

# 2023 ISD Candidate Questionnaire

This questionnaire is for candidates running for ISD and school boards, please complete questionnaire below. Submit a completed electronic copy by Monday, March 6, 2023, to be considered for endorsement in the 2023 Municipal Elections.

Email \*

kevin@kevin4kids.com

Candidate Name \*

Kevin Malonson

Do you intend to seek the Stonewall Democrats of Dallas endorsement for the 2023 Municipal Elections? \*

Yes

No

## Questionnaire

1. Office/District Sought \*

Dallas ISD D2 Trustee

2. Please share any experience that illustrates your understanding of and interest in the needs of the LGBTQ+ community in your District/Role sought.

I have worked in education my entire adult life. My involvement has been hands-on, day in and day out, as a professional, not solely a volunteer. I have turned my passion for helping young people realize the options and opportunities available to them via their education to live a happy and productive life into a thirty year career. I have described my career as both my protest and a labor of love. Beyond my career, however, I have lived a life that has prepared me to lead as a Trustee and demonstrates a deep commitment to public education. For my first 17 years in Dallas, I lived on Lahoma St. in Oaklawn. My children were born there and I was a proud and active member of the community. I believe my decision to live in Dallas's LGBTQ+ community and raise children there is central to my perspective and willingness to advocate for the needs of all children in our district. I believe there are many reasons I am right for this role.

First, I have entrusted Dallas ISD with my most prized possession, my children. I currently have a son who is a 7th grader at Dealey International Academy and a daughter who is a sophomore at Austin College and a 2021 graduate of Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. It is notable that, because of the PK-8 model, my family has spent the last 15 years as a part of the Dealey Montessori and International Academy Family.

Next, I am the only candidate who has experience as a teacher, vendor, and employee of Dallas ISD. In my time as a vendor, I worked in every comprehensive high school in the district and many of the middle schools. As an employee, I worked at a turnaround campus to bring an innovative model to a neighborhood school in Pleasant Grove. I have deep experience working directly with students, parents, teachers, and administrators and will bring their perspectives with me as a trustee. I would work alongside the administration to prioritize programs and initiatives that grow student achievement in these key areas. If diversity of experience is important, I provide a unique perspective which the board would immediately benefit from. Of the current trustees, only two have been teachers, I would be the third. Only two have worked for the district, I would be the third. We have nine volunteers on the board, we need a trustee that brings more than volunteering. We need hands-on, daily experience, to strategically inform our path forward and the policies we create.

I have spent the last five years leading a state chapter of a national teacher leadership non-profit organization that works with effective and engaged teachers around the state of Texas to support key policy and instructional practice issues that advance equity, opportunity, and student success. This work has put me at the forefront of education policy in Texas and gives me a front row seat to practices, policies, and procedures that would help grow student achievement and cement Dallas ISD as one of the best districts in the state and country. I will bring all my policy knowledge, depth of relationships, and practical experience to the role of trustee.

Finally, support for special populations and marginalized students would be a priority for me. I believe this is a way for me to express my desire for equity and inclusion in our school district and to ensure the students and populations who need the most attention and resources are receiving the service and outcomes they deserve. In my opinion, special populations include, but are not limited to ELL, ECE, students with disabilities, Black and Latino students, low SES, TAG, and LGBTQ+ students

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3. As an organization affiliated with the Texas Democratic Party, Stonewall Democrats of Dallas will only endorse candidates who affirm an affiliation with the platform and policies of the Texas Democratic Party. Do you make such an affirmation? What is your previous voting history?

Yes, I have always voted in the Democratic primary. I have a very consistent voting record.

4. If you earn the Stonewall Democrats of Dallas endorsement how would you showcase your endorsement ? Would you include the endorsement in your campaign media?

I would proudly list the endorsement with the Stonewall logo on my website and campaign materials. And I would showcase it along with any endorsements I can earn. This one is important to me because of my history living in Oaklawn and as the father of a queer child.

5. Please list some of your qualifications and experiences pertinent to the office you are seeking:

Please see below for a list of accomplishments. I would like to point out that I am the only candidate in this race with 30 years of work experience in education, experience as a vendor and employee of DISD, has children in the district, and is a state level policy expert. Currently I am the Executive Director of Teach Plus Texas, a state office of a national teacher leadership non profit. We work with effective and engaged teachers to bring leadership to key policy and practice issues to advance equity, opportunity, and student outcomes.

Spring 1992 Initiate - Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Spring 1996 Initiate - Friar Society, University of Texas at Austin

2013 - 2017 - United Negro College Fund Empower Me Tour Featured Speaker

2014 - 2015 - Dallas ISD Home Rule Commissioner

2014 - 2017 - Audubon Dallas Board Member, President 2017

2015 - Present - North Texas Master Naturalist

2016 - 2017 - Dallas Morning News Community Voices Opinion columnist

2019 - Woodrow Wilson Feeder Pattern Advisory Committee, Dallas ISD

2019-2020 - Co-Chair of Innovation and Transformation Sub-Committee of Dallas ISD 2020 Bond Committee

2020 - Present - Dallas Services Board Member

2021 - Present - Advisory Board Member - The Educator Collective

2021 - Present - Region 14 Comprehensive Center Advisory Board Member

2021 - Present - Advisory Board to the Dallas College School of Education

2021 - Present - Texas Education Agency Educator Preparation Stakeholder Group (Formerly Educator Preparation Advisory Committee)

2022 - Present - The Commit Partnership Board Member

Life Member - Texas Exes Association

Member - Aqua Corps, Meadows Center for Water and the Environment, Texas State University

PIE - leadership institute?

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6. Once you are elected, what are some of your plans specific to your office's responsibilities?

If elected, my top priorities will be supporting teachers, Dallas ISD school choice, and support for special populations. Teachers are most proximate to students and research says teachers are the number one factor affecting student achievement in schools. If we want to see student achievement grow, we have to better support teachers and honor the profession. My focus will be on compensation, working conditions, and support and professional development. First, I would like to see more teachers make more money. I believe we have to root out waste and innovate in school design and instructional delivery to best use existing funding to prioritize better teacher pay for all. In addition, we need to continue to refine TEI to pay our best teachers like the experts they are and grow the pot of those teachers eligible to be recognized.

Next, we need to double down on Dallas ISD as the best and only choice for children within our attendance zones. Our Choice schools are offering some of the most innovative and effective school models including 50/50 models, montessori, single gender, and dual language. Now is the time to slow growth in that area and let these schools simmer and mature. My focus for the next three years would be to continue to solidify the neighborhood school as the foundation of DISD school choice and ensure that each neighborhood and feeder pattern has viable and logical pathways for students beginning in the middle grades.

Finally, support for special populations and marginalized students would be a priority for me. I believe this is a way for me to express my desire for equity and inclusion in our school district and to ensure the students and populations who need the most attention and resources are receiving the service and outcomes they deserve. In my opinion, special populations include, but are not limited to ELL, ECE, students with disabilities, Black and Latino students, low SES, TAG, and LGBTQ+ students.

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7. Across the state we see attacks on the ability of LGBTQ students being able to freely express their identity. Do you support students being able to express themselves?

Absolutely! I am in full support of LGBTQ students being able to freely express themselves. I also would strongly enforce policies aimed at upholding these protections for all students.

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8. Suicide rates amongst LGBTQ students are very high. Do you believe enough is being done in our schools to protect students and catch signs of student distress or depression? Please elaborate your thoughts.

No. I do not believe enough is being done in our schools in regards to mental health or support for LGBTQ students. In Texas, the conversation about student mental health is one that is usually drowned out by conversations about school safety, and LGBTQ issues are often politicized and posed in ways that are void of the human perspective. Beyond the political considerations, funding for mental health initiatives is always an issue. I believe the pandemic, declining enrollment, and the impending fiscal cliff of ESSER funding gives us a great opportunity to reexamine the role of the teacher and the design of our schools. We are at a point where school counselors do not have the capacity to counsel and teachers have been overstretched for a long time. We need the state of Texas to prioritize mental health as a part of the school safety allotment and raise it from the current \$10/student to \$200/student as recommended by Superintendent Elizalde. We also need courageous and equitable leaders like Dr. Elizalde to publicly support and prioritize mental health supports for students and teachers. If elected, I would advocate for more funding and prioritization in this area.

During the pandemic, my daughter came out to my wife and myself and admitted to having suicidal thoughts on many occasions. I was blindsided by her admissions and wished there were more supports, including school counselors, for her and us. As a society and as a school district, we have to prioritize mental health and eliminate stigmas or we will continue to lose children.

9. Do you support safe spaces for LGBTQ students, including but not limited to, allowing teachers to display pride flags in the classrooms or on classroom doors?

Absolutely. I support safe spaces for all students and the right to display their pride.

10. What do you see as the role of the ISD in protecting transgender students? What is your opinion of how your ISD currently handles issues related to transgender students? Is there anything you would change on how your ISD handles trans issues.

The role of the ISD in protecting transgender students is the same as it is for all students. However, it is important to recognize the different challenges and issues that trans and other marginalized students experience on a daily basis. The law provides for a safe environment free of discrimination for all students and the role of the ISD is to ensure that our trans students feel safe and as much of a part of the school community as any other student.

Because of its large size and decentralized nature, I am sure there is wide variance in how the district currently handles trans issues. I recognize that individuals in the district can have widely different experiences. However, Dallas ISD stands out to me for the lack of hateful policies, polarizing press, and negative incidents of personal and systemic discrimination that we see in some other areas of North Texas. I believe Dallas ISD has an empathetic leader who truly believes that all students belong and all can achieve. If elected, I will stay true to my pledge to provide support for all special populations in the district.

11. What are your thoughts on Charter Schools?

I am a staunch proponent of the traditional ISD system and am a public school advocate. The original intent of charter schools was to encourage innovation and provide parents with more educational options for their children. There are some high quality charter operators who offer greater flexibility and autonomy to teachers and administrators, which allows for more personalized and effective teaching methods. However, in Dallas, there are many low performing and predatory charters who could undermine traditional public schools by siphoning off resources and students. They are often less transparent and accountable than traditional public schools and may not provide equitable access to all students, particularly those with disabilities or from low-income backgrounds. Overall the effectiveness of charter schools can vary widely depending on the specific school, its management, and its educational approach.

12. What is your opinion of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives? Do you think they provide value in today's academic environment? \*

My opinion of DEI is different from my opinion of DEI initiatives. Overall I would say that there are DEI initiatives that provide value in today's academic environment and there are others that do not. As a first generation college student who went to school on an affirmative action scholarship, I can confidently say that when an academic institution (such as DISD) values diversity, equity, and inclusion, all students perform better and value is provided to the academic environment. Rather than an initiative, districts can adopt policies and practices that promote diversity in the workplace, promote culturally relevant curriculum, support safe affinity spaces for students and staff, and provides opportunity to all. To further reinforce a DEI mindset, the budget and choice of superintendent signal signal priorities and will affect how DEI initiatives are selected and implemented, if at all.

13. The current 88th legislative session has seen discussion and consideration of strict library and book rules for schools across the state. What are your thoughts on efforts to ban books in schools?

Highly functioning societies do not ban books. I do not support any efforts to censor or ban any age appropriate books in any schools.

### All Candidates

All candidates will need to answer the following questions.

14. Are you a current member of Stonewall Democrats of Dallas?

No

15. Is there anything in your past or background that has not been covered by the previous questions that might – without careful explanation - cause our organization to reconsider or withdraw our endorsement of you? \*

No



16. I'm seeking an endorsement from the Stonewall Democrats of Dallas for the 2023 Municipal \*  
election. (Please type name)

Kevin Malonson

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This form was created inside of Stonewall Democrats of Dallas.

Google Forms