

St, Tammany School Board District 2

Richard Bentley-Smith	Republican	withdrawing (emailed) – no responses
<i>Kathleen Cannino</i>	<i>Republican</i>	
<i>R. Whitney Davis</i>	<i>Independent</i>	
Pamela Ferguson	Republican	
Rosyln Hanson	Republican	
‘Bo’ Jakins	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?

Kathleen Cannino

In 2019, I began working with legislators to create a law to allow for the installation of cameras in special education , upon parental request. For the next four years, I dedicated much of my time and effort to get this legislation passed. In 2021, Senate Bill 86 Cameras in Special Education Classrooms passed unanimously and became law in Louisiana, as Act 456.

During the 2022 legislative session, I worked with advocates and Senator Franklin Foil to pass Act 588, strengthening the current law (Act 456) by adding additional language and a deadline for districts to comply.

Funding was the last major barrier for parents who wanted to request a camera in their child’s classrooms. The law allowed families to pay for the cameras if the school district did not have the funding. However, I did not want this financial burden placed on families. I began a letter-writing campaign and went to Baton Rouge to speak to legislators about the much-needed funding. Through advocacy, we successfully helped secure that funding for all school districts. The \$8 million needed to pay for cameras in self-contained special education classrooms was added to the state MFP (Minimum Foundation Program) for the 2022-2023 school year. The funding will soon be available to every district in Louisiana.

R. Whitney Davis

I am a St Tammany public-school parent, a small business owner, and a veteran Marine. As a parent I want to ensure transparency so that other parents know what is happening with their school board and how we’re preparing all of St Tammany’s children for successful futures. As a small business owner I understand the need for personal accountability and identifying where we are not succeeding so that we can do better in the future. Finally, as a veteran officer of the Marine Corps I appreciate that need for building a culture in which our teachers and support staff feel supported in order to keep the great individuals we have and attract more in the future.

Pamela Ferguson

My background is in commercial property management, tax law and some accounting. I believe this diverse experience will give me a unique perspective for this school board position. As for transparency and accountability; how does anyone’s background prepare them to be transparent? I believe transparency assures accountability! To that end, I have an open-door policy and have published my email, phone, and address. I will be available to all constituents, principals, teachers, students, other board members and the superintendent. I plan to be hyper aware of what is going on in all 4 schools in my district.

Rosyln Hanson

I have 28 years’ experience as an educator in the St. Tammany Parish Public School System serving as a teacher, curriculum specialist, jr. and high school principal, and district Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction working with all 55 schools, Pre-K-12. In each role, my responsibility was to share all aspects of academic progress on the school and district level which included specific sub-group goals (i.e., Students with Exceptionalities, Minority students, Economically Disadvantaged). As a board member, my role would be to monitor the educational goals set by the district and review progress. My

experience as an educator enables me to interpret progress and growth data which determines the School Performance Scores and District Performance Scores published by the Louisiana Department of Education. I have extensive experience working with LDOE and the US Department of Education on curriculum development, instructional practices, data analysis, and progress monitoring. This provides me with the insight which will be valuable to hold our school system accountable for the decisions made to ensure we reach our goals.

‘Bo’ Jakins

For the past 18 years, I have been a business owner in St. Tammany parish. I have served on several nonprofit board of directors and graduated from Leadership St Tammany, the New Orleans Regional Leadership Institute and Louisiana Economic Development CEO Roundtable programs.

“Ethical behavior is doing the right thing when no one else is watching- even when doing the wrong thing is legal.” — Aldo Leopold This is one of my favorite quotes.

- 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?**

Kathleen Cannino

The school board is currently discussing hiring a third-party company to help increase the hiring of substitutes. I believe the money being spent on the third party could be used to increase the pay for current substitutes and/or employees. If St. Tammany parish schools invest in their staff, I believe it would increase the number of teachers in our district. Holding more job fairs and hiring events and offering reimbursement for teachers that obtain certification in critical needs areas, such as special education. Another option could be utilizing upper administration & central office staff until vacancies are filled.

R. Whitney Davis

First, in order to address this in the long term, we need to create a culture that teachers want to work in. St Tammany needs to be an employer that attracts the best teachers in the state. Certainly paying teachers enough is a part of that, but much more important is the culture they work within. In the short-term, we need to make it easier for non-traditional educators that want to teach to get certified. I am currently working through this process myself and I find it very challenging to determine all the requirements. I do not want to drop the standards, but I do want all paths to certification to be very clear and easy to follow. The parish needs to encourage everyone that is interested in teaching to earn certification and make the process as easy as possible. Finally, we also need to tap into our retired teacher pool and encourage those outstanding educators to come back and help while we struggle through this shortage.

Pamela Ferguson

This is a national problem not just a St. Tammany problem. Currently substitute teachers are being vetted to take on long term positions and moving teachers if a school is over staffed or spreading out students from smaller classes. As a board member I will work with the other board members and the superintendent to continue to recruit and vet teachers until we have what we need.

Roslyn Hanson

The significant teacher shortage in St. Tammany Schools is particularly disconcerting as there was a time in which our district was the beacon for the best teachers, even as others were experiences shortages. Therefore, while I want to work with the superintendent and his staff to address the shortage immediately, there should be ongoing discussions to solve the problem long term. As a short-term solution, I would want to get data on the number of support personnel (instructional coaches, interventionists) and look toward restructuring the assignment of key personnel. Many of these teachers were hired as “support” for our schools classified as “Urgent Intervention Needed/Required” therefore, funding policies would have to be reviewed. If allowable, some of the personnel could be assigned to schools to allow for sufficient staff and ensure quality education in all

classes. The added support at the schools may ease the burdens that many of our teachers are experiencing and perhaps help to retain and recruit more quality teachers.

'Bo' Jakins

We have to restore the joy in learning. We need to make our teachers feel empowered and show them they are valued. STPSB introduced a program from ESS at the last CAW meeting to help recruit and attract substitutes. Outside the box solutions like this must continue to help ensure every child has every chance to succeed and receive the highest quality of education.

- 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?**

Kathleen Cannino

As an advocate, I am often in the schools and have witnessed some of the demands being placed on teachers. I believe there are some responsibilities that should not fall on the shoulders of the teachers, the correct staff should be utilized to provide the necessary support and services. There is a large focus on testing instead of teaching and learning. I believe we need to get back to basics and focus on students, not test scores.

R. Whitney Davis

To start, by talking with teachers directly. I want to develop a strong understanding of the full range of challenges facing our teachers. With regards to their not feeling supported, that starts with cultural change at the top. I will instill an understanding throughout the school board and the parish that our teachers are the most important part of the organization. Providing them the tools, the training, and the full backing of the entire parish must be the primary goal of our school board.

Pamela Ferguson

I will talk to teachers directly. I will need to hear from them the problems and tasks assigned that may impede teaching children the important basics of learning. With solid information at hand, I can advocate for them confidently and assertively.

Roslyn Hanson

I have noticed a change in the overall culture in St. Tammany Parish Schools from my days as a teacher, , and supervisor. While some may be attributed to Covid, I believe it is largely due to our school system falling from the top to 18th. With this has been an aggressive push, from the top, to perform better. We have forgotten how important school culture and climate are to the success of our schools and system. When our teachers don't feel supported, that is a sign that we are not attending to school culture and climate. I would address this with the person most responsible for the success of our school district, the superintendent. Just as a principal sets the tone at the school; the superintendent sets the tone for the district. I understand that the superintendent is under tremendous pressure to improve our school system ranking. However, I strongly believe that it can best be done in a culture of collaboration, engaging our teachers in the process and working together toward a common goal. Perhaps if we work more with our teachers, they will know they are supported.

'Bo' Jakins

This is not a perception - schools are being asked to "include more" in the daily educational minutes every time you turn around (water safety and heart health in the last session). Teachers need to feel valued, safe and respected in the classroom. I will work to support programs and offerings that restore the joy of learning, get students excited about coming to school, and help teachers enjoy their student interactions. I will work with state legislators to inform them of the consequences of certain school related legislation that adds to teacher workloads.

- 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?

Kathleen Cannino

I am not an expert on safety and would have to research solutions as well as seek advice from experts. I believe addressing school overcrowding could be a possible solution to discontinuing the need for portable buildings as well as, ensuring future schools do not use portable buildings for classrooms. St. Tammany parish school board currently has \$87 million in ESSER funding according to the Louisiana Department of Education Federal Relief Dashboard. I believe the funding can be utilized to find a solution.

R. Whitney Davis

I acknowledge that there is a great deal of reasonable fear about school safety given the widely publicized school shootings over the past few years. Certainly some good steps have been taken over the past few years. Single point entry during the school day, ID checks for visitors, and our excellent School Resource Officers all help a great deal. I would be open to more changes that improve security as long as they are unobstructive to the learning process.

Pamela Ferguson

Currently district 2 has two capital projects in process. Covington High and Covington Elementary. These projects are done with money from a bond issue. I want all the schools to have a secure perimeter, locked doors and in the case of "open corridors", these will also have to be hardened. This type of project may be able to be in the yearly budget. As a commercial property manager, I have the experience to judiciously address the need with the board and superintendent.

Roslyn Hanson

The Comprehensive School Safety Initiative has sponsored research studies for the past twenty plus years identifying key steps to keeping our students safe. St. Tammany Parish Schools has implemented many of these such as perimeter fencing, single point entry, mental health providers and school resource officers. Key to the success of these steps is assuring that on-going school campus reviews are completed to ensure continuity and effectiveness. Also important is the training of school staff and students. The training should not only include the annual Lockdown Drill required by law, but also addressing a range of school safety topics such as identifying social media threats, bullying prevention, and developing a culture that stresses the importance of individuals coming forward with concerns. These actions take little funding but are critical to the safety of our students. Based on a CSSI, 93% of school shooters communicate their intents. Of those 75% go unreported. We should not underestimate the benefits of developing supportive school cultures.

'Bo' Jakins

School safety is not a singular problem. It touches all facets of the school system - students, teachers, support staff, administration, board members, law enforcement, city/parish government, first responders, etc. My goal is to ensure that ALL of these parties have ongoing, continuous discussion and review of school safety issues across the parish. I will look for funds from dollars already allocated but unspent as well as consider allocating funds from bond issues/renewals to help pay for any necessary solutions. Construction plans in the last two bond renewals have included school camera systems and student ID entry systems.