

St, Tammany School Board District 12

Michelle Hirstius

Republican

Richard 'Rickey' Hursey

Republican

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?**

Michelle Hirstius

I am a concerned citizen that is worried about what is currently happening in our system and if something isn't done to change it, it will get worse. I do not like what I am seeing being indoctrinated to our children. So, I am standing up and doing something about it. I am an author, illustrator and publisher of children's books, my passion is what children learn and the importance of reading. Recently my books gear toward teaching children history and loving America something I feel is lacking in the classrooms. We need to make sure that parents have a say and know exactly what is being taught. I am not looking to be a politician, I am looking to help the community, I have nothing to gain but knowing I stood up for the children and teachers for the future of our country. It starts at home and school with our children.

Richard 'Rickey' Hursey

I have been a school board member for 7 ½ years. During this time I have developed a good working relationship, along with open communication, with parents, teachers, administration, and board members. As for the transparency and accountability of the school system, we just adopted St. Tammany Checkbook which will make it quicker and easier for the public to view and access the financial information they are searching for.

- 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?**

Michelle Hirstius

don't feel there is a teacher shortage more of keeping the teachers we have due to how the system is being run. I'm sure there are many teachers that do not want to teach the crazy things that are thrown at them, the nonsense of gender identity and using proper pronouns. There is too much pressure put on teachers to the point where they aren't going to care anymore or leave. Leave and teach children at home. Home-schooling has grown so much due to the converting schools to liberalism. On top of that, their safety is at risk because nothing is done to children that commit violent acts on teachers or other students, there is no security in place. I'm sure many retired veterans would come to schools and straighten some of the bad ones or be security. I'm sure some would love to teach in the classroom. If things don't change you will continue to see more and more GOOD teachers leave.

Richard 'Rickey' Hursey

We need to continue to recruit the universities in Louisiana and surrounding states. We also need to target the younger students before they enter college, by reaching out to our own high school students and encouraging them to think about choosing education as a career. We can do this by offering internships at schools to give the high school students the opportunity to work as teacher assistants.

- 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?**

Michelle Hirstius

This would be my first time on any school board, but first thing I would like is to have representatives from the schools say what their needs are. What is actually happening in the classroom. I am looking to get permission to sit in on classes at Salem High School to see what is going on, so that I have a better understanding. If it is something reasonable and something the community wants and needs then I will stand up for it. Simple as that.

Richard ‘Rickey’ Hursey

The administration has been working aggressively in trying to stop the unfunded training requirements and/or mandates that come down from the state in the form of law. We want to ensure teachers that we actively advocate against these items being mandated that take away from instructional time for our teachers and students. Open communication between administration and teachers is key to resolving any perceptions.

- 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?**

Michelle Hirstius

School safety is a big deal right now with the threats we have seen and some schools have experienced recently. There should be certain protocols taken for the safety of children and teachers. I remember when I was in school, we had fire drills, maybe do active shooter drills. Have our police department come in and teach a short safety class. If we can have orientation for schools, we can surely have part of that with some safety training. As mentioned, in a previous answer we could look into retired military or officers that would be interested in volunteering. There is also a group of fathers that are taking matters in their own hands called “Dads on duty”, maybe we can start a grass roots group like that here.

As far as that school, I would need to look at the structure plans and speak with the principal about the building and arrangements.

Richard ‘Rickey’ Hursey

We need to fortify the perimeter fencing at schools. Secondly, we need the absolute use of a single point of entry for all visitors. Thirdly, the badge pass system will be complete in all 55 schools by the end of this school year which will also aid in safety. In addition to these, every school has a school resource officer, a mental health provider, and a full-time nurse to assist in supporting school safety. These changes could be funded by using the capital improvement funds that we have in place.