

School Board Voter Guide 2022

Disclaimer

This guide does not support or oppose any political candidate. It may be distributed and used *only* for educational purposes. It is not to be used to endorse any candidate.

The responses of the candidates are unedited and are exactly as they were submitted. A special thanks to each participant for their response.

Why are you running for School Board?

Darrin Gilley
(Incumbent)

I want to help the district provide a safe and welcoming environment for both students and teachers alike. Through this position, I want to advocate for my family and my community.

Marla Hart

Education is changing and the curriculum is influenced more by the government's agenda than what our children need to learn to thrive intellectually in society. Ensuring the integrity of what children are taught, how they are treated and what they are exposed to is important. I have an unbiased vote with the ability to understand the situation and the impact of the decision that is made. It is important that teachers that are invested in our children. Being able to provide the support, training, structure, and tools they need to do their job is imperative to their success in the classroom.

Sergio Mendez

No response

Ross Piaz

To contribute my unique talents while collaborating as a team with other board members and the Superintendent with the children being the ultimate focus.

Jeri Lynn White
(Incumbent)

I am running for reelection to the school board because I enjoy serving our community and our school by being a representative on the board.

What do you think is the most important responsibility of a School Board member?

<p><i>Darrin Gilley</i> <i>(Incumbent)</i></p>	<p>I feel that the most important responsibilities are to ask question, bring your own knowledge and experience to the table, and seek out knowledge to better serve in the role.</p>
<p><i>Marla Hart</i></p>	<p>Understanding the situation, the impact of the outcome and making an unbiased vote.</p>
<p><i>Sergio Mendez</i></p>	<p>No response</p>
<p><i>Ross Piaz</i></p>	<p>To communicate actions to the community also to work as a team and collaborate well with other members. Most importantly to focus and base decisions on what will be the best for the students, faculty and staff.</p>
<p><i>Jeri Lynn White</i> <i>(Incumbent)</i></p>	<p>As a School Board member my responsibilities are limited. These responsibilities include developing a budget, setting the tax rate according to the needs of the district and the laws of the state, and evaluating the Superintendent. Most importantly, I feel that I represent the community and serve as a liaison between the school district and the community. The board provides basic oversight for the running of the district. This does not mean that the board gets to vote on everything that is decided, but we are made aware of the process so that all parties are accountable.</p>

Are you aware of the State Mandated training each Board member is required to attend?

Yes/No

<i>Darrin Gilley</i> <i>(Incumbent)</i>	Yes
<i>Marla Hart</i>	Yes
<i>Sergio Mendez</i>	No response
<i>Ross Piaz</i>	Yes
<i>Jeri Lynn White</i> <i>(Incumbent)</i>	Yes

What qualifications and/or life experience do you have that would make you an effective School Board member?

<p><i>Darrin Gilley</i> <i>(Incumbent)</i></p>	<p>My parents are retired teachers. My brother and I went to college to become a band teacher and an ag teacher, respectively. My wife and my mother-in-law both work for Friona ISD. I have children on three of the four Friona ISD campuses. School has always been a central theme in my life. I think that provides me with a broad perspective of the uniqueness of how a school district can operate. Also, I now have four years of experience as a school board member. I am a very vocal member of the board. I am not afraid to challenge the status quo to do what I feel is best for our students.</p>
<p><i>Marla Hart</i></p>	<p>I am a parent to a child in Friona ISD, I am a business owner and member of our community that works closely with many families. My family has a long line of teachers and principals within it, so I understand the issues, politicisim, and roadblocks that teachers face. My degree and professional background has trained me to analyze, understand and look for a resolution. I intend to do this in every situation that I encounter as a member of the board.</p>
<p><i>Sergio Mendez</i></p>	<p>No response</p>
<p><i>Ross Piaz</i></p>	<p>I have a conviction that public education is important. I am also committed to community involvement. I have the ability to make good decisions that will play a vital roll in the lives of our students, faculty and staff.</p>
<p><i>Jeri Lynn White</i> <i>(Incumbent)</i></p>	<p>I believe I am uniquely qualified for several reasons. First, I am a certified teacher who has previously taught in the district. Also, I have two children who have graduated from Friona ISD as well as my son who is currently a sophomore at the high school. Third, I have served in a variety of ways throughout the community and the school, so I have leadership experience on different boards and in diverse organizations. Finally, I have learned a great deal about how our school district functions having served on the board for the last three years.</p>

What do you believe is the best fiscal strategy for a School Board to have?

<p><i>Darrin Gilley</i> <i>(Incumbent)</i></p>	<p>I feel like we should be cautious of spending and take a more conservative approach. We need to spend money on what impacts the most students.</p>
<p><i>Marla Hart</i></p>	<p>One that looks for equality in spending and that the areas that need the funding are held accountable to what is done with the appropriated finances. I believe it is important to find balance to meet what the school district needs, but also not burden the tax payers of our community.</p>
<p><i>Sergio Mendez</i></p>	<p>No response</p>
<p><i>Ross Piaz</i></p>	<p>Paying attention to the finances and how the budget is laid out and regularly monitor the financial health of the school district with the students being the focus and will will benefit them and the community.</p>
<p><i>Jeri Lynn White</i> <i>(Incumbent)</i></p>	<p>I believe being conservative with our finances is a good place to start. It important to use our money wisely, but we must plan by providing upkeep for our facilities and making improvements as necessary. We must set aside money for emergencies or unforeseen costs. Our district receives local, state, and federal funds. These funds have requirements attached to them. It is not uncommon for these requirements to change, and the school must adjust. How a school spends its money is also tied to state laws. All these issues must be taken into consideration when budgeting occurs.</p>

What programs would you like to see expanded (e.g. music, trade schools, sports, STEM, etc.)? Why?

Darrin Gilley
(Incumbent)

I think FISD does a great job making sure we offer our students a variety of programs. I'd like to see continued expansion in our CATE programs. These support the industry in and around Friona. I think that our students would benefit from expansion of STEM opportunities such as computer coding as a foreign language option. That could support students wanting to move into the competitive technology sector.

Marla Hart

Trade schools. These are skills that our children are going to walk away with after graduation and be able to utilize immediately. It helps them learn a skill, work with others, build a work ethic and advance both their knowledge and skills. The practical life skills and knowledge that our children need to develop can be gained through these programs.

Sergio Mendez

No response

Ross Piaz

I would like to see more focus on career oriented programs such as certified nursing assistant programs, emergency medical technician programs and maybe law enforcement programs. Also more technical programs such as industrial and agriculture.

Jeri Lynn White
(Incumbent)

One thing I love about Friona I.S.D. is the fact that we offer a variety of opportunities for our students, especially for a small school. I am particularly excited to see how our Ag program has grown over the last couple of years. I would like to see our Career and Technology Education programs increase. These programs train students for real world jobs and often provide certification before students leave high school. These programs give kids an extra boost as they head out into the real world whether they plan on going to college, trade school, or entering the workforce.

What subject(s) do you believe are the most critical to prioritize in education?

<p>Darrin Gilley <i>(Incumbent)</i></p>	<p>Reading, writing, and math are great building blocks for education. However, focusing singularly on a few subjects is a narrow-minded pursuit.</p>
<p>Marla Hart</p>	<p>Math, reading, writing and history.</p>
<p>Sergio Mendez</p>	<p>No response</p>
<p>Ross Piaz</p>	<p>Mathematics in which we use in our daily lives. It provides an effective way of building mental discipline and encourages logical reasoning and mental rigor.</p>
<p>Jeri Lynn White <i>(Incumbent)</i></p>	<p>I believe the most important components in education are our students and teachers. It doesn't matter what is being taught if the students don't feel safe and loved and the teachers don't feel appreciated. We must always ask ourselves what is best for our students and our staff, and what must be done to help them both be successful.</p>

What are your thoughts regarding CRT?

“Critical race theory (CRT), intellectual and social movement and loosely organized framework of legal analysis based on the premise that race is not a natural, biologically grounded feature of physically distinct subgroups of human beings but a socially constructed (culturally invented) category that is used to oppress and exploit people of color. Critical race theorists hold that racism is inherent in the law and legal institutions of the United States insofar as they function to create and maintain social, economic, and political inequalities between whites and nonwhites, especially African Americans.” Encyclopaedia Britannica (2021).

<p>Darrin Gilley (Incumbent)</p>	<p>It doesn't matter what I think about this topic. In order to continue to receive funding for our schools, I will vote to go along with whatever is required by the state legislature.</p>
<p>Marla Hart</p>	<p>I believe this is indoctrinating our children to focus more on race and inequality. It is teaching our children to look for inequalities, beyond even color. I would rather see the focus be about teaching our children to treat others with respect, to judge not the person, but their actions. We are all created by God as unique individuals, just the way He intended us to be. The color of our skin, our size, weight, and financial status should not be what one is judged by, but by their character.</p>
<p>Sergio Mendez</p>	<p>No response</p>
<p>Ross Piaz</p>	<p>Friona ISD is an institution with a large population of minorities and students of color. A comprehensive understanding of critical race theory is an integral part of education, especially for teachers. No one is suggesting that we need to teach elementary age students about race relations. However, educators need to be able to recognize microaggressions and racial biases in order to prevent that type of behavior in the classroom, which will in turn promote equity amongst all students. This is how we break generational inequality. Once students hit appropriate age milestones, curriculum can then be expanded to teach.</p>
<p>Jeri Lynn White (Incumbent)</p>	<p>I do not support the teaching of CRT. I believe it is the school’s main job as a public institution to teach children to read, to write, to do math, to think critically, and to be a good citizen. I believe we should teach all children to be kind to one another and to treat others the way you want to be treated. With these skills, all children will have the chance for a successful life.</p>

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2021, September 21). critical race theory. Encyclopaedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/critical-race-theory>

Do you see any areas of concern in public education as it relates to sex education and gender identity?

Darrin Gilley
(Incumbent)

I think Friona currently gives students the opportunity to find out who they are and what they want to be without the constraints of gender identity.

Marla Hart

Most definitely. We are pushing this upon our children and at an age that I consider inappropriate. Sex education is understandable, but at the appropriate age. Gender identity is not. Allowing a teacher that the parents don't know the moral, religious or ethical views to present and teach this to our kids is terrifying. This should be a separation from the school system. Parents should be the ones who talk to their children about gender, within their home with their own religious and moral views.

Sergio Mendez

No response

Ross Piaz

Sexual education needs to evolve into a more realistic approach. It should include more scientific education about our bodies and resources for sexual health. It should also teach gender how presentation may not match gender assigned at birth, and not every child is heterosexual. Freedom of expression is a must. Forcing a child to conform outer appearance based on their genitalia is the TRUE sexualization of child, not the teaching of all types of people. We as adults need to stop forcing gender roles where there should be none.

Jeri Lynn White
(Incumbent)

I really hope that Friona ISD will not get caught up in all the nonsense surrounding sex education and gender identity. That being said, I do believe there is a place and time in the school where basic sex education can be offered at an appropriate age level and with parental consent.

What are goals that you have for the Friona I.S.D.?

Darrin Gilley
(Incumbent)

My goal is to continue to provide the students and teachers with a safe environment to get the best education. Also, as the world faces a growing teacher shortage, it is my goal to help the district find innovative solutions to attract and retain quality teachers.

Marla Hart

For Friona ISD to offer the highest level of education to our children, to offer continuing education and development to the educators, to hold everyone accountable to the same standard and to provide a safe learning and working environment.

Sergio Mendez

No response

Ross Piaz

I want to see Friona ISD grow in a positive direction and build more programs for all of our students to become more engaged and have more parental involvement in the education and extracurricular activities throughout there children's school years.

Jeri Lynn White
(Incumbent)

Although I do have my own thoughts about the best way to keep Friona I.S.D. a successful school district, as a member of the board, I must be willing to work as a team with the other members. I believe we must cooperate for any goals to be met. I will support goals that will lead to continued success for Friona schools and that will allow for kids to learn and grow and where our teachers feel appreciated and are encouraged to learn and grow along with their students.

What else would you like voters to know?

Darrin Gilley
(Incumbent)

I have enjoyed using my voice to serve our community. I will continue working towards moving our district forward.

Marla Hart

I will be fair, unbiased and maintain my integrity as a board member. I will value the opinion of our children, parents, teachers and community.

Sergio Mendez

No response

Ross Piaz

No response

Jeri Lynn White
(Incumbent)

It has been a privilege to serve on the School Board the last three years. I would be honored to be reelected and continue to serve our community.

Will you commit to being at every Board meeting and making the meetings a priority in your schedule?

Yes/No

<i>Darrin Gilley</i> <i>(Incumbent)</i>	Yes
<i>Marla Hart</i>	Yes
<i>Sergio Mendez</i>	No response
<i>Ross Piaz</i>	Yes
<i>Jeri Lynn White</i> <i>(Incumbent)</i>	Yes