

St, Tammany School Board District 10

‘Mandy’ Ellis-Ringbloom
‘Ben’ Mathis
Deborah McCollum
Vinci Ory
Lionel M. Vead, Jr*

No Party
Republican
Republican
Independent
Republican

No response our questions.

withdrawing (emailed)*

*This candidate sent responses then has emailed that he is withdrawing. Since it is not noted as a withdrawal on the Secretary of State website, his answers are included below.

Questions and Answers:

- 1) **What experience in your background prepares you to effectively ensure transparency and accountability as a school board member in setting and achieving sound educational goals?**

Mandy’ Ellis-Ringbloom

No response

‘Ben’ Mathis

I am not an educator, but I did grow up as the son of one. I am also the father of two children currently in our public school system. I believe it is the duty of our elected school board representatives to be as transparent and accountable as possible. One thing I do in my day job that I believe would translate well is critically reviewing past decisions to determine what the board did well and where they made mistakes. I believe this would benefit the board, the public, and most of all our students. I believe the board should make decisions and then measure the impact of those decisions to determine if they are achieving the intended outcome. If they are, that is wonderful and if they are not, then the board has the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and can update the plan. I would push to implement a review system like this which would help foster accountability.

Deborah McCollum

I have been a resident of St. Tammany Parish for 33 years. I am now retired after serving in the schools of St. Tammany as a teacher, curriculum specialist, and high school principal. Being an educator for 38 ½ years, my experience is extensive. My career began as a teacher in Mississippi and then continued in St. Tammany Parish, teaching advanced and gifted mathematics at Pearl River High and Fontainebleau High. I also worked as district secondary math curriculum specialist which afforded me the opportunity to support teachers throughout the district with professional development training and curriculum implementation. Finally, I was an assistant principal and principal at Covington High. With my knowledge and experience in all aspects of the school system, including accountability, transparency, management, curriculum, and finance, I believe I can make a difference serving as your school board member.

Vinci Ory

I graduated Summa Cum Laude from Southeastern Louisiana University with a degree in Social Work. Transparency and trust are the cornerstone of the social work education model as they are essential when working towards common goals on the micro or macro level. In addition, it emphasized the critical importance of being able to effectively and respectfully collaborate with others to reach goals. Further, I have been a successful business owner in St Tammany Parish for the past 20+ years and there is nothing more important than integrity and accountability when building brand recognition. Finally, my background in both social work and business rely on accountability and evaluating the efficacy of our current models in reaching goals. My unique background has prepared me to be an effective school board member in reaching the goals of our district.

Lionel M. Vead, Jr (withdrawing)

I have worked in the financial industry for 28 years and have written policy and procedure in lending and collections to achieve maximum potential from staff, i now work in the automotive analytics industry where i still use that policy and procedure skill to help businesses grow and prosper and would use that same knowledge to ensure sound educational goals.

- 2) **Despite pay raises and the new certification program, the significant teacher shortage in St. Tammany schools continues. Until the vacancies are filled with qualified teachers, what measures will you take to staff classes and ensure all students receive the highest quality of education?**

Mandy” Ellis-Ringbloom

No response

‘Ben” Mathis

I think we should reach out to retired teachers or those that left teaching for other reasons and make it as easy as possible for them to return to the classroom. We need to review those in central office and/ administrative roles to see if anyone would like to temporarily return to the classroom. We should also review the current pool of substitute teachers to see if any would be interested in accepting a full time teaching position, even if just for this year.

Deborah McCollum

As a school board member and the authority that office holds, I would question the superintendent as to measures being taken to fill the positions and make suggestions as I deemed appropriate. Based on my experience as a high school principal, I know that principals have exhausted all applications in their certified vacancies that are available to them in human resources. Their second step is to explore possibilities with long-term substitutes who are certified or qualified to fill the vacancy. If vacancies are still pending, dependent on the actual vacancy, other options must be considered. If there are still vacancies, then positions in the school, district or central office setting could be considered.

Vinci Ory

Recently, central office has proposed outsourcing the role of filling those vacancies through a contract with ESS - a staffing agency that specializes in placing and managing qualified staff in daily, long term and permanent positions. There have been several concerns raised about approving the contract because of increased costs; however, I feel it could be a short term solution until a more permanent one is found.

If my constituents are dissatisfied with that option, then other ideas include encouraging retired STPPS teachers to substitute at an increased daily pay rate and eliminating the barriers to becoming a substitute. Those barriers include such things as no longer requiring a principal recommendation before applying as a substitute, an online application portal, adding additional in-person substitute certification class times/locations and developing an online substitute training certification.

Lionel M. Vead, Jr (withdrawing)

St Tammany should be able to attract high quality teachers, we need to do qualified national candidate searches to fill those positions. Until that time I would propose (NOTE: received unfinished)

- 3) **St. Tammany teachers reportedly consider that the administration does not support them and that they are being asked to do more daily tasks than they can handle with their teaching responsibilities. How will you address the perception that teachers lack the support they need?**

Mandy” Ellis-Ringbloom

No response

‘Ben” Mathis

I believe administrative support is critical to teacher success. We need to get to the root cause of why teachers feel this way – are there teacher tasks that can be removed or shifted, do the administrators

have too many tasks to focus on support, etc. Then we could create policies to help alleviate pressure where appropriate and focus on supporting our teachers.

Deborah McCollum

Within a normal school year, teachers experience a wide range of challenges. Due to the pandemic, these challenges and others have become astronomical. The pandemic added many daily tasks and duties that the teacher did not normally have to perform. This would certainly result in increased stress, which would lend itself to decreased morale. Regardless of the reasons, if teachers are feeling they are not supported, then it certainly needs to be addressed. Again, as a school board member, I would address this with the superintendent. From my own experience as a high school principal, teachers need to be heard first and foremost. It is essential that serious consideration for the requested needs of the teachers in the classroom are addressed collaboratively. Their knowledge and experience must be honored, valued, respected, and utilized.

Vinci Ory

This is my third year as a substitute teacher in the STPSS and the reality is that teachers lack the support they need to adequately fulfill their daily duties over a long period of time. That is why we are seeing an unprecedented amount of teachers experiencing burnout and leaving the profession. It has been nothing short of inspiring to witness the incredible passion, professionalism, skill and dedication our teachers have for educating students while also facing increasing workloads and daunting responsibilities. St Tammany Parish is privileged to have a large operating budget to work with and we need to consider a reallocation of funds to include additional support personnel in every classroom to support teachers. This would include paraprofessionals to assist teachers with certain administrative tasks, classroom discipline and support students with exceptionalities. I believe bold solutions such as this one would also solve the problem of teacher vacancies and provide our children with the stable and exceptional education experience they deserve.

Lionel M. Vead, Jr (withdrawing)

Continuity with school hours and work hours should be the same, its not fair that some teachers from some schools work longer hours than those at another . Another is making sure that teachers have all the resources they need no teacher should have to come out of pocket to provide resources for students. ST Tammany has one of the largest budgets in the state and the fact that administration to teacher ratio is almost 1 to 1 is not acceptable . Lunch tome should be standard across all schools with some being 20 minute and some 30, that 10 minutes makes a big difference in a teachers day.

- 4) **Many of the schools in St Tammany were built with a design in which open corridors connect adjacent wings of the buildings. Considering this building design could expose children to threats from outside the school campus, what will you do to address the critical problem of ensuring school safety now and permanent changes for the future? How do you propose paying for the changes or measures you identify as a necessary solution to school safety?**

Mandy” Ellis-Ringbloom

No response

‘Ben” Mathis

I believe it would be a good idea for all our campuses to be reviewed by a security consulting firm that specializes in those reviews. Once recommendations are made, I would suggest we prioritize them by order of risk. I know the annual budgets contain line items for unplanned construction or repair work. Perhaps that could be used as a start. I also know there is approximately \$30 million left in future bond issuance from the 2019 election. I would investigate if these funds could be used for this purpose.

Deborah McCollum

Protecting our children and teaching them in a safe and wholesome environment would be my utmost priority as a school board member. The district has in place many safety measures which include school safety plans and collaboration and training with local and parish law enforcement. These are constantly

reviewed and revised. The most significant recent measures have been placing security resource officers and mental health providers on all campuses. In addition, and possibly the most significant, every campus is equipped with electronic access only to all buildings on the school campuses, accessible only with IDs. Analyzing facility needs and improvements in every school across the parish to accommodate growth and safe learning environments for our children is also a priority. From my present understanding building and building improvements are accomplished through bond monies. We will need to ensure that our construction bonds remain in tack so that we can address all safety needs.

Vinci Ory

Thank you for this important question. I am in complete agreement that school safety is a priority. This is outside of my expertise and I would rely on a professional assessment of what outside exposure our schools face and what could be done to eliminate those. In the interim, one idea that seems intuitive is a panic button provided to each teacher. When addressing school safety, we should consider solutions that also mitigate the ongoing internal threats of bullying, on-campus violence and teacher risk.

Lionel M. Vead, Jr (withdrawing)

We need to do more badge swipe doors in our schools i think Pontchartrain elementary would be a good model on how to protect students. Also more school resource officers, retired military and LEO's. With a half a billion dollar budget and a top heavy administration cuts can be made for school security in the administrative offices