

**Monica Benjamin**

## **EPISD School Board Trustee District #1**

**As you read above is our statement of values for public education as the El Paso County Democratic Party. Do you agree with our statement, yes or no. If you do not, please explain.["No"]**

*I am in agreement with the principles, but I have a comment on the second principle. The second principle states "protection of public schools from losing funding and students to charter schools.." While I agree that a public school is the best choice, I also believe where a parent sends their child is their personal choice. Every parent, or guardian, bases their decisions on what they think is best for their child. I do not think a parent's personal decision should fall on the trustee as a failure.*

**Question 1: What motivated you to run for the school board, and what are your top priorities**

*I was motivated to run for school board because of the current mishandling by the school district to provide transparency and equality to our students. Destination District Redesign was a disaster. It was not a redesign campaign but a downsizing campaign. Had the initiative been labeled "we are closing schools" the parents, students, community and general public would not have been blindsided that their schools were closing. My experiences over the last 14 years as an EPISD parent, volunteer and PTA member also motivated me to run for the school board. I've had both good and bad experiences, and I think we can do better. Improvement can only come to those willing to do the work and I am that person.*

**Question 2: How do you plan to address educational equity across schools in our district?**

*Educational equity is best achieved through a holistic approach. We need to evaluate trends in performance, student to teacher ratios, student population, staffing, facilities, extracurricular activities and educational support. The district already has a system in place to evaluate equity, provide recommendations and implement a plan based on campus needs.*

*One thing I would like to work on is empowering parents to advocate for testing if they believe their child might have a learning disability. There is a negative stigma with the words*



*“learning disability” and “special education.” When a child is identified with a learning disability, they are able to get the academic assistance they need to succeed.*

**Question 3: What is your vision for the role of public education in our community?**

*The role of our education system is to produce a population of students with knowledge and skills to become productive citizens. Not all students will go to a 4-year university and that is acceptable. Our schools are staffed with college, career and military readiness counselors to prepare the students for their future. In the school setting, mentorship can also come from other school officials, teachers, coaches, counselors and club sponsors. My vision is for every student to have the resources available to them to make that decision when the time comes. I want to ensure that students feel they are in a safe place to discuss their future, whether that be with a counselor, teacher, coach or other school official.*

**Question 4: What are your plans to ensure transparency and accountability in your work on the school board?**

*I am committed to transparency and accountability. That is one of the reasons I am running for trustee. I don't want this district to be embarrassed again by fraud, waste and abuse by “leaders” with salaries 4 times the median income of the average El Pasoan. I would like to develop a newsletter much like the EPISD superintendent. I will also publicly post upcoming business that requires a vote by the trustees and the reasoning behind my vote. I am committed to responding to concerns from my constituents. I am committed to being up front with issues that do not fall in line with the majority. I am committed to always working in the best interest of our students.*

**Question 5: What is your stance on charter schools and their impact on public schools?**

*I do not support charter schools. I believe charter schools compete with local school districts in both positive and negative ways. Our public schools lose state funding to students who attend charter schools. However, the presence of charter schools forces our districts to provide diverse programming to keep and attract those same students. Overall, the public school system is resourced to better serve the needs of all students regardless of economic status and for all protected classes.*

**Did you attend public schools? ["Yes"]**

**If applicable: do your children - or did your children - attend public schools?**

*["Yes"]*



**Have you received any campaign contributions from charter school supporters such as CREEED? ["Yes"]**

**Do you believe in Greg Abbott's Voucher Plan? ["No"]**