a Moms for Liberty Facebook group (or a similar group) and, if so, if they are an active member—commenting, sharing, liking, etc.
5. I went through minutes and videos of school board meetings in the district over the past year to see if any candidates have spoken during public comment periods and, if so, what they've said.
6. I looked to see what political donations each candidate has made in the past five years. NOTE: Donating to one party or another did not raise red flags for me *per se*, though I did note extremist behavior, such as the two candidates in last May's elections who donated thousands to the Donald Trump campaign *after* November 6th, 2020—in other words, while the outgoing president was trying to subvert a legal election.
7. Finally, I checked to see what candidates are saying on local media (local news articles, podcasts, radio hits) or what's being said about them.

NEW for 2023: This year, I also looked up every candidate's primary voting history using the Reach app. My goal was not to inject partisanship into these races, but rather the opposite. I had a hunch that doing so would show the dividing line between pro-censorship and anti-censorship candidates isn't a partisan one. Turns out I was right. In the first place, there just aren't many Democrats running for school board in rural or suburban Texas. Almost everyone in the races I'm covering is a Republican. In other words, this isn't a question of partisanship; it's about principles. Some people—Democrat *and* Republican—stand up for the value of education. Some oppose it.

That's important to keep in mind in the next few months, because you're going to hear the green-highlighted candidates in this guide called "leftists," "Marxists" or "communists." They're not.

Scope:

I'm from North Texas (Fort Worth), live in Central Texas (Austin), and started my teaching career in Houston (Spring Branch ISD). A lot of book challenges and attacks on educators have taken place in suburban and exurban districts surrounding those places. So, just by focusing on the areas I know best, I've been well situated to report on some of the most explosive school district battles in the state.

But the war on education is spreading through the whole state. I will expand this list to include as many districts as I can (prioritizing the most contentious elections), but I'll need help. If you have information or know of a district that you think needs to be on this list, please email me at booklovingtexanvotes@gmail.com.

Also note: I've only looked at contested school board races. Some of the best (or worst) candidates may be running unopposed.

Finally: What if I don't live in any of these districts?

This is still your fight! I'm a teacher in Austin, and I'm forbidden by law from assigning any essay or poem from the Pulitzer Prize-winning *1619 Project*, even as a part of a balanced collection of perspectives on race in the US. Why? I'd argue it's a direct result of what has happened in school board meetings and elections since 2021.

In other words: *What happens in these districts doesn't stay in these districts*. As long as politicians perceive that bullying trans kids, protecting white innocence, or accusing teachers of "grooming" is a winning political issue, they will continue to do it.

So adopt a race and see how you can help. Can you plan a road trip to knock doors? Can you donate to a candidate or a group doing the work on the ground? Can you support great statewide groups like [Mothers Against Greg Abbott](#) and [Blue Action Democrats/Safe Schools for All/2 Million Texans](#)? Can you amplify good voices and call out bad actors online?

We need your help!

National and Statewide Resources

- [#EReadom](#)
- [Book Ban Busters](#) (Red Wine & Blue)
- [Dr. Tasslyn Magnusson's Book Censorship Database](#) (EveryLibrary Institute)
- [Mothers Against Greg Abbott](#)
- [TxLEADSEd](#)
- [Pastors for Texas Children](#)
- [Texas Educators Vote](#)
- [Texans for the Right to Read](#)
- [We Make the Future](#)
- [Book Riot](#) (includes weekly roundup of censorship news)
- [Blue Action Democrats / Safe Schools for All / 2 Million Texans](#)

DISTRICTS

Canyon ISD

Notes: Canyon ISD is home to the pro-censorship group [Texans Wake Up](#), which is run by Jamie Haynes, who is not a district parent but who regularly appears at Canyon board meetings to call for the removal of books from the district. Last September, Texans Wake Up targeted by name (even sharing her staff photo) a Canyon ISD English teacher who had [shared photos](#) on social media of her school library's Banned Books Week display. Predictably, the targeting led to calls for the teacher to be fired, and accusations of "grooming" and "inciting children toward pornography."

Texans Wake Up has been influential across the state. In April of 2022, it posted a video on its YouTube page on [How to Find the Harmful Parts of Books Without Reading It](#). The group was cited in Conroe

ISD, where book challengers did, in fact, [challenge books without reading them](#), lying on district forms in the process.

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 2	Jodi Davis Katharyn Wiegand (I)
Place 7	Laurie Gilliland Derrick Thomas Tiffany Rogers
Place 3 (unexpired)	Casey Posey Josh Grisham Claudia Burkett Jared Wirt

Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)

Place 2

- **Jodi Davis** is a former teacher who has been working both publicly and behind the scenes to remove books from the district since late 2020, when her son was assigned *The Glass Castle* as a reading option in a ninth-grade English class.
- The pro-censorship group [Texans Wake Up](#) has been particularly supportive of her case, running [articles](#) highlighting [ninth-grade reading assignments](#) at her [son's school](#) and [negatively reviewing](#) *The Glass Castle*. Texans Wake Up leader Jamie Haynes also cheered on her [campaign announcement](#) on Facebook.
- Davis and her husband have both spoken at board meetings, calling for stricter guidelines on books available in the district. In February, her husband also [berated the district](#) for only giving parents 13 days to review the 600 books it was planning to purchase for its libraries—a complaint that makes sense if you think parents are supposed to vet every single book a library acquires.
- Davis has laid out a clear, if absurd, [standard she would like the district to adopt](#) for its books: language in the books should adhere to the district's Student Code of Conduct. To show how *The Glass Castle* failed to live up to this standard, Davis read aloud every curse word in the book at one school board meeting—every “sonofabitch,” “ass,” and “chickenshit”—and pointed out that her son would not be allowed to say those or write those words in school. Of course, that standard would also preclude the teaching of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, MLK's “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” and hundreds of literary classics.
- Davis has shared [ugly content](#) on social media targeting trans individuals and undocumented immigrants. On January 7th, 2021—the day after the Capitol Riot—she approvingly passed along anonymous comments complaining that “if a dude pretends to be a woman, you are required to pretend with him” and “Irish doctors and German engineers who want to immigrate to the US must go through a rigorous vetting process, but any illiterate gang-bangers who jump the southern fence are welcomed.” “He said everything I have been thinking!!” Davis wrote.

Place 7

- **Tiffany Rogers** has been a member of the district's School Health Advisory Committee. On her

[campaign website](#), she lists among her top issues: “Advocate for children’s innocence” and “Stop radical indoctrination from entering the classroom”

- She entered the race with [full support](#) from **Jodi Davis**, who said “She would be an amazing voice for the north part of CISD. She definitely has my vote.”

Place 3

- Davis also [shared](#) one of Casey Posey’s campaign posts—a definite red flag. Posey has been quiet about his [stances](#), giving a basic [non-answer](#) when asked directly about his position on the board’s role in evaluating library books.

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 2

- **Katharyn Wiegand** has been a trustee since 2011. She has voted in every Republican primary for which I could find a record (dating back to 2012).
- When asked directly about library books, Wiegand gave a [measured response](#): “The school board reviewed current policies and created a new committee to review books about which a concern has been shared. The school board added a policy in 2022 for a similar review of library books. The school board should continue to monitor policies and make adjustments where needed.” It’s not exactly a bold defense of intellectual freedom, but it is level-headed and far preferable to her opponent’s stances and record.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Katharyn Wiegand.](#)

Place 7

- **Laurie Gilliland** is a former teacher whose campaign slogan is “An Educator for Education.” Gilliland taught for 32 years, including 15 in Canyon ISD.
- Gilliland has expressed support for the district’s current book selection policies, [writing](#), “I am a proponent of using books in the classroom to enrich learning. CISD has created a district policy and procedures to select books. This process involves parents, community, school personnel and board members. I believe that books should be grade appropriate and not contain inappropriate content. Board members must abide by the policies in place and choose books that promote learning and reflect the values of the community.”
- Gilliland does not yet appear to have a website, but here is her [campaign Facebook page](#).
- Derrick Thomas is a businessman and Dimmitt High School graduate.
- I haven’t yet found a campaign website or Facebook page for Derrick Thomas.

Place 3 (unexpired)

(NOTE: The candidates for this race have generally been pretty vague about their positions. I will definitely update as more information becomes available.)

- Claudia Burkett served as a trustee from 2021 to 2022. She is a CISD parent and grandparent, and has served the district for 25 years.
- When asked directly about [district library books](#), this was her answer: “I want to be clear. I unequivocally do not want sexually explicit material/pornography in our school libraries. I also don’t want to start banning books, that is a slippery slope! The school board’s role is to ensure the necessary materials and environments are available for our students to learn. What is taught must meet state requirements. We also need to allow parents to parent their child.”
- I haven’t found Burkett’s website yet, but here’s her [campaign Facebook page](#).

- Like most of his fellow candidates, Josh Grisham gave a cautious non-answer when asked [about the district book policy](#): “We’ve been talking about books for far too long. I want to start at the beginning, mapping the process through approving book selections. The school board’s role, in my opinion, is to ensure our administration has a clear process in place to properly review book selections. Book selection policies can be proposed once we have board/administrator alignment and a process is working. The school board should be engaged to ensure selections align with district educational expectations.”
- I haven’t found Grisham’s website yet, but here’s his [campaign Facebook page](#).
- Jared Wirt is a Captain in the Randall County Sheriff’s Office.
- Wirt gave one of the [stronger answers](#) to the League of Women Voters question about the role of the school board in book selection decisions: “It is obvious to me that the system we have in place is working. Mistakes have been made in the types of materials allowed into our libraries, and the community is doing exactly what it should to correct this. The school board should hear these concerns and then set appropriate systems in place to guide the district in making future decisions on how these materials are vetted to fit within the boundaries set forth.”
- Wirt gave a similarly level-headed, non-reactionary response when [pressed about SEL](#) (social-emotional learning, one of the current scaremonger buzzwords) on his campaign Facebook page: “I admittedly do not have a complete knowledge of the curriculum currently being taught, but it is my understanding that they cover topics such as gratitude, accountability, giving, etc. Coping with anxiety is a valuable skill, and while I hope a child at any age would not have anxiety, unfortunately many do. I think it is helpful to build a foundation early that can be built upon as they grow. Not only would they have the ability to recognize it in themselves, but potentially be equipped to help others around them who struggle.”
- I haven’t found Wirt’s website yet, but here’s his [campaign Facebook page](#).

Contacts on the Ground

- TBD

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Carroll ISD

Notes: Near the end of Mike Hixenbaugh and Antonia Hylton’s podcast *Southlake*, the two reporters describe talking to a supporter of the district’s proposed diversity measures on the night of the town’s devastating May 2021 school board election. “We lost, now we just have to take a little time off and regroup,” she said. “We have lost a battle, but we haven’t lost the war. The town is changing, more people are moving in. So it’s not going to be like this forever.”

So far, things aren't getting better and the outcome of the war in Southlake is looking worse and worse. Southlake Families PAC, the group behind the anti-diversity candidates in that election, powered Andrew Yeager and Alex Sexton to easy victories last May. The PAC's leader, Leigh Wambsganss, is now working with Patriot Mobile Action PAC, which is flooding districts across North Texas with money.

And if brighter times are ahead, they're certainly not visible yet. This May, two more candidates affiliated with Southlake Families PAC, Dudley Jordan and Christy Stacy, will take seats unopposed on the board. They'll replace, respectively, Sheri Mills and Michelle Moore, who have both been frequent targets of attacks by critics of pro-diversity, anti-racist, and LGBTQ-inclusive education.

There is one competitive race in the district, for Place 2, between Eric Lannen and Zdenka (Zee) Duran. Both have red flags. But as information becomes available about their stances I'll update below, and I'm praying to see a ray of light from one of them. Because students in Southlake need a voice of responsibility and moderation on their increasingly one-sided board.

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 2	Eric W. Lannen (I) Zdenka (Zee) Duran
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incumbent Eric Lannen has been on the wrong side of several crucial votes in Southlake over the past several years. In 2020, he voted against the Cultural Competence Action Plan that ignited a backlash against efforts to address persistent racism in the district. In 2022, he voted to reprimand a teacher for having the book <i>This Book is Anti-Racist</i> in her classroom library. • There's not much information available about Zee Duran online, but she has donated to Southlake Families PAC in the past and endorsed extremist candidate Andrew Yeager in his 2022 school board campaign. 	
Alternative Candidate(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If one of the above candidates proves better than the other, I'll move them down here. For now, I'm wary of both. 	
Contacts on the Ground	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southlake Anti-Racism Coalition • Southlake Together 	
Organizing steps/upcoming events	

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Denton ISD

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 6	<p>Charlie Stinson</p> <p>Lori Tays</p> <p>Terry A. Senne</p>
Place 7	<p>Patsy Sosa-Sanchez (I)</p> <p>Carolyn Rachaner</p>
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
Place 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terry Senne calls herself an “independent conservative voice and advocate for the students and families of Denton ISD.” Her website announces, “We find ourselves on the educational precipice, not only in Denton ISD, but in public school systems nation-wide. We must apply the brakes now and change our current course, or we will free-fall to a point of no return.” • According to Senne, we’re at an educational crossroads because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Schools are indoctrinating our children rather than protecting them. ○ Sexualization of our children appears to be a primary focus nowadays. ○ Schools have long since left the traditional Godly values and principles upon which our country was founded. ○ Academic performance is not up to standard. ○ Schools are attempting to circumvent parents and guardians; making decisions that belong to the family. • Senne appeared with Allen West at a recent campaign event that also featured Families Engaged member and fellow board candidate Carolyn Rachaner. (There are about 10 red flags in that sentence) • Senne wrote to the Texas Legislature to voice her support of HB 900, which would ban Lonesome Dove from Texas schools: “I strongly support HB 900 because it prohibits harmful, sexually explicit materials in public schools.” • Charlie Stinson ran for a spot on the board in 2022 on a series of dog whistles: “Keep politics, sexualization & social activism out of the classroom; factual based curriculum.” • In between Trumpy election-denying posts and Bama football fan posts, Stinson’s personal twitter feed includes scaremongering about CRT and a tweet calling Austin ISD “mind polluters,” while publicizing the Bircher-backed pseudo-documentary (<i>The Mind Polluters</i>) that drove the Moms for Liberty wild last spring.
Place 7	

- **Carolyn Rachaner** is a member of the conspiracist book-banning group [Families Engaged for Effective Education](#). Her [campaign-related posts](#) on her personal Facebook page have been liked by luminaries of the North Texas book banning world like McKinney’s Kyle “KD” Sims and Fort Worth/Peaster’s Hollie Plemons.
- A recent Rachaner campaign event included [Allen West](#) and Place 6 candidate **Terry Senne**.
- Like Senne, Rachaner [supports HB 900](#), which [would ban *Lonesome Dove*](#) (and countless other works of literature) from Texas schools. She wrote to the House Committee on Public Education, “I am writing to support HB 900 and to rid our school libraries of sexually explicit books. Our public schools should be focused on education, and they should not be providing minors with erotic books and traumatic descriptions of sexual activities. This should be unacceptable in the state of Texas! Parents desperately need this bill to pass to protect our children.”

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 6

- **Lori Tays** is a pediatric ER nurse and parent of two Denton ISD students who describes herself as “an advocate for special education resources in our community.”
- Tays has an engaging [Facebook presence](#) that includes bite-sized videos she calls “[Tays Talks](#),” meant to inform viewers about the district and the roles and responsibilities of the school board.
- Tays has advocated for public schools and [against the voucher system](#) of SB8.
- She has garnered an impressive list of local endorsements, including Little Elm City Council member [Jamell Johnson](#) and former Denton ISD board member [Rudy Rodriguez](#).
- [Donate to Lori Tays](#).

Place 7

- **Patsy Sosa-Sánchez** is an assistant professor at UNT-Dallas and has also taught at Texas Woman’s University, from which she holds a doctorate in Reading Education. A former elementary educator, Sosa-Sánchez helped implement the first dual language program in Denton ISD and has a long history of service in the district.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Patsy Sosa-Sánchez](#).

Contacts on the Ground

- TBD

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!



Notes: Pro-censorship groups have had little success at winning school board seats in urban Texas. This is as true in Fort Worth (where the public-school student population is 89% non-white) as it is in Houston or Austin. That doesn't mean they haven't tried. Last May, a member of Moms for Liberty financed the unsuccessful campaign of candidate Trischelle Strong (no relation) in Fort Worth's District 6, calling her opponents "Marxists." Strong came in third.

But while these groups failed to win a spot on the FWISD board, they have succeeded in greatly disrupting the board's business and limiting learning for Fort Worth students. Most recently, a group of activists swarmed the board's [December](#) and [January](#) meetings to protest the district's use of a sex-ed curriculum that they said "sexualized" children and promoted "the transgender-industrial complex."

"You have awakened the Body of Christ," said Valeria Nevarez, who brought her whole family with her to take turns chastising the board for the program—which had already been paid for, which required parental opt-in permission for participation, and which had been used in a previous form by the district since 2014. As a result of the outcry, the district [canceled all sex-ed classes](#) in the district for the remainder of the school year. "How will the parents who opted in their children into sexual education last semester be informed that their children did not receive the education they requested? How and when will the parents who opted in their children this semester be notified that their children will not receive the sexual education that they chose for their children?" asked a nurse and member of the School Health Advisory Committee. On a night when many non-district parents were throwing around the term "parents' rights," those were genuine questions about parents' ability to direct their children's education.

The cancellation of sex-ed was one of a line of coups for a particularly vocal group of activists in and around Fort Worth. In 2022, they celebrated the resignations of Superintendent Kent Scribner, trustee

Jacinto Ramos, and district DEI committee co-chair Norma García-López, all of whom extremist Carlos Turcios associated with what he called “CRT and “wokeism.” Another local activist, Hollie Plemons, keeps a [running image](#) of district leaders and employers activists have run out of the district.

Turcios and Plemons are two names to know in the district—though they aren’t on the ballot, they’ve orchestrated most of the pro-censorship and anti-inclusion movement in the district for the past two years. Plemons has actively recruited candidates for trustee on [Facebook for a year](#), and [celebrated](#) when Nevarez, Eagle Forum president Pat Carlson, and Josh Yoder signed up to challenge incumbents at the filing deadline.

Turcios and Plemons are outside of the political mainstream in Fort Worth, but that’s no reason to rest easy about these races. Unlike in suburban districts where school board races have been battles for months, Fort Worth ISD doesn’t seem to have the sort of laser-focused support group that can defend against a board takeover. And in a low-turnout May election, energy can go a long way towards a win. On top of that, Turcios and Plemons are savvier than your average board raiders in suburban Texas districts. They’ve been doing this for a while, and have honed messages that might hide their extremism while sending dog whistles to the area’s most extreme political elements.

When I think about Fort Worth, a town I love, I think about that lone voice speaking up for reason at the January board meeting, and I hope she gets the support she needs.

Contested Races	Candidates
District 2	Tobi Jackson (I) Patricia “Pat” Carlson
District 3	Quinton “Q” Phillips Mar’Tayshia James Valeria Nevarez
District 5	Carin “CJ” Evans Kevin Lynch Josh Yoder
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
<p>District 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patricia “Pat” Carlson is a doozy. The former president of the Texas Eagle Forum—the rabidly anti-gay, anti-feminist group started in the 1970s Phyllis Schlafly–Carlson has a long record of making incendiary comments about Muslims and gays. But her biggest hobby-horse has been lobbying against sex education in public schools—an obsession that puts her right in line with the interests of the activists trying to re-shape Fort Worth ISD. • It’s no surprise, then, that pro-censorship, anti-sex-ed extremist Hollie Plemons celebrated Carlson’s entry into the District 2 race, calling her a “great” candidate. <p>District 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plemons also celebrated the entry of Valeria Nevarez, a central character in the December and January spectacles opposing the district’s sex-ed curriculum. In a social media video, Nevarez 	

claimed that FWISD would be “adopting a sex-ed curriculum that is going to destroy the hearts, minds, and futures of your children.”

- Nevarez is also a member of [Families Engaged for Effective Education](#).

District 5

- Not much information is available online about **Josh Yoder**. The Fort Worth report [describes him](#) as a “Fort Worth resident,” and even the ultra-conservative Fort Worth Watchdog [doesn’t have much to say](#) about him. But pro-censorship activist Hollie Plemons called him a “great” candidate, so until I get more information about him, he’s getting a red highlight.

Alternative Candidate(s)

District 2

- District 2 incumbent and board president **Tobi Jackson** is an Eastern Hills High School graduate who lists volunteerism as one of her family’s core values. Jackson has been on the board since 2010, and [has focused on](#) “sustainable, outcomes driven efforts on behalf of ALL Fort Worth youth.”
- [Donate to or volunteer for Tobi Jackson](#).

District 3

- District 3 incumbent **Quinton “Q” Phillips** has been under constant attack from anti-inclusion and pro-censorship forces in Fort Worth as a chair of the district’s Racial Equity Committee. Phillips is a graduate of District 3’s Dunbar High School (Full disclosure: I attended Dunbar Middle School—Go Wildcats!) and Prairie View A&M University. He worked as a probation officer and an adjunct professor at TCU and is [a passionate advocate for both Stop Six and Dunbar](#).
- [Donate to or volunteer for Quinton Phillips](#).
- Challenger for District 3 Mar’Tayshia James is the president of the Echo Heights Environmental Coalition. If I get more information about her stances on censorship and inclusive classrooms, I’ll update this listing.
- Donate to or volunteer for Mar’Tayshia James. (website pending)

District 5

- I really don’t know what Fort Worth’s extremists have against District 5 incumbent **CJ Evans** except a vendetta against every board member in the district and a desire to burn the whole city’s school system to the ground. But that’s where we are in 2023. Evans, who has voted in four out of five Republican primaries since 2012, was elected in 2019 after being endorsed by Judy Needham—another Republican primary voter.
- [Donate to or volunteer for CJ Evans](#).

Contacts on the Ground

- TBD

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Frisc0 ISD

Notes: Frisco has one of several Texas boards that has steadily restricted students’ freedom to read over the past two years while simultaneously facing blistering attacks from extremist groups for not taking *enough* books out of students’ hands. In November, the board adopted a new library materials policy to the chagrin of district librarians and teachers. The result? Several books that had been challenged and returned to shelves [were removed on appeal](#). Nearby McKinney ISD [copied the policy](#) in January, and state legislators are reportedly looking at it as a model for thinking about limiting books in schools statewide.

For years, the board in Frisco has leaned moderate-to-conservative, and most of the trustees vote in Republican primaries. In last May’s low turnout election, pro-censorship candidates Marvin Lowe and Stephanie Elad squeaked their way onto the board (Lowe was [elected by 51 votes](#)) with the support of a well-funded PAC, Families 4 Frisco. Now, with two seats up for election, the PAC hopes to secure an extremist majority.

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 4	Dynette Davis Reed Bond
Place 5	Mark Hill Susan Kershaw
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
Place 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reed Bond has donated to Families 4 Frisco, the group that supported Lowe and Elad. Other donors to the PAC include Allen West and book-banning trustees Andrew Yeager (Carroll ISD) and Cody Weaver (Plano ISD). The PAC, in turn, is supporting Bond. • Bond attended a meeting about “sex trafficking and pornography in schools” hosted by Families 4 Frisco (to which he has donated) called Battlefield Innocence, which was also attended by McKinney gadfly Kyle “KD” Sims, PAC-backed far-right trustees Lowe and Elad, and Texas Scorecard writer Erin Anderson.
Place 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Kershaw has also donated to Families 4 Frisco. • Along with Sims, one of the area’s chief advocates for censorship is Alison Lambert Darrell, who tagged Kershaw in a photo with Representative Jared Patterson. Patterson challenged dozens of books in the Frisco ISD, and appealed committee decisions when the books weren’t removed. In the post with Kershaw, Darrell described Patterson as “the MUSCLE of the Frisco Mama Bears,” praising him for his commitment “to protect our children from hypersexualization, homosexualization, and transgenderization in the Frisco ISD.”

- Kershaw has voiced her [support](#) of HB 900, which [would ban *Lonesome Dove*](#) from Texas schools.

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 4

- **Dynette Davis** is a former teacher and curriculum developer with an M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction. She’s the first African American trustee in the history of Frisco ISD.
- At a November meeting in which the board made final banning decisions on seven books including *The Glass Castle*, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, and *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, Davis voted to keep six of the seven books (more than any other trustee). Davis said her votes were informed by reading all of the challenged books in their entirety—something the district’s M4L trustees refused to do.
- Davis isn’t perfect—in a [November Facebook post](#), she defended the board’s ill-considered changes to its book reconsideration policy—but her moderation and commitment to due process represent an important balance to the extremists currently on the board and those seeking to join it.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Dynette Davis.](#)

Place 5

- Mark Hill has no obvious red flags on his website. Though I’ll look forward to more specific information on where he stands on issues, his announcement of his campaign was welcomed warmly by Dustin Paschal, who ran for trustee in 2022. Hill is an attorney who has voted consistently in Republican primaries. He [describes himself](#) as the son of teachers and a product of public schools.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Mark Hill.](#)

Contacts on the Ground

- [United4FISD](#)

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD—Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Godley ISD

Contested Races	Candidates
All positions on board are open; top two vote-getters will win seats.	Craig Stevenson (I) Greg Miller (I) Kayla Herburger Lain Nova Olson

Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kayla Herburger Lain and Nova Olson are both members of the Facebook group for Families Engaged for Effective Education. • Lain, who homeschools her kids, is one of the most active commenters on the group’s Facebook page, where she posts about the district “sexualizing” students because it provides links to mental health resources for LGBTQ youth, argues in favor of restricting books in public libraries, and advocates in favor of eliminating the property taxes that fund public schools. • Like Lain, Olson is a passionate advocate for abolishing property taxes. • Her personal Facebook page is also awash with anti-“CRT” posts, anti-gay and anti-trans posts (including several about praying the gay away), and posts about “porn” in school libraries.
Alternative Candidate(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neither incumbent (Craig Stevenson, Greg Miller) seems to have a campaign website, though Stevenson does have a campaign Facebook page. Stevenson has a history of voting in Republican primaries.
Contacts on the Ground
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Organizing steps/upcoming events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Grapevine Colleyville ISD

Notes: Last May, Grapevine-Colleyville ISD was part of the Patriot Mobile wave in North Texas, with a sea of money helping to sweep two pro-censorship and anti-LGBTQ candidates, Tammy Nakamura and Kathy Florence Spradley, onto the board.

Though Nakamura and Spradley ran on “taking politics out of schools” and “restoring a focus on academics,” they immediately did the opposite, joining with trustees Shannon Braun and Casey Ford to [enact restrictions on books and teaching, and to exclude trans from district sports and bathrooms](#). Nakamura even bragged about having a hit list of teachers the district was intending to run off. Since their election, board meetings have become even more contentious, the district is hemorrhaging educators, and

Grapevine-Colleyville ISD has [lost its designation](#) as one of DFW’s “Top 100 Places to Work,” an award it had held for four consecutive years.

Because Patriot Mobile funded so many successful candidates in North Texas last year, it’s easy to forget that those races were not the same. In GCISD, the results were fairly close. In part, that’s because GCISD had an excellent, organized group on the ground, [Protect GCISD](#), that helped to inform and mobilize voters. This year, they’re joined by [United for GCISD](#), which has done a phenomenal job of detailing the extremism of the current board majority, and its negative effects on the district’s students. Both groups deserve your support.

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 5	<p>Dave Stine Sergio Harris A.J. Pontillo</p>
Place 6	<p>Richard Newton Dianna Sager</p>
Place 7	<p>Mary Humphrey Mark Wollin Kimberly Phoenix</p>
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
<p>Place 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A.J. Pontillo has worked in law enforcement for 16 years. Apart from a promise to use that background to improve student safety, his campaign website doesn’t say much that you won’t find on any other candidate’s site. • But Pontillo does seem to have the support of GCISD Parents PAC, a book-banning group that worked to elect Nakamura and Kathy Florence Spradley to the board last year. The PAC welcomed Pontillo, Place 6 candidate Richard Newton, and Place 7 candidate Mary Humphrey to a meet-and-greet hosted by True Texas Project leader Fred McCarty. <p>Place 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Newton formerly served on the Colleyville City Council. His entrance into the Place 6 race was welcomed by a whole slew of North Texas book banners, from Families Engaged leader Mary Lowe to current GCISD trustees Kathy Florence Spradley and Casey Ford. • After Nakamura and Spradley joined with Ford and Braun to impose a chaotic book-banning, anti-LGBTQ spree on the district, Newton expressed support for them and their policies. • In return Nakamura—again, the trustee who kept a list of teachers she wants to chase from the district—warmly endorsed Newton, saying, “I am so excited. Every person in GCISD should be excited and rally to help elect Richard Newton to GCISD.” <p>Place 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Humphrey is a former teacher whose entrance into the race was celebrated by a number of Moms for Liberty, Families Engaged, and GCISD Parents PAC members. Her campaign

studiously avoided controversial language in her [website](#), but Humphrey has [the support](#) of the district's [book-banning PAC](#). Erin Anderson, a writer for the extremist site Texas Scorecard, wrote that [she aligns](#) with the current anti-LGBTQ, anti-book board majority.

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 5

- **Dave Stine** ran unsuccessfully for the board in 2022. He is a former federal criminal investigator, a veteran, and a GCISD parent who is married to a teacher.
- Stine is running on a platform of “prioritizing students over divisive political noise.” That’s a hard phrase to parse, as taking politics out of the classroom is something lots of candidates claim to be doing—even while running on explicitly partisan or political grounds. That said, the language on Stine’s [website](#) is promising, if not as specific as I’d hope. One of his goals, for example, is “safeguarding academic programs and materials that meet *all* of our student’s individual needs, restoring GCISD’s place as a destination district.”
- As a part of his non-political emphasis, Stine is refusing to take money or support from any PAC, and seems to be pitching his candidacy as a middle-ground option for the district.
- Stine voted in the 2022 Republican primary.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Dave Stine.](#)
- **Sergio Harris** is a teacher, a veteran, and former Army combat medic. His priorities include improving the district’s mental health resources, spending responsibly, providing students safe and secure schools, valuing inclusion, and retaining teachers. He writes, “I’m committed to creating a school system where parents, teachers and students from all walks of life are represented, acknowledged, and treated with respect. I believe all students, parents, and teachers should feel safe, welcome, and included in our district.”
- Harris has the support of [Protect GCISD](#), a group that has fought hard to support teachers and defend the district against attacks on public education.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Sergio Harris.](#)

Place 6

- **Diana Sager** is a teacher and popular basketball coach from Colleyville Heritage High School whose battle against brain cancer inspired her community. While most candidates in this district are claiming to be unifiers, Sager really has made bringing the community together a centerpiece of her campaign.
- Sager has a history of voting in Republican primaries.
- She also has the support of Protect GCISD.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Diana Sager.](#)

Place 7

- Mark Wollin is a GCISD grad and parent who works at SiriusXM Radio. One of his campaign priorities is restoring civility to the district.
- Wollin voted in the last three Republican primaries.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Mark Wollin.](#)
- **Kimberly Phoenix** announced her campaign with a series of [Facebook](#) posts that promised “excellence over extremism” and promised to “show our teachers that we respect their professionalism and their dedication to our students” while taking issue with the current

- board’s censorship and elimination of stakeholder voice.
- In addition to committing to protect Special Education services and “rebuilding advanced academics” programs, Phoenix [writes](#) on her website, “I was shocked but not surprised to see the current board majority’s immediate focus on curriculum, books, and other ideological agendas soon after they took over GCISD. It showed me that the current board majority was not interested in continuing GCISD’s tradition of academic excellence. Their first action was to push through a policy around fear tactics regarding social issues — while most GCISD families are focused on the availability of classes, programs, and materials that will help GCISD be a top-tier district once again.”
- Regarding her support for teachers, Phoenix [writes](#), “I’ve witnessed the hostility and carelessness of our current board majority toward GCISD educators,” and calls out both extremist Tammy Nakamura’s hit list of teachers she wants purged from the district and Colleyville Grapevine Values PAC, “whose leaders call teachers ‘groomers’ and claim GCISD has ‘failed.’”
- At the August [board meeting](#) where a variety of anti- called the policies “abhorrent, unkind, dangerous, and will cause this district to be a shell of what it once was—a destination district.”
- Also called out mismanagement of funds / budget cuts leading to the reduction of sheltered GT class in GCISD high schools.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Kimberly Phoenix here.](#)

Contacts on the Ground

- GCISD has two excellent groups organizing to protect district schools, support teachers and students, and resist extremism. [Protect GCISD](#) has made candidate endorsements and provided ways to volunteer and get involved in the election; [UnitedforGCISD](#) is a bipartisan alliance that has broken down the district’s extremism problem with lots of easy-to-digest informative pieces. And both groups have great merch!

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Humble ISD

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 2	Robert Scarfo (I) Asdrubal “Dru” Gutierrez Reginald Spivey Erin Greene
Place 6	Marques Holmes (I) Audra Deaver

Place 7	<p>Holly Ham</p> <p>Nancy Morrison (I)</p> <p>Michael Grabowski</p> <p>Leigh Marcus</p> <p>Natalie Carter</p>
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Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)

Place 2

- Erin Greene is a close ally of Tracy Shannon, who has challenged more than three dozen books in the district. Shannon is the Texas director of the wildly homophobic group MassResistance, and her homophobia bubbles out in her social media conversations and on her blog, [MadMommaBear](#). Greene and Shannon regularly appear together at board meetings to decry books; after a meeting last December, the two [appeared in a video together](#) in which they called for librarians to be jailed, and argued that parents who buy books they deem obscene should be arrested. Shannon complained that the book reconsideration committee she participated in had too many lesbians, and Greene argued that “the transgender thing” is part of a conspiracy to get “the children to depend on the government.”
- Greene (like Shannon) is a member of [Families Engaged for Effective Education](#), and her personal Facebook is essentially a mix of transphobia and shared posts from Lynn Strawn Davenport, the leader of Families Engaged.
- In one post on her Facebook page, Greene approvingly shared a [snarky Texas Monthly article](#) from 1979 that called teachers “certified ignoramuses” and “incompetents.”
- Reginald Spivey is a former teacher, coach, and assistant principal with two degrees from Prairie View A&M University. One of the issues he stresses on his [campaign website](#) is teacher retention, and he doesn’t shy away from acknowledging the need for social and emotional learning—a buzzword that has become anathema to extremist groups in Texas. On the other hand, at a recent candidate forum, he expressed support for banning (his word) books on the Matt Krause list.
- Challenger Asdrubal “Dru” Gutierrez [promises](#) to “govern by adopting conservative, common-sense policies” and “blocking indoctrination of our children.”
- At a recent candidate forum, Gutierrez advocated adopting a policy like the draconian policy [just passed by Spring Branch ISD](#), which eliminated input from teachers, librarians, and school administrators.
- Gutierrez isn’t just going after librarians—at a recent candidate forum he took aim at English teachers, too. “Not only do we need to review our libraries, but these English departments, they also have books that need to be reviewed,” he said.

Place 6

- Audra Deaver’s [campaign website](#) is fairly bland, with just a couple of coded gestures to culture-warrior obsessions (she promises a “traditional curriculum” that will “eliminate unnecessary distractions in learning” and “stick to the basics, anything else is the parent’s responsibility.”) But Deaver has been promoted by district book-banner-in-chief Tracy Shannon, who hosted a meet-and-greet for Deaver in January and has donated to her campaign.
- Deaver is also endorsed by far-right State Board of Education member Julie Pickren, and is a member of [Families Engaged for Effective Education](#).

- **Holly Ham** served several roles in the Trump administration, working as a senior official in the Department of Housing and Urban Development and as Assistant Secretary for Management in the Department of Education. She was also executive director of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- Ham’s campaign [Facebook page](#) was started by Jameson Ellis, who in 2021 [ran a hyper-Trumpy campaign](#) for Congress in an attempt to unseat Dan Crenshaw for “choosing to vote against President Trump and certify a fraudulent election.”
- Notably, one of the early members of Ham’s Facebook group is Kayla Hensley of [KAG Strategies](#), an “America First” political agency that has worked on school board elections before and, among other tactics, [hires block-walkers](#) to campaign for conservative candidates. Expect Ham’s campaign to have lots of firepower.

Place 7

- **Michael Grabowski** lists “sexual indoctrination” as one of the three “[Problems at Humble ISD](#)” he aims to address as a trustee. “Books targeted at sexual indoctrination are proliferating in our school libraries,” he claims. And in a charmless video he produced on the topic, he includes passages from *This One Summer* (characters’ brief discussion of oral sex); L8R, G8R (a brief, unsexy description of a character’s first sexual experience), *Lily & Dunkin* (for describing the feelings of a transgender teen), and *Fun Home* (“a book promoting lesbianism”). Grabowski contrasts these books to “the literature we read in school,” one example of which is *The Grapes of Wrath*. Grabowski is no young man, so he can be forgiven for having forgotten how that novel ends. Grabowski says he based his video on the work Tracy Shannon, whom he credits for having “diligently documented the body of these books in Humble ISD.”

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 2

- Incumbent Robert Scarfo seems the most reasonable of the Place 2 bunch.
- Scarfo is a solid red Republican voter who has been [endorsed](#) by the Humble/Kingswood/Astascosita Conservatives.
- At a recent candidate forum, Scarfo defended due process for evaluating library books. “We do have the committee in place, because what I may feel, material that I don’t think should be there, there’s other people who think it’s okay. And if it doesn’t rise to that bar [of violating the penal code], then that’s up for the committee to decide.”
- In a meeting on revisions to the district’s library and instructional materials policies in September, Scarfo asked to include specific language from the Texas Penal Code in the new policy. It’s a fairly standard anti-book move, but not particularly consequential because Texas school libraries already don’t include material that violates the Penal Code.

Place 6

- In a 2021 interview, incumbent **Marques Holmes** emphasized the importance of trusting teachers and the value of diversity and inclusion for the district—both good signs.
- Holmes had a reasonable response to questions about book bans at a recent candidate forum. “Humble ISD has never, will never allow pornographic materials or inadequate things in our schools,” he said. “I will also say this—that we have amazing librarians. We have placed the power back in our parents’ hands, and they can earmark which books they choose to have their

children read or not.”

Place 7

- Incumbent **Nancy Morrison** is a former educator who was the founding principal of Lakeshore Elementary School in Humble ISD. Morrison has served on the board since 2015, and has earned the [designation Master Trustee](#). She has a record of voting in Republican primaries.
- “The state of Texas is not going to let Texas schools teach pornography,” Morrison said at a recent candidate forum. She also pointed out that the district already has an opt-out process for parents who don’t want their children reading a certain book. “So therefore it is the parent’s responsibility to watch out for what their child is reading.”
- **Natalie Carter** is a first-time candidate. A registered nurse with a master’s degree from UT-Houston, Carter is also an Humble ISD parent with three children in district schools.
- Carter has one of the most thorough and thoughtful candidate websites I’ve seen—its wordcount is through the roof. In one of its most impressive features, Carter printed her [full responses](#) to the questions of the Lake Houston Pachyderm Club’s forum. Carter’s answers are notable in their detail and in Carter’s willingness to directly address hard questions. The whole thing is worth reading, but for this guide, the most relevant portions are Carter’s responses to the questions “How do you plan to ensure children are not exposed to pornographic materials in school?” and “What is your position regarding CRT, SEL, and DEI in our schools?”
- In answer to the first question, Carter responded, “I believe every parent has the right to decide what is appropriate for their children, but not what is appropriate for all children.” It’s a simple concept, but one that’s hard to grasp for some. Carter also objected (correctly) to the application of the term “pornographic” to Humble ISD library books and emphasized the importance of access to information so parents can make judgments on materials for their children.
- For the CRT/SEL/DEI question, Carter dispelled the idea that CRT is being taught in Humble ISD *without* denigrating the academic field itself *and* she offered a reasonable, nuanced explanation of how she would like to see the history of racism taught in schools: “There are, however, discussions of highly sensitive race-related topics such as slavery, racism, and affirmative action being taught in public schools. Learning, teaching, and discussing issues pertaining to topics can be difficult for us all. It evokes a wide array of emotions that are uncomfortable. When done responsibly (without implied guilt, or group shaming), we all gain a better understanding of what makes our country great: our resiliency.”
- [Donate to or volunteer for Natalie Carter](#).

Contacts on the Ground

- TBD

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD—Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Katy ISD

Notes: Here are just a few headlines Katy ISD has generated over the past two years:

- 1) [KATY ISD PULLS BOOKS, CANCELS AUTHOR VISIT AFTER PETITION CLAIMS SUBJECT MATTER TEACHES ‘CRITICAL RACE THEORY’](#)
(This cancellation was of an author visit by award-winning author Jerry Craft, whose books are in no way Critical Race Theory)
- 2) [KATY ISD TEACHER ‘DECIMATED’ CLASS LIBRARY, REMOVING EVERY YA BOOK TO AVOID CONTROVERSY, PARENT SAYS](#)
- 3) [KATY ISD CANCELS VISIT FROM AUTHOR EMMA STRAUB AFTER SHE USES ‘F WORD’ ONLINE](#)
(*This* author visit was canceled because Straub used the f-word on her personal twitter account in reaction to the massacre of 21 children in Uvalde)

The king of the Katy book banners is Victor Pérez, who now sits on the board. The queen is **Mary Ellen Cuzela**, who is running for Place 5 this year with the support of Pérez and a full slate of book-banning courtiers, **Amy Thieme** and **Morgan Calhoun**.

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 3	Amy Thieme Bruce Bradford Shawn Miller
Place 4	Morgan Calhoun Erica Bretell Cicely Taylor
Place 5	Mary Ellen Cuzela Shana Peterson
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
Place 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I’m going out of order, but Mary Ellen Cuzela is the leader of this slate, so it makes sense to start with her.• Along with current trustee Victor Perez, Cuzela has led the charge on book challenges in Katy ISD. She’s a regular speaker at board meetings—last August, she accused the board of breaking the Texas Penal Code obscenity chapter (it did not) by maintaining certain books in its library. “Because a book appeals to certain people,” she said, “is not reason enough to break the law.” In the same speech, Cuzella equated Katy ISD books to child pornography and said books like John Green’s <i>Looking for Alaska</i> “exacerbate the sex-trafficking epidemic.”
Place 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amy Thieme’s campaign worked very hard to create a website that says nothing about her

positions on any controversial matter. Nor has Thieme been a vocal presence during public comment at KISD school board meetings. But the fact that Thieme has won the support of the district's two most prominent book banners—her slate-mate Mary Ellen Cuzela and [trustee Victor Pérez](#)—speaks volumes.

Place 4

- [Morgan Calhoun](#)'s [website](#) is also full of fairly anodyne language—nothing stronger than promises to “hold the line for family values” and “stand in the gap for Katy families.” Notably, the latter is a tagline Cuzela has used in her public comments at board meetings.

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 3

- Bruce Bradford is a mortgage agent. I haven't yet found information about his positions on academic freedom or inclusive classrooms. He has a history of voting in Republican primaries.
- (website pending)
- Shawn Miller is an accountant and professor at Lone Star College. He has taught “Bible studies on personal finance and money matters” and launched his firm The Christian CPA in 2016. Miller has a history of voting in Republican primaries.
- (website pending)

Place 4

- Erica Brettell is a former legislative assistant of Republican senator Jim Inhofe, for whom she handled education and healthcare policy. In Katy, she has volunteered in numerous capacities for the district, including the district's Bond Committee and her school PTA Board. She has also led a nonprofit “providing dating violence prevention education and awareness to students and counselors.” Her positions on inclusive schools and academic freedom are not immediately apparent, and when asked directly on Facebook, she pivoted away from answering.
- Donate to or volunteer for Erica Brettell (website pending).
- [Cicely Taylor](#)'s campaign Facebook page includes something rare and brave for a Texas school board candidate: a clear, full-throated policy statement on the importance of providing diverse reading materials for students. She writes: “Currently, the Katy ISD response to books and authors has been quite reactionary. A parent should be able to request a review and for their child not to have access to said literature. However, should the book be removed while under review—No! Should schools alert parents that a book is under review so parents can make the choice as to if they want their child to be exposed to it—Yes! Should parents be able to opt out of author visits that do not align with their own personal values, absolutely! However, said authors should not be banned from schools because of the outcry of a handful of detractors.”
- Taylor has been an educator and administrator with a network of charter schools (KIPP Texas Public Schools). She ran for trustee last year—here is [what I wrote about her then](#).
- [Donate to or volunteer for Cicely Taylor](#).

Place 5

- [Shana Peterson](#) is a military mom whose son just returned from deployment overseas. She's also a former teacher, who served in both general ed and special ed roles. Her priorities reflect her experience as both a classroom instructor and a diagnostician. “[W]e need to focus on the emotional and social well-being of our students,” Peterson argues, because “when students are

emotionally healthy, they experience fewer disciplinary incidents, and can concentrate better on academics.”

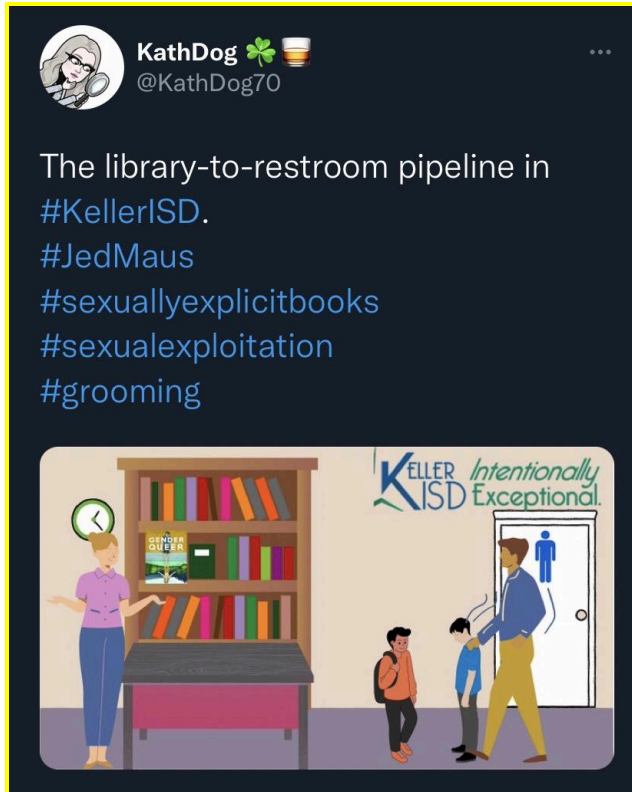
- Peterson has consistently voted in Republican primaries.
- Though Peterson has not made censorship a centerpiece of her campaign, she earned a green highlight for her thoughtful but firm and clear response to someone who complained, “There is nothing on your webpage about opposing CRT. Nothing about cleaning up content in libraries. Nothing about opposing woke culture.” Peterson responded:
“As an educator, teachers teach history and facts. It is not the job of educators to impose their beliefs on students. As students grow they form their own opinions based on the knowledge they have acquired and their experiences. In addition, the state of Texas has outlined instructional requirements regarding this concern. On the topic of library books, the district has a policy in place that is consistent with the state law, which includes reviewing and ordering books. In addition, parents have the ability to determine what books are appropriate for their child. IF you have a particular book you are concerned about I would encourage you to visit Instructional Resources Information/Home (katyisd.org) to complete the Checklist for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources. I have yet to find any two people that define woke the same way and it seems to put people on edge. Before we can dig into your concern lets agree to a definition. Woke is an adjective derived from African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) meaning “alert to racial prejudice and discrimination”. If you’re in agreement that this is the definition of the term within your question context, then my answer is very straight forward. There is no place in our school district that should encourage prejudice or discrimination.”
- [Donate to or volunteer for Shana Peterson.](#)

Contacts on the Ground

- TBD

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!



Notes: Keller is a cautionary tale about what can happen after an angry, organized group blitzes a school board. Last year, three Moms for Liberty candidates swept the May board elections, joining board president Charles Randklev to create a 4-3 pro-censorship, anti-LGBTQ majority.

Since then, the board has mired the district in controversy, provoked a [federal civil rights complaint](#), and garnered Keller a national reputation as [the town that went to war against books](#).

First, the board voted to rescind the policy that had allowed parents to challenge library materials but failed to result in the mass removals the pro-censorship forces desired. Over the summer, the district ordered all previously challenged books removed for re-vetting, which resulted, briefly, in the removal of a graphic-novel version of Anne Frank's diary. (The district sheepishly returned it to the shelves after a national outcry)

Then, the board implemented a rigid rubric to determine books' age appropriateness that would exclude virtually all of the books from last year's AP literature exam from district libraries. Even though the board members knew the policy was flawed, the majority voted it in anyway, with president Charles Randklev explaining they could fine tune it later.

Policy EFB(Exhibit) Content Guidelines

Theme	Elementary	Intermediate	Middle	High*
Profanity	M	M	S	C
Passionate and/or extended kissing	N	N	M	P
Horror	N	M	S	C
Violence	S	S	S	C
Bullying	S	S	S	C
Drug or alcohol use by minors	N	N	S	C
Tobacco use by minors	N	S	S	C
Drug or alcohol use by adults	M	S	S	C
Glorification of suicide, self-harm, or mental illness	N	N	S	S
Brief description of non-sexual nudity	M	M	S	C
Illustrations or description of nude intimate body parts	N	N	N	N
Detailed descriptions of sexually explicit conduct or sex acts	N	N	N	N
Sex scenes or sexual activities	N	N	N	M
Discussion or depiction of gender fluidity	N	N	N	N

N = None
M = Minimal - the content rarely appears throughout the volume.
S = Some - the content occasionally appears throughout the volume.
C = Common - the content appears throughout the volume but is not a main theme of the volume.
P = Prevalent - the content is frequent enough to be a main theme of the volume.

In November, it became clear what Randklev meant: not that the board would revise the policy to be more tolerant of the fact that great literature sometimes includes hard scenes but, instead, that they would seek to remove any books that acknowledge the existence of LGBTQ people at all. At that month’s meeting, the board voted to eliminate from the entire district any book that contained any “discussion or depiction of gender fluidity,” a blatantly bigoted move that earned it a federal civil rights complaint from the ACLU.

In an article on that meeting, the Texas Scorecard described the board as having a “4-3 conservative majority.” That’s false—every single trustee on the current board has a history of voting in Republican primaries. In other words, the whole board is conservative, and the divisions in Keller aren’t partisan: they’re about principles. It’s about Christian nationalism vs. care for the community.

Keller is home to the [KISD Family Alliance](#), a well-funded PAC that supported book-banning candidates last May, and [Keller ISD Parents Informed](#), a private Facebook-group characterized by nasty personal attacks on teachers, administrators, parents and community members. At one point, four current board members belonged to the group. Keller ISD candidates also received tons of funding last cycle from Patriot Mobile Action PAC, and likely will again.

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 4	John Birt Haley Taylor Schlitz
Place 5	Beverly Dixon (I) Chris Coker
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
Place 4	

- **John Birt** is a donor to the KISD Family Alliance and is supported by the district's most vocal book removers. When he [announced his campaign](#) on Facebook, the district's [leading book banner](#), Kathy Booher, greeted the announcement by declaring, "Behind you 100%!".
- At the August board meeting, Birt singled out a district librarian for speaking earlier in the evening. "I have two daughters attending a middle school, the librarian of which is here," he said. "And it hurts me that this librarian would consider having a book in the library that depicts what bodily function has to be greased in a manner to go in the bodily orifice."
- Birt praised the board's policies that got Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison's work taken out of KISD libraries, to the detriment of Keller students, saying "I want to commend the board for taking the leadership role legally entrusted to them to keep inappropriate, illicit, and pornographic instructional and library materials out of KISD classrooms by adopting policies EFA Local and EFB Local."
- At the [November meeting](#), Birt argued in favor of the district's ban on materials referencing "gender fluidity": "While I know the board appreciates and respects the districts teachers and librarians, any material that either condones, endorses, supports, or attempts to normalize the notion of transgenderism, especially to school-aged children, must be scrutinized. Make no mistake, we are in a battle for the souls and minds of our children."
- Birt is a member of Keller ISD Parents Informed, a private Facebook group where attacks on teachers and community members proliferate.

Place 5

- **Chris Coker** is a major donor to KISD Family Alliance.
- At the [August 2022 meeting](#) in which the board adopted a draconian rubric that could exclude *The Canterbury Tales* from Keller ISD libraries, Coker gave a shouty speech praising the new board members because, under their influence, "We're seeing a focus on God again, we're seeing a focus on schools again, on education."
- Coker also praised the board's new members for their catastrophic decisions at a special meeting earlier that month, saying, "There's been a short period of time that's happened from the election to now, and there's a lot that's been done. So I just want to commend you guys on how quickly you've taken action."
- Like **Birt**, Coker is a member of the private Facebook group Keller ISD Parents Informed, where district teachers are often attacked.

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 4

- **Haley Taylor Schlitz** graduated from Texas Woman's University at 16, then SMU's Dedman Law School at 19. As her [personal website](#) puts it, Taylor Schlitz was "the youngest Black American to ever graduate from law school in the history of the United States," and her academic achievements have been covered by a number of [media outlets](#).
- As an advocate, she has focused on standing up for a wide range of student groups, with a special focus on minority gifted and talented students. At TWU, she organized to provide support for DACA students.
- For good measure, in 2020 Taylor Schlitz was crowned Miss Keller and Miss Tarrant County Outstanding Teen and was celebrated by Beyoncé. (No word yet on Beyoncé's opinion of John Birt)
- At the August board meeting, Taylor Schlitz gave an impassioned speech that called the district's book-banning moves "malpractice and unconstitutional" and blasted the "misguided attempt by some of you to harm the intellectual curiosity and freedom of students." "Besides

embarrassing all of Keller with this misguided decision,” she said, “you are doing serious harm to the educational opportunities of the future generations we will need to ensure a conscious, strong, and successful community.”

- Her whole speech is worth watching. [It starts at 3:01:17.](#)
- Taylor Schlitz [has been endorsed](#) by the teachers of the Texas AFT.
- [Donate to Haley Taylor Schlitz.](#)

Place 5

- Beverly Dixon is a Navy veteran who has a long history of voting Republican.
- Dixon voted for revisions to the library policy that resulted in all challenged books being pulled from library shelves; she abstained from the vote on book rubric because it was too “muddled” and confusing. She was one of two votes against the addition of a “gender fluidity” ban to the book rubric. Through the discussions of all three measures, you can watch Dixon struggle to reconcile the perceived demands of the community with her conscience and knowledge that the majority’s measures are damaging school children:
- In the August meeting, she expressed reservations about the one-size-fits-all nature of the book rubric. “If we have a student who’s an intermediate student, that has something going on in their life that won’t fit into this guideline, can that staff member get them a book that will help them with some of the situations that we’ve heard about tonight?”
- At the November meeting where the “gender fluidity” ban was discussed, Dixon said, “I think we should have a rubric, I think it makes it easier for the librarians, but I think we’ve gone so far beyond what was originally the intent, that we’re now saying to a part of our population, that is in our schools, that, we’re sorry, you don’t exist. And I can’t support that.”
- A few minutes later, she elaborated: “I don’t necessarily think those [books] need to be in middle school and below, but I do think that at the high school level, we do have a lot of kids that, regardless of how you feel about it, actually are in this group—and these are kids that I’ve know their entire life, since first grade on. And if we remove everything that even mentions it, at the high school level, then what are we saying to them?”

Contacts on the Ground

- TBD

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD—Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Lewisville ISD

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 6	Mindy Bumgarner Michelle Alkhatib
Place 7	Staci L. Barker

Jacob Anderson
Ashley Jones

Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)

Place 6

- **Mindy Bumgarner** has a doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Argosy University. She says on her website she plans to “fight shoulder to shoulder to remove obscene materials from our classrooms and libraries.”
- In an [interview](#) with *The Crosstimbers Gazette*, Bumgarner said, “I have a major issue with critical race theory. We are weaponizing our children, but not only weaponizing them against each other, but we’re weaponizing them against their past and their history, everything that made these children have the freedoms that they have. And it’s starting to alter even their views of history because we’re getting a watered-down version that’s not really helping.” In the same interview, Bumgarner claimed that teachers tell her they spend 40% of their instructional time on social-emotional learning. She asserted that a “political agenda” is coming into the classroom, and suggested that teachers are teaching “sexual orientation, sexual identity, and transgender issues” in class. “Thanks to the pandemic,” she said, “we got an eye into our child’s curriculum and a lot of parents aren’t too happy right now.”

Place 7

- **Ashley Jones** is a homeschool parent whose [campaign website](#) leads with a quote from Allen West.
- Asked in an interview by *The Crosstimbers Gazette* about whether “sexual orientation and gender identity” are topics that should be taught in schools, Jones said, “When you bring those type of topics into a school classroom, you’re not teaching basics at that time, you’re teaching ideology.”
- Among her [donors](#) is Kathy May, one of the individuals who led the charge on challenging books in Keller ISD. Alison Lambert Darrell, who has appeared at school board meetings in various North Texas districts advocating for book bans, [greeted](#) her campaign enthusiastically: “I stand with you, Ashley!! Thank you for running for LISD board!! I will do all I can to support your campaign!!”
- **Jacob Anderson** is a former teacher, administrator and CPS investigator with a master’s degree in Education Leadership from Concordia University.
- Like all Lewisville candidates, Anderson was asked about his views on “CRT” and the “teaching” of gender identity during [an interview](#) with *The Crosstimbers Gazette*. His answers were mostly the same as Place 6 candidate Michelle Alkhatib and his opponent Staci Barker–It’s not in the TEKS, so it’s not being taught in the district. But when asked if he thinks “sexual orientation, gender identity, and transsexual issues” are topics to be taught in schools, he said, “No sir, I do not. Do I think that people in our district are gay, lesbian, transgender? Yes I do. But gay, straight, whatever your preference or identity is, it shouldn’t be projected on the child.” That’s a concerning answer, as it indulges the apparent premise of the question, which is that teachers are imposing gender identity or sexuality on students. That idea, in turn, underlies a lot of the “grooming” talk that’s being directed at teachers these days.

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 6

- Michelle Alkhatib is a former teacher and principal who has a long history of volunteering in Lewisville ISD and is the mother of four LISD students.
- Assailed by extremist commenters, Alkhatib offered a [level-headed response](#) to questions of whether she supports “critical race theory”: “CRT was developed for a college level of study. It is much too complex for K-12 students to comprehend. In Texas, we are required to teach the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that are developed by the State Board of Education. CRT is not in our TEKS, therefore we do not teach it in Lewisville ISD.”
- In [an interview](#) with *The Crosstimbers Gazette*, Alkhatib similarly threw cold water on the idea that teachers in Texas are trying to “teach sexual orientation, gender identity, and transsexual issues.”
- [Donate to](#) or [volunteer for](#) Michelle Alkhatib.

Place 7

- **Staci Barker** is a former middle-school English teacher who majored in English at Texas Tech, and earned a master’s degree in English Education from NYU and a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from UT-Arlington. She’s also a Lewisville ISD parent, and she’s running a smart campaign that centers students. The [platform page](#) on her website is thoughtful and well-developed, and shows both a respect for Lewisville teachers and a detailed awareness of areas where the district can improve.
- When pressed by commenters on Facebook about whether or not she supports the teaching of “CRT,” Barker responded, “I firmly believe that teachers should and do teach the TEKS, which are the standards determined by the State Board of Education. CRT is not in the TEKS.” In [an interview](#) with *The Crosstimbers Gazette*, she also added, “I believe that history should be taught in schools, and I believe that we should make sure that our true history is happening in our social studies classrooms, but it should be age-appropriate.” When pressed about the idea that “CRT” might sneak into lessons, Barker responded, “I would want to know what they mean by that, because sometimes these terms get thrown around, and people may have different opinions about what that means.” (Amen)
- [Donate to or volunteer for Staci Barker.](#)

Contacts on the Ground

- TBD

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Mansfield ISD

Notes: Mansfield ISD was one of 11 districts flooded in 2022 with money from Patriot Mobile PAC during last May’s school board elections, and that funding helped usher four challengers onto the board.

One of those candidates, Keziah Valdes Farrar, challenged two books in the district—*The Bluest Eye* and *All Boys Aren't Blue*—and the board is [now planning](#) to revisit the district's library materials policy. Another of those candidates, **Courtney Lackey Wilson**, is up for re-election, but will walk back onto the board unopposed. That leaves one competitive race in the district this cycle, and it's an easy choice: Mansfield voters will need to put all of their muscle behind Benita Reed.

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 6	Quintin V. Huckaby Benita Reed
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After <i>The Bluest Eye</i> and <i>All Boys Aren't Blue</i> were retained through the district's formal challenge process, real estate agent Quintin V. Huckaby spoke before the Mansfield school board and city council at a joint session. Huckaby seemed nervous, and his speech is hard to follow, but it was clear he was arguing for the books to be removed and that he wants the policy changed to make it easier to remove books (“This policy is a joke and leaves the door wide open, allowing just about any books to stay in the library.”) • Huckaby also demanded that the board draft a message to the district “stating that this matter has been brought to the school board and that you also, as a school board, are looking at the current policies.” The board did exactly that after the meeting, suggesting that there was some coordination between Huckaby and the board's Patriot Mobile bloc: Huckaby provided the public “demand” for the board to do what it already wanted to do. • Huckaby's social media shows a lot of connection with the district's Patriot Mobile slate. One of his first campaign stops (ironically, reading to students) was an appearance with book-banning trustee Keziah Farrar. His entrance into the race and posts about his campaign have been welcomed by other Patriot Mobile trustees, including Craig Tipping and Bianca Benavides Anderson. 	
Alternative Candidate(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benita Reed is a professor of English at Tarrant County College. She has experience teaching at-risk and honors students, and a long history of volunteering in the community, both with local high school students and for her church. Before teaching at TCC, she taught middle school English Language Arts in Arlington ISD. • Reed ran for trustee last year, pushing current trustee Craig Tipping to a runoff, despite the tremendous fundraising advantage afforded to Tipping by Patriot Mobile's Action PAC. In an interview before that runoff, Reed called out the extraordinary amount of money Patriot Mobile dumped into the race, saying it injected politics into what had previously been non-partisan races. “Our children are not red and blue,” she said. “We have to be clear: our children do not reflect political sides. According to the law, this is a non-partisan position, and it's a volunteer position. So there is no place in public education where we should be politicizing the education and the academic integrity of our students. And I'm adamant about that.” • In the same interview, Reed staked out a cautious position when asked directly about CRT and book bans: “In terms of book banning, of course I am in English and literature, so I am very sensitive about that, but let's be clear: there have been some things that I have read and seen recently that should not be available to our students. However, I do believe in MISD we already 	

have a system set up where there is a committee that will evaluate that.” Regarding CRT, she said: “I do not agree with critical race theory.” However, she pointed out that CRT is not a part of the TEKS and thus is not a part of Mansfield’s curriculum.

- [Donate to or volunteer for Benita Reed.](#)

Contacts on the Ground

- [MISD for Dr. Reed](#)

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- [Weekend canvasses to support Dr. Reed](#) -Weekly
- [Mansfield Area Chamber of Commerce Candidate Introduction - Dr. Benita Reed](#) - March 16
- [Mansfield Area Chamber of Commerce Candidate Introduction - Quintin Huckaby](#) - March 17
- [Mansfield Area Chamber of Commerce Candidate Forum](#) - March 29
- [Mansfield Council of PTAs Candidate Forum](#) - April 10

McKinney ISD

Notes: McKinney ISD is another example of a moderate-to-conservative Texas school board that has tried to balance perceived community concern about library books with respect for due process and for educators’ professionalism and has, in return, earned nothing but opprobrium from the district’s extremist book-banning faction.

I’ve [written critically](#) about the board’s recent decision to modify its library materials policy, making it easier to remove books by changing the criteria on which they’re evaluated. But, as I said in that piece, “the board has stood firm for the past year in the face of relentless, vocal pressure to remove books.” Board members—including the incumbents up for re-election in May—have insisted on the value of an inclusive district and have been consistent in their support of teachers and librarians.

McKinney board meetings have featured plenty of drama, including (the now cliché) angry readings of out-of-context sex scenes, and [grown men heckling high school students](#). The board implemented rules to try to restore decorum; subsequently, when some vocal members of the public were removed from meetings and (after more escalation) arrested, right-wing groups described that as tyranny. Board president Amy Dankel was served with papers for a lawsuit [in the middle of a board meeting](#).

McKinney ISD also made headlines in 2022 when a pair of district parents, Rachel and Paul Elliott, tried to challenge [282 books en masse](#). The couple claimed to have read all of them, but for every book on their list—which ranged from *And Tango Makes Three* to Isabel Wilkerson’s *Caste*—the couple

[copied-and-pasted a generic, ungrammatical complaint](#): “Contains one or more of the following: Marxism, incest, sexual explicit material—in written form and/or visual pictures, pornography, CRT, immoral activities, rebellious against parents, and the material contradicts the ISD’s student handbook.” The challenges were dismissed out of hand.

Now Rachel Elliott is running for the board with a slate of two other pro-censorship candidates, Brittany Hendrickson and Jim Westerheid, hoping to replace three longtime incumbents. If they win, they’ll join trustee Chad Green to create a pro-censorship, anti-LGBTQ majority.

The district is home to two PACs supporting pro-censorship candidates: McKinney First and McKinney Values. Members of those groups have also talked about trying to get support from Patriot Mobile Action PAC ahead of May’s election. Many of the district’s extremists congregate online in a private Facebook group called [McKinney Talks Politics](#), where ugly personal attacks on board members proliferate. One poster, for example, photoshopped the faces of incumbents Dankel, Lynn Sperry, and Stephanie O’Dell over an image of the witches from *Hocus Pocus*, with the caption “We eat children.”

Fortunately, McKinney is also home to a great group supporting teachers, librarians, and the goals of inclusive public education. [Public Schools First McKinney](#) deserves your support.

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 4	Amy Dankel (I) Brittany Hendrickson
Place 5	Lynn Sperry (I) Rachel Batluck Elliott
Place 6 (at large)	Stephanie O’Dell (I) Serena Ashcroft Jim Westerheid
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
Place 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brittany Hendrickson signed up early to run as part of McKinney’s hate slate with Rachel Batluck Elliott and Jim Westerheid. At last March’s board meeting, Hendrickson read an out-of-context passage from Arundhati Roy’s <i>The God of Small Things</i>, shouting, “This is disgusting!” <i>The God of Small Things</i> has appeared on the AP Literature Exam at least three times since 2010. Hendrickson is a member of Families Engaged for Effective Education.
Place 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rachel Batluck Elliott made national headlines when she and her husband Paul attempted to mass-challenge 282 books in the district. That stunt was dismissed out of hand by the district, but Elliott has also made real challenges to books, including <i>Perks of Being a Wallflower</i>. Both Elliotts are donors to McKinney First, and both have regularly spoken at board meetings; in March of last year, Paul suggested the board commemorate Child Abuse Awareness Month by removing <i>Perks</i> from the district, saying (falsely) that the book “glorifies and tragically

normalizes the rape of a minor,” and (falsely) suggesting that “there’s potential criminal activity going on” by making the book available in the library. Rachel followed, reading an excerpt from *The Bluest Eye*, by Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison, (falsely) claiming that the book encourages pedophilia.

- On [social media last December](#), Rachel Elliott argued that the incumbents up for reelection (Dankel, O’Dell, and Sperry) should be arrested for “child abuse, exposing children to pornographic material, soliciting children for sexual abuse.”
- For good measure, Rachel Elliott is also a member of [Families Engaged for Effective Education](#).

Place 6 (at large)

- **Jim Westerheid** joined the original McKinney slate (which Westerheid calls #thetruthteam) with Hendrickson and Elliott. Westerheid is given to angry social media screeds against the current board and former superintendent Rick McDaniel. “Rick McDaniel is obfuscating the material fact that illegal pornography is in the school,” he wrote in one. “Their [sic] is no protection for any child from a rogue student putting an explicit picture in front of a group of innocent children,” he wrote in another. In a third, he accused the Republican-dominated board of being Alinskyites: “The truth never matters to Saul Alynski’s [sic] followers,” he wrote.
- **Serena Ashcroft** originally supported Westerheid, but sometime this winter decided he couldn’t win and that she would be a better candidate for the race. Ashcroft ran a failed campaign for the board in 2021; she runs a hybrid homeschool/private school called M.A.K.E. Greatness Academy.
- Ashcroft is also an active member of the activist group [Families Engaged for Effective Education](#), and her entrance into the race was celebrated by the leader of that group, Mary Lowe (formerly of Moms for Liberty’s Tarrant County chapter).
- On multiple occasions, Ashcroft has called for the defunding of public schools. In one post, she wrote, “Sick of it all! I don’t want my tax dollars going into the system in the first place. I don’t want them giving me a tax credit or a voucher. We [need] true tax reform. I will just fund my own education with my own money. I’ll put it where I want. It never goes into the system in the first place. I don’t support porn in schools. I don’t support anti-american [sic] instruction or divisions based on race, sexuality. No gender theories or CRT. Why am I forced to pay into this system that is against my beliefs, anti American [sic] and unconstitutional?”
- Ashcroft is supported by McKinney Values PAC.

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 4

- Incumbent **Amy Dankel** is the board president, and has been relentlessly attacked by local extremists. She’s a former teacher with an M.Ed. in Curriculum and sent both of her children through MISD schools. She has voted as a Republican in at least the last six primaries.
- Dankel’s website includes an [impressively specific platform](#), but also forthrightly addresses the attacks the board has faced. Importantly, she also promises to “support our staff instead of demonizing them with accusations of grooming and indoctrination.”
- [Dankel is endorsed by Public Schools First McKinney](#).
- [Donate to or volunteer for Amy Dankel](#).

Place 5

- **Lynn Sperry** is a former music teacher who has earned the designation “Master Trustee.” All three of her children and all seven of her grandchildren have attended MISD schools. Sperry

has voted in Republican primaries and donated heavily to Republican campaigns.

- [Sperry is endorsed by Public Schools First McKinney.](#)
- [Donate to or volunteer for Lynn Sperry.](#)

Place 6

- **Stephanie O'Dell** is a member of the McKinney Education Foundation Board and the Baylor Hospital Board. She has a long history of volunteering in MISD, and has two daughters who graduated from district schools. She has voted as a Republican in at least the last six primaries.
- [O'Dell is endorsed by Public Schools First McKinney.](#)
- [Donate to or volunteer for Stephanie O'Dell.](#)

Contacts on the Ground

- [Public Schools First McKinney](#) has been doing great work for some time, organizing to support teachers and to demonstrate at board meetings that the McKinney community opposes censorship and stands behind all of the district's students. If you're in or near McKinney, please contact them to see how you can help as the election approaches.
- [McKinney Residents for MISD Excellence](#) is another local group that organizes and informs local citizens to protect public schools from extremist attacks.

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- [McKinney ISD Council of PTA's Candidate Forum](#) - March 16
(note: all seven candidates were invited, but **Hendrickson**, **Elliott**, & **Westerheid** have so far chosen not to attend)

Northwest ISD

Notes: Northwest Family First PAC is a new group that seems built [in the mold](#) of Patriot Mobile PAC. The PAC officially launched in February with help from [Christian nationalist state congressman Nate Schatzline](#). Group founder Heather Fields described the start of the group as a spiritual revival, writing, "as a natural extension of that, parents won't be content to sit by and allow evil to occupy political seats of power over our children." For Fields, that evil is what she calls "radical sexual grooming, child pornography, and facilitating genital mutilation of children," which she suggests the district's incumbents support.

In one particularly nasty [social media post](#), Fields singled out a trans elementary school student, misgendering her and detailing her grade and her future middle and high school. "Will the special attention this student receives inspire other children to demand the same level of attention?" she wrote—again, about *an elementary school student*. "Will they think they want to transition without understanding what that actually means?"

Even though the current board is already relatively conservative, the leaders of the PAC have recruited three candidates—**Jennifer Stephens**, **Jon Pendergrass**, and **Michelle Slater**—to run far to the right of the current incumbents as part of an extreme and explicitly partisan slate.

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 5	<p>Steve Sprows (I) Amanda Smith Jennifer Stephens</p>
Place 6	<p>Lillian Rauch (I) Jon Pendergrass</p>
Place 7	<p>Jennifer Murphy (I) Michelle Slater</p>
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
<p>Place 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On her campaign website, Denton ISD diagnostician Jennifer Stephens writes, “Parents are the primary and final authority over their children.” Apparently that authority has limits: On Facebook, Stephens complained about parents who insist that school employees respect their child’s gender identity. “I have been told and threatened by parents that I have to use they and them when speaking to their kid,” she wrote, “because they have ‘gender dysphoric disorder’ and if I don’t, they will come after my job.” (That comment, incidentally, came in response to PAC founder Heather Fields’ post singling out a trans elementary student. Instead of standing up for that student or her parents, Stephens ratified the attack. “Parents are forcing schools to prioritize these students and typical peers see that and they get angry.”) Stephens also adamantly opposes sex ed in schools. “I don’t think sex education needs to be part of a school,” she told one interviewer. As Steven Monacelli reports, Stephens may have committed an election ethics violation by conducting that interview from her office in Denton ISD. <p>Place 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jon Pendergrass is the director of career and professional developments at Dallas Baptist University. While his slate-mates’ websites are relatively free of culture war content, Pendergrass’s dives directly into the fight. His website’s tagline is “Protect our future leaders from a radical agenda,” and one of his stated priorities is “safeguarding our youngest students by implementing processes to eliminate explicit adult content from classrooms and libraries.” Asked about library books in an interview, Pendergrass said, “Anything that includes explicit content, sexual images, sexual text that’s graphic by nature, that doesn’t belong in a workplace, it doesn’t belong in our schools.” (Reminder: that standard would preclude nearly half of the works listed on last year’s AP Literature exam.) <p>Place 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michelle Slater’s website is fairly bland, but she has embraced being a part of the PAC’s slate, attending the PAC’s launch and regularly appearing with Stephens and Pendergrass. 	
Alternative Candidate(s)	

Place 5

- **Steve Sprowls** is an Air Force veteran and pilot, a father of NISD students, and the husband of an NISD teacher. He has been on the board since 2017 and has voted in the last five Republican primaries.
- Sprowls has displayed a willingness to address buzzwords that animate extremist groups like Northwest Family First PAC. In [this Facebook post](#), for example, Sprowls deflates scaremongering around “SEL,” writing, “I’ll start off by saying that NISD’s version of SEL has nothing to do with CASEL, and teaches neither CRT nor sexual grooming.”
- [Donate to Steve Sprowls](#).
- **Amanda Smith** is a first-time candidate for trustee who has taken a forthright stance against book bans (“When we ban books we teach students that they can restrict ideas and opinions,” [her website reads](#)) and lists diversity and inclusion as one of her [top priorities](#).
- [Donate to Amanda Smith](#).

Place 6

- **Lillian Rauch** is the longest-serving incumbent up for re-election, having served as trustee since 2014. She is a teacher with 40 years of experience and holds a doctorate in Reading Education. She has three grandchildren who all attend NISD schools.
- Rauch has voted in every Republican primary since 2012.
- [Donate to Lillian Rauch](#) (website pending).

Place 7

- **Jennifer Murphy** was elected to the board in 2020. She currently works as the Director for Foundation Relations at Texas Wesleyan University, and has experience working in both schools and the nonprofit world.
- Like Sprowls, Murphy has been unafraid to [defend](#) the importance of social-emotional learning as “part of the bigger picture in how we educate the whole child.”
- [Donate to Jennifer Murphy](#).

Contacts on the Ground

- A brand new bipartisan group has blossomed in Northwest ISD to resist extremist attempts to take over the board: [Unite for Northwest ISD](#).
- Besides a beautiful website, the group has a ton of energy and organization and is working to fight disinformation and support all students, teachers, and families in NISD. Just as importantly, Unite for NISD already has a [slate of events](#) planned to energize and inform district voters, build community and (why not?) have some fun.
- [Donate to](#) or [get involved with](#) [Unite for Northwest ISD](#).

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- [Texans Defending Democracy \(Virtual Event\)](#) - March 15
- [Game Night at the Roanoke Library](#) - March 25
- [Early Voting Pre-Game Virtual Happy Hour](#) - April 23

(You can also fill out [this form](#) to learn about even more opportunities to get involved with Unite for NISD)

Plano ISD

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 4	<p>Tarrah Lantz Lydia Ortega Margaret Turner-Carrigan</p>
Place 5	<p>Michael Cook Khalid Ishaq Greg Jubenville</p>
Place 7	<p>Cody Weaver (I) Katherine Chan Goodwin Simon Salinas</p>
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
<p>Place 4</p> <p>Place 5</p> <p>Place 7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lydia Ortega has donated to Families 4 Frisco, a PAC that has worked to elect extremist candidates in neighboring Frisco ISD. ● Ortega has spoken at multiple PISD school board meetings. In October of 2021, Ortega did the now-cliché act of reading an out-of-context bit of dialogue about sex from a scene from a Lauren Myracle book, saying, “I find that the books are sexualizing kids, making them vulnerable to molestation, rape, and pedophiles.” ● But there’s a twist! “Since constant book monitoring and review is costly,” Ortega proposed a policy that would “incentivize” kids who find books with sexual language in the library to turn them in to authorities for a \$500 reward. “I think that’s a way to cull this material and to ensure that the costs aren’t borne by the staff and faculty,” she said. ● In fairness, that would be a great way to teach students Shakespeare. Elizabethan English can be hard to parse, but promise students cash and you can bet they’ll find dirty references in <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> faster than you can say “My naked weapon is out.” ● TPPF-funded <i>Texas Scorecard</i> wrote about Ortega in 2019, calling her a “California refugee” preaching to Texans against the ills of “big government.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greg Jubenville also donated to Families 4 Frisco, a PAC that has worked to elect extremist candidates in neighboring Frisco ISD. ● On the endorsement page of Jubenville’s campaign website, one supporter notes, “He will work against (CRT) Critical Race Theory, drag queen story time or any other woke agenda that is destroying our youth. He wants schools to teach our kids math, reading, science, history through merit based education and not to confuse our youth with gender ideology.” ● Jubenville and anti-“CRT” Place 7 candidate Cody Weaver have appeared together at campaign events.

- Incumbent **Cody Weaver** has [staked out](#) a pretty vehement position against [what he calls “critical race theory.”](#) In the summer of 2021, he led a [2-hour workshop](#) on spotting “CRT” in schools at Redemption Point Alliance Church in McKinney, which was also attended by Frisco ISD trustee Stephanie Elad. Here’s one blogger’s [write up of the event](#).
- Weaver has also donated to Families 4 Frisco, the PAC that helped elect Elad and her fellow anti-“CRT” trustee Marvin Lowe.

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 4

- **Tarrah Lantz** [describes herself](#) as “a Plano ISD parent for the last seven years who has served for the Plano ISD Council of PTAs and the Plano ISD Education Foundation.” She seems to be [running alongside](#) Michael Cook (Place 5) and Katherine Chan Goodwin (Place 7).
- [Donate to or volunteer for Tarrah Lantz](#).

Place 5

- **Michael Cook** [describes himself](#) as “a Plano ISD parent who has advocated for the teaching of honest American history in the district and frequently attends school board meetings.”
- [Donate to or volunteer for Michael Cook](#).
- Khalid Ishaq has been a member of the Diversity Advisory Committee for the district. He’s a Republican primary voter who attended [Collin County Republican Party events](#) with some of the more problematic figures in the area. But, apart from hobnobbing at events featuring extremists like Kyle “KD” Sims, Serena Ashcroft, and Rachel Batluck Elliott (which is not nothing), he has no major red flags on his website or in his social media presence. I’m waiting to see more information on his positions on academic freedom and inclusive classrooms.

Place 7

- **Katherine Chan Goodwin** has been active in PTAs in Plano ISD for years, and [has rallied](#) at the Texas Capitol to support public schools in the face of vouchers and defunding.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Katherine Chan Goodwin](#).
- **Simon Salinas** graduated from Plano East High School in 2022 and has spoken at several board meetings in the district. In one meeting, he argued against the removal of the college-readiness [AVID program](#), saying that objections came from fear-mongering and misperceptions that the program was anti-white or anti-God.
- [Donate to or volunteer for Simon Salinas](#).

Contacts on the Ground

- TBD

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Prosper ISD

Contested Races	Candidates
Place 2	Dena Dixon (I) Aimee Boots Siva Pilli
Place 5	Debra Smith (I) (withdrawn) Jim Herblin Eileen Riverside Kurt Kuehn Tommy Van Wolfe

Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)

Place 2

- **Aimee Boots** has been endorsed by one of the biggest book banners in North Texas, [Rep. Jared Patterson](#), who single-handedly forced the removal of dozens of books from Frisco ISD. Boots has donated to Families 4 Frisco, a PAC supporting extremist pro-censorship candidates in neighboring Frisco ISD.

Place 5

- **Jim Herblin** is the treasurer and one of the lead organizers for Prosper Citizens Group, which [challenged 80 books](#) it called “obscene materials” in district libraries in 2022.
- Herblin is [endorsed](#) by McKinney activist Kyle “KD” Sims, and his social media campaign announcement was liked by extremist school board candidates Rachel Batluck Elliott (McKinney) and Jennifer Kratky (Tomball).

Alternative Candidate(s)

Place 2

- Before joining the board, incumbent Dena Dixon had a long history of serving the district as a volunteer, coach, and substitute teacher. She has voted in the last three Republican primaries.
- [Donate to](#) or volunteer for Dena Dixon.

Place 5

- Eileen Riverside is a trauma nurse who is married to a teacher in the district. She entered the race calling for change after her child’s bus driver was arrested for repeatedly molesting two children. There is no connection between this awful situation and the presence of, say, *The Glass Castle* in school libraries, but many of Prosper’s pro-censorship figures have tried to connect the two issues, and some have thus supported Riverside’s candidacy. That’s not a knock on Riverside herself, though. I’ll update this listing when I get more information on her stances.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (website pending) • Tommy Van Wolfe is a businessman who has years of experience in the restaurant industry and has been a commissioner on the town of Prosper’s Planning and Zoning Commission. He has volunteered in Prosper ISD with the Superintendent Parent Advisory Council and the Career Technology Education Advisory Council. • Donate to or volunteer for Tommy Van Wolfe.
Contacts on the Ground
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Organizing steps/upcoming events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Richardson ISD

Contested Races	Candidates
District 3	<p>Bonnie Abadie Debbie Rentería (I)</p>
At-Large Place 6	<p>Eric Eager (I) Blake Sawyer</p>
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
<p>District 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonnie Abadie is a business owner who ran for the board in 2013 and 2014. (In 2014, she expressed support for vouchers) • She supports HB900, Jared Patterson’s bill, which would remove hundreds of great works of literature—including dozens of books from recent AP Literature exams—from all school libraries in the state. • On her website, she says, “The sexualization of our children has been growing in recent years and is a great cause of concern for parents. I will call for a review of books in our libraries to make sure our students can check out only age appropriate books.” (She also says this doesn’t count as a book ban because, “If parents are ok with their kids reading certain books, they can take them to the library or bookstore.” Here’s why that argument doesn’t hold water.) • Among her campaign donors is Lynn Strawn Davenport, the former Dallas College trustee candidate and leader of Families Engaged for Effective Education. 	

At-Large Place 6

- **Blake Sawyer** ran for the board in 2021. His [campaign website](#) is one of the blander ones I've seen, but a good indication of his positions comes from looking at who is supporting him. His most recent [campaign finance form](#) shows that his biggest donor (accounting for more than half of his campaign's cash on hand) is Sherry Moore Clemens, who ran an unsuccessful campaign for [trustee in 2022](#) that focused on banning books.
- Sawyer also seems connected to District 3 candidate [Bonnie Abadie](#), as well as Families Engaged leader [Lynn Davenport](#).

Alternative Candidate(s)

District 3

- Incumbent **Debbie Renteria** is a former teacher with a teaching degree from UTSA and a master's degree in Education from Pepperdine. She has been on the board since 2020, and has been a [committed advocate](#) for [inclusive classrooms](#).
- [Donate to or volunteer for Debbie Renteria](#).

At-Large Place 6

- **Eric Eager** is an accountant and founder of a software firm who has served on the board since 2020. He's a former RISD student and parent of two district graduates.
- Eager has consistently voted in Republican primaries since 2016.
- He has [expressed his commitment](#) to and support for the district's diversity and for inclusive classrooms, saying in 2022: "I knew we were the fifth in the state [in diversity] but it surprised me we're the 50th most diverse district in the entire country. And that is a huge opportunity for our kids. Because I just know in the workplace, out in the real world, that having cultural awareness is one of the top three skill sets that employers have in such high demand. If we think about it, we have an opportunity in our community, for our kids, and for everyone involved to learn and appreciate from these cultures and all these communities."
- [Donate to or volunteer for Eric Eager](#).

Contacts on the Ground

- [Richardson ISD Families for Equity](#) is an active, organized, and effective group that helped the district fend off an extremist takeover in 2022—one of the state's best groups focused on making sure that classrooms are inclusive and equitable. They are non-partisan and they don't do candidate endorsements, but they care deeply about the well-being of all district students and they work hard to keep voters informed about candidate positions. Reach out to them for ways to help in RISD.
- [Mark Steger](#) is a blogger with deep knowledge of the district—definitely a perspective worth reading on ISD candidates.

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Spring Branch ISD

Notes: Spring Branch ISD is where I had my first teaching job, at a (now-defunct) alternative high school north of I-10, so it is very dear to me. Like a lot of districts in the Houston area, SBISD has been a flashpoint for book controversies. In January, the new book-banning board majority [voted to ban](#) Frederick Joseph’s *The Black Friend: On Being a Better White Person* from all district middle schools, overturning decisions made by committees of librarians, teachers, and parents. And [in March](#) the board adopted a “[streamlined](#)” policy for book challenges that skips the book review committees entirely and sends book objections directly to the board.

Here’s what I wrote about the district [last year](#):

Spring Branch is like two districts mashed into one: a relatively poor district of mostly brown and black students north of I-10 and a wealthy (disproportionately white) suburban district south of the freeway. The school board has been dominated by candidates from the south. In fact, though the district is only 27% white, SBISD has *never* had a non-white trustee. [**Note:** This changed in 2022–see below.]

How does that happen? Well, the answer provides a nice look at how structural racism works.

Spring Branch’s board seats are all at-large rather than geographically based. While the north is the population base of the district, the south is where the money resides, where folks have time to campaign and volunteer, and where there are more regular voters and fewer non-citizens. So the south wins the elections. I don’t know why the district decided long ago to use at-large rather than geographical seats, or if race had anything to do with it. But it’s clear that maintaining that system when there are other models available amounts to a decision to dilute the power of the poorer (again, less white) parts of the district.

Last fall, school board candidate Virginia Elizondo [sued the district](#) to try to force it to move to either geographically based model or a hybrid one (like Houston ISD has & Richardson ISD recently adopted). Predictably, parents in the southern part of the district balked. Also predictably, the loudest voices in that fight are the same folks who want to ban “CRT.” In other words, the people who benefit from structures that privilege some groups over others are the same ones who don’t want their kids learning about structural racism.

Most of that still applies (voters did elect John Pérez, a Mexican-American man, to the board in 2022). [Spring Branch Families First PAC](#) is the group behind most of the district’s book controversies *and* the most vociferous opposition to single-member districts. Three candidates they backed won seats on the board last May. This year, moderate board members Joseph Klam and Chris Gonzalez have opted not to run, and the PAC is hoping to further consolidate power for the most extreme and least inclusive factions of the district’s south side.

Contested Races	Candidates
Position 1	<p>David Lopez</p> <p>Courtney Anderson</p>
Position 2	<p>Shannon Mahan</p> <p>Becky Ardell Downs</p>

Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)

- Position 1
- Courtney Anderson has the full endorsement of [Spring Branch Families First / PIPELine SBISD](#), the district’s most virulent [book-banning group](#), which should be no surprise, since Anderson has been a [regular donor](#) to the PAC and was part of the the “[campaign team](#)” for PAC-supported trustee Caroline Bennett’s 2022 election.
 - On her [website](#), she says one of her priorities is “removing the radical indoctrination the education system is succumbing to.” (Clearly she won’t prioritize teaching students not to end sentences in prepositions.)
 - Anderson also calls the possibility of single-member districts a looming catastrophic event, saying, “We do not want to be mandated to elect single-member districts, allowing each voter to only vote for one candidate every three years. Having single-member districts breeds backdoor politics, infighting, and mistrust. We can look to neighboring districts to see how this system has failed constituents and more importantly children.” The last sentence gestures at the “Don’t HISD my SBISD” signs that dotted lawns in wealthy Spring Branch homes in 2021 and that were interpreted by some district residents as a [racist dog whistle](#).
 - Anderson’s [campaign announcement](#) was liked by Chris Zook, the president of the Freedom Foundation of Texas. Anderson’s [campaign finance disclosures](#) indicate that she is working with CAZ Consulting, LLC, which is also owned by Zook.
 - For good measure, Anderson has been [endorsed](#) by the wildly extremist True Texas Project.

- Position 2
- Though Shannon Mahan has been relatively quiet about her positions on key issues—she hasn’t spoken at the most explosive school board meetings and her [campaign website](#) is devoid of positions on any issues—she is part of a [matched pair](#) with Courtney Anderson.
 - Like Anderson, Mahan has been endorsed by [Spring Branch Families PAC / PIPELine SBISD](#), the district’s extremist book-banning group.
 - Also like Anderson, Mahan has been [endorsed](#) by the True Texas Project.

Alternative Candidate(s)

- Position 1
- David Lopez has been a teacher and administrator at YES Prep in Houston, and his [website emphasizes](#) that he “values diversity and inclusivity to create a welcoming environment for all.”
 - Lopez is a first-generation American, which is worth noting in a district where many students are either immigrants or children of immigrants, but where the school board has rarely reflected

the district's diversity.

- Lopez and Position 2 candidate **Becky Downs** have been the subjects of [nasty negative campaigning](#) that says they are being funded by “out-of-state billionaires, like George Soros.” Lopez has also been accused of aiming to “sideline parents” and “push radical leftwing indoctrination” on children.
- Lopez is a founding member of Somos Spring Branch, an important public-school advocacy group in the district.
- [Donate to or volunteer for David Lopez.](#)

Position 2

- **Becky Downs** is a Presbyterian minister and the pastor of John Knox Presbyterian Church. She's also an SBISD parent.
- Her campaign website addresses the district's North/South divide directly:
14 SBISD campuses received grades of A or B by Children at Risk, a statewide nonprofit that evaluates school quality. Only one of those is located north of I-10.
That same organization rated 16 SBISD schools with a D or F. All but two of those campuses are located on the north side of the freeway.
Almost every member of the SBISD school board lives in a community with highly successful, and well-resourced neighborhood schools, and they seem content to ignore the glaring problems in half of our district, while they spend time with irrelevant national political distractions. Our community deserves better. We should work to protect every child.
- Like Lopez, Downs has been attacked in robo-text messages that [accuse her](#) of being funded by “out of state billionaires, like George Soros.” Not only is it not true, it's also an ugly anti-Semitic smear commonly used by conspiracy theorists. And it's ironic in an election where Downs has [far less funding](#) than the district's PAC-supported [candidates](#).
- [Donate to or volunteer for Becky Downs.](#)

Contacts on the Ground

- [Families 4 Every Child](#) is fighting the good fight against the *very* well-funded reactionary PACs and their allies operating in the district. They don't shy away from addressing the very obvious disparities in the district's North/South divide; nor do they ignore the ways those disparities play into controversies about books and “CRT.”
- [Support them in any way you can.](#)

Organizing steps/upcoming events

- PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

Victoria ISD

Notes: Book banners claim they're not banning books when they get them removed from school districts, because you can still get those books at bookstores and public libraries. It's a bogus defense, but the book banners of Victoria ISD can't even claim that, because they spent 2021 and 2022 trying to get books removed from the Victoria Public Library. They specifically aimed at LGBTQ books: "We are targeting the LGBT books," said the leader of the effort. Another requested that "LGBT+ or any type of sexualized books be removed from VPL." In the process, they forced the system's director to resign, installed three pro-censorship members on the library board, and sharpened their skills for what they hope will be a takeover of the Victoria ISD school board.

One leader of the Public Library blitz was Tracy Hanes, who runs a private Facebook group called (ironically) [Freedom Over Fear Citizens Unite](#), which has followed the predictable path of culture-war obsessions: vaccines and COVID restrictions to critical race theory to "porn" in libraries to drag queens. Hanes is also a very active member of [Families Engaged for Effective Education](#), and the candidates she supports—**B.J. Nelson** and **Rick Jones**—share the conspiracist Families Engaged obsessions: SEL, surveys, and a stunted idea of "classical education."

Contested Races	Candidates
District 3	Bret Baldwin (I) BJ Nelson
District 5	Fami Keeling (I) Rick Jones
Notes on Red Flag Candidate(s)	
<p>District 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I have got a team of people throughout the entire state that have been mentoring me for months, over a year, learning what is actually going on in the state," says former teacher B.J. Nelson. "It's not just what is going on here. We have got to wake up. And I woke up." Apparently, that team is the conspiracist group Families Engaged in Effective Education, of which Nelson is a member, and Freedom Over Fear Citizens Unite, the local book-banning group led by her ally and campaign treasurer Tracy Hanes.• Nelson's social media is full of scaremongering about trans students and "CRT," including support for banning "CRT" and for the state's book-banning "anti-CRT" law.• She has also shared a video made by Victoria book banner Tracy Hanes and Tarrant County activist Sheena Rodriguez about "sexually explicit and concerning books" and a video from an Abilene activist with a "porn bag" of books she wanted restricted in the Abilene Public Library. ("The only problem with obscenity laws in Texas is that if it has any educational value it's excluded.") <p>District 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rick Jones doesn't have children or grandchildren in Victoria ISD. That's not in itself a problem, but Jones also hasn't volunteered for the district, and his public record doesn't show any experience or background in education. He's running on running down the district—in a local radio interview he described families who can't afford private or homeschool as "stuck"	

<p>in Victoria ISD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Jones does have is the full-throated support of the district’s chief book banner, Tracy Hanes, who has knocked on doors for him and yoked him into a slate with B.J. Nelson. • Jones was “recruited” to run, in his words, after attending one of the city council meetings where activists targeted LGBTQ-themed books for removal from the Victoria Public Library.
Alternative Candidate(s)
<p>District 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bret Baldwin barely made it into this box. Before the book banners decided to take over the school board, he was their favorite trustee–Tracy Hanes praised him for voting against Deputy Superintendent Michael Kuhrt and for pushing “transparency” in the district. But for now he stands in the way of an extremist board takeover and is certainly preferable to his opponent. • I haven’t found a working website for Baldwin yet, and his campaign FB is hasn’t been active since 2020. I’ll update if I find more. <p>District 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tami Keeling is an experienced school board member who has served Victoria ISD as trustee, board vice president, and board president. Keeling was named a Leadership Master Trustee in 2007; she has also served as a PTO president, a community ambassador for Raise Your Hand Texas, and a member of the School Board Advocacy Network. • She was also an English major at UT-Austin! • Donate to or volunteer for Tami Keeling.
Contacts on the Ground
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
Organizing steps/upcoming events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLEASE CONTACT ME TO ADD–Canvasses, organizing meetings, other events!

OTHER DISTRICTS (Quick Hits)

These are quick hits. Unfortunately, the dynamics I’ve described in the districts above are present all across the state: candidates who are members of, or supported by Moms for Liberty-esque groups, PACs dedicated to censoring books and ideas, partisans pretending to be non-partisan.

Though I haven’t had time to do full dives into the districts below, I’ve learned enough to know how I would vote in their races. Where appropriate, I’ve continued my green, red & orange designations from above. And I’ll continue updating through Election Day.

District	I would vote for...	I would NOT vote for...	I don't know much about ...	I say this because ...
Allen ISD (Place 7)		Michelle Boren	James Hollis Bill Parker Brandon Villareal	Boren is a member of the extremist group Families Engaged for Effective Education. She also has the support of We the People Allen PAC, whose donors include Tara Schulte, leader of extremist group County Citizens Defending Freedom, and Jim Westerheid, extremist candidate in nearby McKinney.
Arlington ISD (Place 7)		Kathi Arocha	Hunter Crow Watson Robinson Corliss Bunkley Bridgett Davis Leanne Haynes	Arocha is a member of the extremist group Families Engaged for Effective Education.
Clear Creek ISD (Place 3)		Peter Lauzon	Arturo Sanchez (I)	Lauzon has the support of the True Texas Project, one of the most extreme anti-public-education groups in Texas.

<p>Collin College</p>	<p>Megan Wallace (Place 1)</p> <p>Scott Coleman (Place 2)</p> <p>Stacey Donald (Place 3)</p>	<p>Fred Moses (Place 1)</p> <p>Jay Saad (Place 2)</p> <p>Cathie Alexander (Place 3)</p>	<p>Joe Minissale (Place 3)</p>	<p>Moses, Saad, and Alexander all have the support of McKinney first, the pro-censorship extremist PAC that's also supporting a "hate slate of candidates for the McKinney ISD school board.</p>
<p>Crowley ISD (Place 2)</p>	<p>La Tonya Woodson</p>	<p>Diana Acosta</p>		<p>Acosta was a member of the Tarrant County Moms for Liberty group before that group imploded. She is currently a member of Families Engaged for Effective Education, the extremist conspiracist group that sprang from M4L Tarrant County's ashes.</p> <p>Last year, when Acosta was preparing her first run for the board, she wrote on the M4L Facebook page, "All new teachers come preprogrammed and contaminant [sic] the population. Unless they are properly screened before hiring them. We will suffer." And: "Think of MAO. He waited a full generation to create brainwashed students who grew the communist party. History happening</p>

				here again.”
Dripping Springs ISD (2 open seats, all at-large)	Kim Cousins	Rob McClelland	Jeffrey Aylstock (I) Ron Jones	Cousins is a popular former principal of Dripping Springs High School with loads of administrative experience. McClelland has the support of Tricia Quintero and Olivia Barnard, two extremist candidates elected last year.
Eagle Mountain - Saginaw ISD (Place 6)	Ron Franklin	Trent Hill		Hill has the endorsement of book banning trustees Andrew Yeager (Carroll ISD), Casey Ford (GCISD), and Sandi Walker (Keller ISD), as well as Christian nationalist Nate Schatzline.
Fort Bend ISD	Angie Hanan (I) (Position 1) Shirley Rose-Gilliam (I) (Position 4)	Oscar Saenz (Position 1) Cheryl Anne Buford (Position 4) Sonya Jones (Position 5)	Rolly DeMeza (Position 5) Allison Drew (Position 5) Angel Hicks (Position 5) Denetta Williams (Position 5)	Saenz, Buford, and Jones have the support of the True Texas Project, and Buford and Jones are endorsed by Moms for America. All three attended a meeting for “family values” candidates that included many of the extremists running for school board in the Houston suburbs.
Fredericksburg ISD (3 open seats, all at-large)	Brian Lehne (I) Taylor Ward Keri Hensley	Dennis McCanless Jake Whittington		McCanless is endorsed by the local Moms for Liberty chapter and has the support of Tara Petsch, one of the state’s

				<p>leading book banners. Whittington said that “CRT is being implemented under the radar, so it will take a board, superintendent and administration scrutinizing the curriculums that are being brought in so that this ideology will be prevented from entering our schools.”</p>
Hurst-Eules-B edford ISD	Miste Anders-Clemons		Dan Mendoza Andy Cargile (I)	<p>Anders-Clemons has made fighting racism and championing equity a centerpiece of her campaign. Mendoza is intriguing, too.</p>
Joshua ISD		<p>Georgia Wright Head (Place 1)</p> <p>Angela Tolliver (Place 2)</p>	<p>Kelly Hammons Ronnie Galbreath (Place 1)</p> <p>Nini Wilson (Place 2)</p>	<p>Georgia Wright Head and Angela Tolliver are members of the extremist group Families Engaged in Effective Education. Wright Head is an administrator of the group’s FB page, and has a history of complaining about LGBTQ books.</p>
Kerrville ISD (District 2)	Jack M. Stevens (I)	Brandon Aery		<p>Aery has the endorsement of both Moms for Liberty’s Gillespie County chapter and Moms for America.</p>
Lamar Consolidated ISD	<p>Brian Moore (Place 5)</p> <p>Alex Hunt (I) (Place 7)</p>	<p>Jacci Hotzel (Place 4)</p> <p>Jon Welch (I) (Place 5)</p> <p>Suzanne Box (Place 7)</p>	Craig LeTulle (Place 4)	<p>Hotzel, Welch, and Box were all endorsed by the True Texas Project, one of the most extreme anti-public-education groups in Texas. All three are also endorsed by Moms for America.</p>
Lovejoy ISD	Mark Wheelis (Position 4)	Amy Campbell (Position 4)		<p>There are no great choices for a book lover in</p>

				<p>Lovejoy ISD’s competitive Position 4 race. Both candidates gave troubling answers on books on this Vote411/League of Women Voters questionnaire, but in this candidate forum, Campbell was the more passionate of the two about, in her words, quickly making sure “these books can all come off the shelves.” (That said, Wheelis was not much better, saying, “The last thing I want a school district teaching my kids is sex education. That should not be in school.”)</p>
Pasadena ISD	<p>Larry Savala (Position 5)</p> <p>Andy Garcia (Position 6)</p>	<p>Kenny Fernandez (Position 5)</p> <p>Marshall Kendrick (Position 6)</p> <p>Vickie Morgan (Position 7)</p>	<p>Jeff Snover Irene Tamayo (Position 7)</p>	<p>Fernandez, Kendrick, and Morgan all have the support of the True Texas Project, one of the most extreme anti-public-education groups in Texas.</p>

NEXT UP:
November 2023 School Board Races