

Eanes ISD Board Of Trustees Voter Guide



May 2024
Local Election

Eanes for Equity is proud to present our 2024 Eanes ISD Board of Trustees Candidate Voter Guide.

In this election **two seats are on the ballot: Place 4 (incumbent James Spradley and Robert Morrow) and Place 5 (Kelly Marwill, Aaron Silva, and Catherine Walker)**. We thank the candidates, each of whom welcomed the opportunity to answer six questions from our community about diversity, equity, and inclusion within Eanes ISD. We present the candidates' answers in order to help voters make an informed decision.

Please use discretion when viewing and sharing.

- **Some answers contain disparaging and inflammatory statements. In the interest of respectful dialogue, we have opted to replace or redact them.** Should you wish to see the full answers, please email info@eanes4equity.com.
- We encourage our readers to do their own due diligence as candidate claims have not been independently verified. **To aid in your decision making, the last page of Voter Guide contains links to candidate campaign pages and voting information.** We also encourage you to seek out other candidate voter guides and candidate forums.



James Spradley
Place 4



Robert Morrow
Place 4



Kelly Marwill
Place 5



Aaron Silva
Place 5



Catherine Walker
Place 5

Early Voting: April 22 - April 30, 2024

Election Day: Saturday, May 4, 2024

Eanes for Equity envisions an equitable Eanes ISD community where everyone can reach their full potential in the district and beyond. We work to foster equity through community conversations that create belonging. We celebrate our diversity, build connections, interrupt injustice, and collaborate with students, families, Eanes ISD staff, and School Board.

Eanes for Equity is a parent-led community organization (non-profit 501(c)3) independent of Eanes ISD. As such, our organization does not endorse candidates. Our goal with this Voter Guide is to inform the voting public.

eanes4equity.org

Q1

What is something that you have learned about diversity, equity, and inclusion in the last year that you hope to incorporate into your leadership as a school board member?



James Spradley
Place 4

I have become an even bigger supporter of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in education. I appreciate how UDL emphasizes creating flexible learning environments that accommodate diverse learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds. UDL helps ensure all students can access and participate in learning activities effectively. I appreciate how this approach helps remove barriers to learning and fosters opportunities for all learners to succeed. UDL has been an important part of the Board's annual goals for years, and I support integrating these concepts into our district's approach to educating students.

Robert Morrow
Place 4

I want to teach the Eanes students about Israel's mass murdering and genocide of the Palestinians. We should "include" the oppression of the Palestinians and information about it in the curricula of Eanes.

Kelly Marwill
Place 5

Leading with empathy goes a long way in building trust in a community. I've worked with Eanes for Equity since its inception in 2020. I've learned to meet people where they are. When I take time to listen, there is usually a common thread that gives me an opportunity to connect and continue a meaningful discussion where the person I'm speaking to is more likely to listen to the many ways DEI is benefiting our school district. This conversation has happened more times than I can count since I announced I was running for school board at the end of last year. I have watched as members of our community who were initially opposed to or conflicted about the benefits of DEI efforts in our schools are now appreciating how it is enriching our schools and community. From the community conversations to the annual Jubilee, we are coming together to see the value in our DEI work together. In my leadership as a board member, I will be committed to continuing the school board's prioritization of DEI to create a safe and welcoming environment for all of our students. I will continue to be actively engaged and responsive to the cultural diversity needs we have in our community.

Aaron Silva
Place 5

I want to build stronger parental partnerships with the school and many parents have not felt seen, heard or included in this conversation for many years. Many are treated as outsiders and because they are not in agreement with all of the tenants of DEI they can feel marginalized and scorned. As a result, they report it is difficult to have meaningful conversations with other parents, their children and this defeats the purpose of DEI. More needs to be done to win over the hearts and minds of all parents – be better prepared to listen to them.

Catherine Walker
Place 5

Over the past year, I've come to appreciate the profound impact of inclusion in fostering a vibrant and thriving community. I've learned that true equity requires proactive measures to ensure every student, regardless of background or ability, feels valued and supported. Which leads me to address the need for measurable outcomes that can be tracked to confirm whether policies and initiatives are meeting the mark, or if we need to reconsider our implementation of these principles. As a future Eanes Trustee I'm committed to prioritizing policies and initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level of our educational system, and then seek data that helps us track our own progress. This also means actively seeking out voices that have historically been marginalized, listening to their experiences, and taking tangible measurable steps to address disparities. Building a culture of inclusion isn't just about words; making this type of change takes time and change can be hard. That's why I'll provide unwavering dedication to creating a learning environment where every student can thrive.

Q2

What are you currently doing within the district to support Eanes
(a) students and (b) staff?



**James
Spradley**
Place 4

I serve on a Board of Trustees that values diversity in our community and in our classrooms. Through our continued support of programs like Best Buddies, the Board of Trustees has worked to ensure more members of our community participate in the outstanding opportunities presented to Eanes ISD students in and out of the classroom. The Board has also worked hard to ensure our school calendars are aligned, to every extent possible, with major cultural holidays represented in our diverse community. This benefits our students, staff, and families. While we cannot always accommodate all religious and other observations, we can align school holidays and no homework nights with events that allow flexibility for most members of our community.

**Robert
Morrow**
Place 4

I often brag about all the NFL and college quarterbacks that come out of Westlake High School.

**Kelly
Marwill**
Place 5

As a leader in this district, I understand that it is part of my job to be actively involved in the schools my children are attending as well as the entire district. For the last decade, I've been attending school board meetings. As a Leadership family, I volunteer time and money to the Eanes Education Foundation. I served as a booster club president. Currently, I'm serving on the district's Bond Oversight Committee. I'm on the HCMS E4E Campus Engagement Team. At the beginning of April, I will be at the HCMS staff breakfast for the second year celebrating our teachers there with my giant coffee pot and lots of open conversations about classroom needs for DEI. I'm also a firm believer that we need to celebrate and acknowledge all student extracurricular activities with full enthusiasm. I've been serving as the HCMS Band Parent Rep for the last 3 years where I coordinate all the food and volunteer needs for the band program. Through the Westlake Chamber of Commerce Board, I'm working to foster relationships with businesses and Adult Transition Services for job opportunities and student interview practice. I also served as board chair for Pop Up Birthday and offer many opportunities for our students and parents to get involved in this non-profit that serves foster children.

**Aaron
Silva**
Place 5

I have operated the Eanes Parents Unite podcast for 2+ years, 28 episodes, featuring many of our leaders (and their unedited messages and viewpoints) and the important issues facing Eanes, including DEI. We are routinely downloaded by 15,000 – 20,000 listeners per episode. No other parent in the district has spent more time discussing these issues publicly than I have. My wife and I have donated tens of thousands to EEF over the years, which helps the District fund teachers. We also donate my time at the booster club and various other functions when asked.

**Catherine
Walker**
Place 5

I've been deeply involved in the scouting community since 2018, serving as Advancement Chair for Cub Scout Pack 39 and later becoming Den Leader for Lion Scouts. Additionally, I'm involved in Boy Scout Troop 30 and volunteer for Board of Review for scout rank advancement, and as a Merit Badge Counselor. I am also a parent volunteer for Brownie Troop 42405, supporting their badge work. A trustee must be properly informed in order to guide a school district, which includes adopting policies and budgets that support district goals. Understanding the impact of current school-year goals on teachers, staff, and students is imperative. I have been on a quest to not just understand the past few years, but diving deep into historic data from our district, going back more than a decade to understand where we've been from an enrollment perspective, a curriculum perspective, and a financial sustainability and funding perspective. I have also been reading Texas state statute on transfer students, funding allotments, tax rate compression and weighted average daily attendance. A deep understanding of all of these topics will be critical to preparation for stepping into the role of Trustee, in order to support and make informed decisions that impact students, staff and teachers.

Q3

The 2024-2025 board priorities are currently in draft stages (published 2/20/24). Do you support the strategic priority of *safe and inclusive school communities* and its strategic objective “Educational experiences and a district culture based on the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion”? Why or why not?



James Spradley
Place 4

I was a trustee when the Board originally adopted diversity, equity and inclusion as a top level priority, and I support the Board's and the community's ongoing efforts to ensure all students, teachers, and staff are respected and appreciated. I support the language that is evolving into this year's Board Priorities, including, “Educational experiences and a district culture based on the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion.” I think there has been a lot of growth in understanding in our community over the last few years. People understand the value and importance of diversity and inclusion in our schools. There may be a few people who fear that "equity" means equality of outcomes, but I think there are more and more people who understand the true meaning of equity when it comes to the Board's priorities. As a trustee, I am simply seeking to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive and succeed, regardless of their background or identity. I will continue this work in my next term.

Robert Morrow
Place 4

Most of this stuff is cooked up by liberal idiots who hate straight, white men and as a general rule I would [act of violence towards] DEI or as I liked to refer to it "DIE."

Kelly Marwill
Place 5

I strongly support a safe and inclusive school community through the principles of DEI. We know inclusive education values diversity and the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom and allows them to meet their full potential. Since the pandemic, students have more anxiety than ever before. As leaders, we must ensure that fostering the mental health of our students matters as much as their academic success. Keeping them safe and thriving in the classroom is key. Students who feel welcome and safe are more likely to thrive academically, engage in school activities, form caring connections with each other, use critical thinking, have non aggressive behaviors, and overall add to a positive school culture. We can support inclusion by creating spaces for safe conversations, conscientiously celebrate cultural heritages, and collaborate on how to best support our students with disabilities. We can also expose our students to nontraditional career options to allow a broader perspective on professional paths available. I support a safe and inclusive school culture because every child deserves to have a sense of belonging in our district.

Aaron Silva
Place 5

Actually these plans are for the next 4 years (not just next year) and I do not support it as currently written because they are incomplete and void of addressing the important fiscal issues facing the district. There is no discussion about reducing administrative expenses, raising revenue, supporting EEF properly, ending teacher attrition, hiring fewer non-certified teachers and ending the use of bonds for operational expenditures and generally returning the school to a healthy fiscal footing. Unless we can focus on these priorities – there is no hope for the school to successfully support “Educational experiences and a district culture based on the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion”.

Catherine Walker
Place 5

Yes, as a Board Trustee, I would advocate for the integration of diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility criteria into curriculum evaluation and development within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). I would look for guidelines that include collaborating with stakeholders to enhance broader representation and accessibility of instructional materials. Additionally, I would champion procedures aimed at increasing access to inclusive educational opportunities. Identifying barriers and implementing support services or alternative instructional approaches would ensure equitable access for all students. Furthermore, I would promote initiatives that value and honor community diversity. Through multicultural events and platforms for sharing diverse experiences, an inclusive environment would be fostered where dialogue and celebration of diversity thrive, ultimately creating a more equitable educational experience for every student. Embracing diversity and fostering inclusivity not only enriches the educational experience but also prepares students to become empathetic and culturally competent global citizens.

Q4

How do you think the Eanes ISD school board can create a welcoming environment for students, parents, and staff within the LGBTQIA+ community?



James Spradley
Place 4

Our district has made progress in fostering a welcoming environment for students, parents, and staff in the LGBTQIA+ community by implementing inclusive non-discrimination policies, providing comprehensive training for staff on LGBTQIA+ issues and terminology, and incorporating LGBTQIA+ representation into the curriculum. Additionally, our schools have taken steps to address and prevent bullying or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Creating open channels of communication with parents and guardians ensures their involvement and support in creating an inclusive environment. Regularly seeking feedback from students, parents, and staff helps identify areas for improvement and demonstrates a commitment to ongoing inclusivity efforts.

Robert Morrow
Place 4

I oppose catering to [slur referring to the gay community] at the Eanes School District. [The remainder of the answer has been redacted due to disparaging and inflammatory speech.]

Kelly Marwill
Place 5

Leaders who lead by example position themselves as tremendous role models. If we want our students to be safe, we have to speak up. Speaking up for LGBTQIA+ persons isn't just about reacting to the negative comments from others. We need to use our leadership platform to spread positive messages that encourage our community to think openly and divergently. Leaders that approach these tough conversations calmly, listen and ask questions will gain greater understanding of concerns around these issues. Building that trust will allow for incremental change and open the door for a better understanding of the need to support our LGBTQIA+ community. Recent studies have shown that in states with laws targeting these issues, school hate crimes quadrupled. Unfortunately, this has caused a number of our families with LGBTQIA+ children to leave Texas altogether out of concern for the safety of their children. As a board member, I will not tolerate our students being discriminated in this manner and will advocate for a zero tolerance of harassment or bullying of our students who identify as LGBTQIA+. We teach our children to do what's right, so our leadership needs to be an example for them.

Aaron Silva
Place 5

Eanes is one of the most welcoming communities in the state, if not the country. There has been great progress made in these areas, as indicated by high marks in the climate survey showing that all people feel they belong – that will certainly not change if I am elected to the Board.

Catherine Walker
Place 5

To foster a welcoming environment for the LGBTQIA+ community, the board can take several proactive steps. I have three recommendations. First, according to TASB, one of the five primary responsibilities for a board of trustees is to adopt policies and review for effectiveness, hence implementing inclusive policies is something that is absolutely within the board's wheelhouse. I will champion policies that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Second, providing comprehensive sensitivity training for teachers and staff ensures they understand LGBTQIA+ issues and can support students and colleagues effectively and in an appropriate way. Third, fostering open communication with LGBTQIA+ advocacy organizations could strengthen Eanes ISD's commitment to inclusivity. By engaging with these groups, the board would demonstrate a willingness to listen, learn, and actively address the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community across the district.

Q5

Eanes students, teachers and families have shared that they have observed a positive shift in school climate with a greater emphasis towards meaningful inclusion. What steps would you take to continue the active inclusion of students receiving special education?



James Spradley
Place 4

I will work to continue the active inclusion of students receiving special education services. I will prioritize ongoing training for educators in inclusive teaching practices, emphasizing collaboration between general and special education teachers. Individualized support plans, like Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), should be regularly reviewed and updated to meet evolving needs. Additionally, I will work to ensure access to assistive technologies and resources, promote positive behavior support strategies, and establish peer support programs to foster social inclusion. Family involvement must remain central, with regular communication and partnership opportunities to address students' holistic needs. Continuous monitoring of progress and feedback loops from students, families, and staff should guide adjustments to ensure an environment where every student feels valued, supported, and able to thrive academically and socially.

Robert Morrow
Place 4

I want to teach these [disparaging word for students receiving special education] kids about Israel's genocide of the Palestinians and [redacted due to disparaging and inflammatory speech].

Kelly Marwill
Place 5

We continue opportunities in professional growth, training and resources for staff around meaningful inclusion to empower educators. One cost effective idea is to offer book clubs or workshops for staff in which they explore specific student populations, types of learning differences or educational styles. We can access the expertise among us by polling teachers and staff about their unique skill areas, then host workshops to train and share with each other ways they've advanced inclusion for those receiving special education. I value our teachers and their time so we would use the stipend established for that in the EEF endowment. I have worked on every school campus and can tell you if we deliver this in a one-size-fits-all manner, it will feel like just one more thing to get done. But by providing opportunities that are uniquely suited to the needs of a campus and students, educators can intentionally address their specific needs for inclusion. I will also continue to advocate for the Best Buddy program to continue to grow on every campus as we have witnessed great success with this program.

Aaron Silva
Place 5

If it's going the right direction...let's keep it going! I won't get in the way of progress.

Catherine Walker
Place 5

Continuing the positive shift towards meaningful inclusion for students receiving special education requires concerted efforts. First, I'd advocate for regular assessments of inclusion practices, ensuring they align with best practices and student needs. Collaboration between general and special education teachers is also crucial, facilitating the implementation of inclusive strategies in every classroom. Investing in professional development opportunities focused on inclusive teaching methods empowers educators to better support students with diverse needs. Regular communication with families of students receiving special education is essential. Providing resources, support networks (like the Special Education Parent Partners), and opportunities for feedback ensures that families' voices are heard and valued in the decision-making process. By prioritizing collaboration, professional development, and ongoing communication, we can sustain and enhance the active inclusion of students receiving special education in the Eanes community, fostering an environment where all students can thrive.

Q6

During the February 6, 2024 special school board meeting, the Eanes ISD's demographer stated increasing the number of transfer students in kindergarten and first grade (including the Spanish Immersion program) could help address the limited housing growth potential in our district and prevent a future budget shortfall. If this strategy is adopted, how would you help the district make new families feel welcome in Eanes ISD?



James Spradley
Place 4

Due to the way the state funds public education, it is important for school districts to keep classrooms at the recommended "full" levels. With a declining student population, as recent demography reports have shown, this will become increasingly difficult for Eanes ISD. Without transfers, a future Board would be forced to make tough decisions around closing and consolidating campuses. Instead, the current Board pursues a strategy of keeping our schools full by welcoming transfer students from surrounding areas to receive an Eanes ISD education. The key to making these families feel welcome in our district is to fully adopt them into the Eanes ISD family. We need to ensure transfer students are treated the same as resident students. We need to make sure we are not creating and fostering an "us and them" mentality with respect to transfers.

Robert Morrow
Place 4

Maybe if these kids are students of Eanes ISD employees I would support that. But we should teach these kindergarten kids that DEI is a pile of hot burning garbage and we will not take about [slur referring to the gay community] stuff with them.

Kelly Marwill
Place 5

As Cedar Creek Booster Club President, I would facilitate new parents in volunteering and getting involved. I created a special form that included opportunities with varying commitment levels so everyone could find something to fit their schedule and budget. One of my favorite activities was introducing new families to the Principal with our "popsicles, playground and principal" event. We partnered with the new CCE Dads Club to host socials. Our New Family Liaison position served as a point of contact for school questions, best places to eat, the best activities for the kids, and other community activities for families. We would personally invite them to the events to let them know everyone would really love to see them and their family. I also seized the opportunity to tap into experiences from their former schools to bring new and more inclusive ideas to our school district and offer some impactful, meaningful changes while also making the new families feel more at home. As a board member, I would encourage all the campuses try similar events if they are not already so. Communication and interaction with these new families are key to engaging them and making them feel welcome.

Aaron Silva
Place 5

We've had so much success in Eanes that housing costs are out of reach for young families. We are around 500 kindergarten students short of being able to stabilize the budget due to the state recapture formula. But transfer students are only one part of the solution – the entire Eanes area is quite expensive to live in, and there is a limit to how far most people will be willing to drive their students into Eanes. We need bold solutions like paying the top 10% of teachers \$100,000 or more and once we do that...we'll have people being shipped in from all across the country.

Catherine Walker
Place 5

To ensure new families feel welcome in Eanes ISD amid increased transfer student enrollment, I would prioritize several initiatives. First, I'd advocate for comprehensive orientation programs that provide newcomers with essential information about our district, various resources, and support services. Second, I would support schools as they establish mentorship programs pairing new families with experienced ones, to foster a sense of belonging and facilitates integration into the community. Additionally, promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity through school-wide events and activities celebrates the unique backgrounds of all students. Regular communication channels, such as welcome packets, newsletters, and digital platforms like the Booster Club websites keep families informed and connected. Lastly, I would solicit feedback from new families and address their concerns promptly to demonstrate commitment to their well-being and ensure a positive early experience within our district.

Voting Resources



Ballot Information

Eanes ISD Trustee Board Election
www.eanesisd.net/board/election

For your custom ballot & voter guide
vote411.org

When & Where to Vote

Last Day to Register: April 4, 2024

Early Voting: April 22 - Apr 30, 2024

Election Day: Saturday, May 4, 2024

Election Day Locations:
www.votetravis.com

Candidate Websites

Place 4

James Spradley
jamesforeanes.com

Robert Morrow
not available at time of publication

Place 5

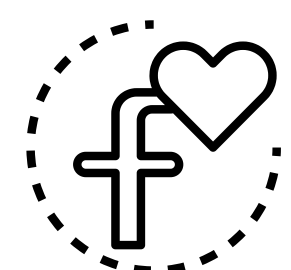
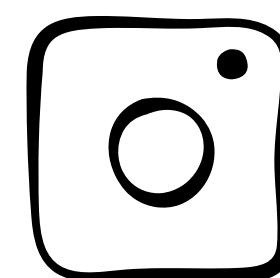
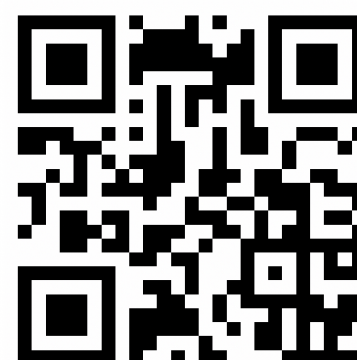
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Eanes for Equity is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Please consider donating to support our community efforts (like this voter guide), checking out our events, following us on social media, and sharing with your friends.

We appreciate your support!



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