



**Name: Mita Havlick**  
**Job Title: Stay-at-home mother, public school advocate**

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**2 Describe leadership positions, responsibilities and/or personal experiences that have most prepared you to serve Dallas ISD students as a trustee.**

Since 2008  
Active member and parents on the Stonewall Jackson (SJE) PTA; School volunteer

- Room parent
- Created the New Student Ambassador Program
- Worked on a multitude of PTA teams including numerous/countless fundraising events
- Worked with volunteer parents on "Save our Gardens" after DISD budget shortfall in 2009.

2013-2015: Member and co-chair of SJE SBDM

- Led effort to secure funds for the schools identified in the Interim Bridge Plan.
- Led effort for a principal change after documenting repeated principal violations
- Worked with teachers and volunteer parents on Literacy Library
- Collaborated with teachers, administration on curriculum decision
- Engaged DISD trustees

2015-Present

- Active member of the Travis PTA, again working in various roles from school tours, parent volunteer for Chess Team, parent volunteer for field trips and weekend UIL tournaments
- Community member of the SJE SBDM. Creating engagement between our community and school

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**3 Give three examples of local organizations you are affiliated with that have influenced your thinking regarding the needs of the district.**

Stonewall Jackson PTA  
Stonewall Jackson SBDM  
Travis Vanguard and Academy PTA

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**4 Provide insight into your understanding of the role and responsibility of an individual trustee as well as the Board of Trustees as a whole.**

As the District 2 School Board Trustee, my first and primary responsibility is to advocate for the students and teachers of DISD. I understand that specific responsibilities to include:

- Setting policy direction for the District
- Understand and prioritize the needs of the schools within the entire District
- Understand, prioritize and advocate for the needs of each school within District 2
- Appropriately allocate financial resources
- Work collaboratively and professionally with other Trustees seeking compromise when there's disagreement.
- Engage the community, understand their needs and communicate District policy.

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**5 Explain school board governance and how it impacts student achievement.**

The school board is trusted by the voters in Dallas with governing the school district. Specifically:

- The school board should always be seeking to improve the quality of learning for its students balanced with the financial resources available
- The school board is the outward facing representative to our community: the residents of Dallas
- The school board is not "in charge" of the District but rather delegates authority of the day to day management of the District to the Superintendent.
- The school board provides oversight of the District
- The board, working with District administration, constantly monitors performance of the schools. Metrics must be established, documented and clearly communicated prior to any review of performance.
- As the highest level of oversight, the school board members must always conduct themselves ethically and professionally.

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**6 Analyzing information is a fundamental trustee responsibility. What resources will you rely on to have a full understanding of board issues; and what groups will you call on for perspective?**

Information and data matters. And collecting accurate data is imperative as parsing the information will help the school board define its strategic goals and visions for the next three to five to ten years. Additionally, analyzing data and trends over time will aid the District in improving student achievement.

Some of the resources include:

- Surveys within the District: teacher surveys, community surveys, student surveys
- TEA compiled and provide reports and analysis
- There are a number of organizations throughout the city such as Children at Risk and Commit2Dallas that collect, compile and analyze data and distribute their findings.
- To learn from my other Trustees on their "go to" resources.

While analyzing and understand the information provided is imperative, it is important to not just be data-driven as being completely data-driven removes empathy and understand from the decision making process.

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**7 Describe your level of familiarity with Dallas ISD's revenue sources and budgetary needs. If you are not very familiar, how will you address that knowledge gap?**

My understanding is the primary revenue source for DISD is our property taxes and state funds with property taxes accounting for approximately 2/3 of the revenue and the remaining coming from State aid. An additional, but a small percentage of federal monies is provided.

I understand our budgetary needs from a very high level -- teachers and staff salaries being the primary expenditure. I will dig in depth into the most recent DISD budget with a knowledgeable individual. Fortunately, I have an analytical mind (hence the Physics and Computer degrees) and believe that while there is a learning curve, that the time will be short.

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**8 Name three recent successes for Dallas ISD and three for your district.**

District successes

- Passing of the Interim Bridge Plan (IBP)
- Launch of the IDEA at Fannin Personalized Learning Center
- Agreement that the focus needs to be on early childhood learning

District 2 successes

- Securing IBP funds specifically for Stonewall Jackson and Lakewood Elementary
- Certification and implementation of the pre-IB program at JL Long

- Woodrow Wilson's significant improvement of its graduating students being college ready
- Continued community support for Stonewall Jackson and Lakewood elementary schools

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**9 What advice and direction would you give a parent considering enrolling their child in Dallas ISD?**

When you send your child to a DISD school, you are entrusting him/her to the public education system. While you must embrace the system, realize that an integral component to a child's success is you, the parent. The parent must be actively engaged in the child's learning including knowing the school, the teachers and investing time into knowing your child's friends.

Do not outsource the parenting of your child to the school. You are still and always responsible for discipline, recognition and continued development and maturing of your child.

Support your child's teacher. Always go in with the belief that your child's teacher has a great investment in ensuring your child's success.

Stay informed; get involved. Communicate with your child's teacher regularly to understand how your child is improving or being limited. Volunteer as much as possible.

Keep your child safe. And always make sure your child comes home to a safe, loving and supportive environment.

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**10 A majority of Dallas ISD trustees have supported expansion of the district's pre-K program with several votes over the last year. What is the role of policy in this expansion and do you support a budget priority for continued expansion?**

The role of governance is to balance the required expansion with budgetary constraints.

An expansive and successfully implemented District-wide pre-K will help every child start his/her education with the primary ingredients for success -- the love of learning and not being grade-level behind when starting Kindergarten. However, there is concern that the cost of early childhood learning is extensive and with enrollment rates dropping, required revenue will decrease with less state funds allocated.

I am in favor of making pre-K a budgetary priority. We must ensure that our children start their formal education with as many advantages as they have.

At present, I am not familiar enough with the DISD budget allocation to understand how and where the money will come from, but will work to find a solution and the money.

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**11 The approved plan for teacher evaluation, Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) is a three- pronged approach.**

- \*Defining Excellence using teacher performance, student achievement, and student surveys.**
- \*Supporting Excellence through increased classroom observations and coaching.**
- \*Rewarding Excellence with a new model of aligning teacher compensation with student learning and growth.**

**What is your level of understanding of this initiative? Based on your familiarity, is the current plan moving the district closer to having a highly effective teacher in every classroom? Briefly explain whether you support the plan as a whole or describe parts of the plan that you would guide the administration to review.**

I am familiar with this initiative primarily from a teacher perspective. I know almost all of the teachers at my children's schools personally, whether they are my children's grade level teachers or not.

Some may argue that compensation drive behavior, pay for performance is not necessarily the answer. The issue as I understand it is that the TEI as implemented does not positively incent teachers. In fact, many teachers feel that the TEI:

- Pits teachers against teachers. Instead of working collaboratively, they now work competitively  
- Unfairly benefits teachers in high performing and magnet schools  
- Has not been effectively implemented as is evident by the almost 150 teachers who recently received a special stipend of \$1000 (but only if they agree to return next year).  
- Allows for favoritism, that is the principal nominating only her teacher advocates and not those who question or challenge (that's a whole other issue).  
Any evaluation system must be equitable and fair.

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**12 The 2013 Parsons report determined that more than \$4 billion in improvements are needed for district facilities by 2020. The recent bond election was for \$1.6 billion. As trustee, how would you address the continuing facility needs of the district?**

First and foremost, facilities improvements **MUST** be one of the highest priorities of the board and the District. Our students cannot continue to be subjected to some of the deplorable conditions that exist throughout so many Districts schools.  
Unfortunately, instead of spending money on appropriate maintenance over the years, the District allowed the facilities to decline, applying band-aids instead of improvements.  
While that is a learning experience for the future, the fact remains that we are considerably short in terms of funds for our schools.  
We must look for and find efficiencies on expenditures today, and we must use money as it becomes available to truly improve a school's facilities instead of applying quick fixes.  
I will continue to learn and understand the District's budget and the budgetary process and work towards a solution.

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**13 Only 11% of DISD high school students are scoring college-ready (using state standards) on the ACT or SAT. How is this failure to graduate more of our students' college and/or career ready the responsibility of Dallas ISD and/or the Board of Trustees? Please explain.**

It is the responsibility of the DISD, the Trustees and the community to ensure that every child is college or career-ready. However, I do not believe that the ACTs and SATs are a true measure of career-readiness.  
Not all children are college-bound and using a college entrance exam to test for career readiness is inappropriate.  
With that said, an unacceptable percentage of our students do not graduate "life ready". Personalized Learning Centers and specialized tracks will help.  
Some tactical ideas:  
- Life Journal: Every year, have each student write in their journal, from Kindergarten until graduation, "where do you want to be in 10 years?" Something as small as that will remind the child of his/her goals.  
- Find our successes and have them come back: For the ones that were ready, interview them, find out what worked for them and create a model of success.  
- Teach them a trade.  
- Give them a Mentor.  
- Know your students: Each staff member takes on X students/year.

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**14 More than 85% of our students are "economically disadvantaged". Can Dallas ISD's challenges be solved with this level of poverty in the district?**

Any problem can be solved but not by a blanket solution. While our students are 85% economically disadvantaged, our city is not. Therefore, not enough parents above the poverty line are entrusting their children to public education. We need to understand why and bring those families into DISD.  
I recently saw a video produced by the OTI that details how having an 50/50 socioeconomic mix in a school helps all students -- the affluent students continue to score well; the other students score better than if they were in a school that

is a majority poor. The problem is that we don't have a 50/50 mix in terms of enrollees. We must figure out how communities around Stonewall Jackson and Rosemont and Withers have bought into their school and public education and create a model for other areas to follow. A good neighborhood school benefits everyone.

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**15 If elected, what will be your two primary goals during your term, and how will we know you are working towards these goals?**

I hope by my answers above, my top priorities are evident, though I must expand it to three:

1. Facilities improvements
2. Implementation of pre-K Learning District wide
3. Get all families in Dallas to believe in public education

Ok, if I were to add a fourth, it would be how to support and retain our teachers. Yes, an ambitious agenda, but one that can be accomplished through proper fiscal management, cooperation, collaboration, partnership, understanding and working together to find the answers. You know I'll be working towards these goals because that is the only reason I want to be the District 2 Trustee -- to advocate for our students and teachers. I have two children in the Dallas public education system. They, like all students throughout our city, deserve an improved school system. I believe in order to be a true advocate for public education you have to have true investment -- skin in the game. I have my two children in the system. That's skin in the game.

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**16 If not elected, do you plan to serve in some capacity to benefit Dallas students and schools? If yes, how?**

I plan to continue to serve the students in Dallas as I have done throughout my tenure as a parent of children in DISD. I have, through my volunteer efforts, transformed my children's school for the better. That is why outside of my husband and my kids, my number one supporters in this race are the teachers who know me. At school pick up today and via text all evening, I have received countless exclamations of gratitude that I am in this race. The latest I received is at 8:59pm: You are perfect for this position, we believe in you!! I believe in myself and I believe that I can improve DISD. Thank you for taking the time to read these responses.

This completes the DallasKidsFirst 2016 candidate survey. Thank you for participating.