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## VOTERS GUIDE

**Nonpartisan**

MAY 7, 2022, LOCAL ELECTION

FRISCO ISD

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Early voting: April 25 – May 3

Election Day Polls: May 7 – 7 am to 7 pm

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### ABOUT THIS VOTERS GUIDE

This Voters Guide is published by the League of Women Voters of Collin County to help citizens prepare to cast an informed vote. The League of Women Voters encourages informed and active participation in government. The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate.

This guide is available online at [www.LWVCollin.org](http://www.LWVCollin.org), along with guides for other offices that include all or part of Collin County. Candidate responses for all races are also available at [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org), where you can enter an address and view a personalized ballot with races specific to that address.

Questionnaires were sent to all candidates for each office, whether or not the race is contested. Candidate replies were subject to a character limit and are printed without editing or verification. If a candidate did not respond by the deadline, "No response received" is printed. Candidates were asked to avoid references to their opponents. Photos are included for candidates who provided them.

This Voters Guide is organized by office sought, with candidates listed in alphabetical order.

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### Frisco ISD Board of Trustees

3-year term, elected district wide. Must be at least 18 years old, a United States citizen, a qualified voter, and a resident of the District. The Board of Trustees makes all final decisions regarding school district priorities, policies, personnel, textbooks, expenditures, and growth management. Trustees adopt a budget, levy taxes, and submit bond issues to finance construction projects.

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### Questions

**Motivation:** Why do you want to serve on the school board, and what qualities would you bring to this position?

**Controversy:** As a school board member, how would you address controversial topics like Covid protocols, diversity and inclusion, and library books?

**Employees:** What actions would you take to recruit and retain employees in all areas of school district jobs – teachers, administrators, counselors, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, etc.?

**Readiness:** What changes, if any, would you like to see in the district's curriculum or programs to prepare students for career and life?

**Planning:** What are the biggest challenges in planning for the district's future population, and how would you address them?

**Finance:** What concerns do you have about the district's finances, and how would you address them?

**Pandemic:** What, if anything, should the school board do to address pandemic learning loss?

**Other issues:** What other important issues are facing the school district, and how would you address them?

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**Angela Dunford**  
**Frisco ISD Trustee, Place 1**

**Education:** BS in Microbiology from Brigham Young University

**Experience:** 8 yrs on PTA (including 4 as a board officer), 4 yrs on district SHAC committee, 3 yrs on campus Whole Child Committees, 1yr on Campus

Improvement Team, 10 yrs in church's children's & teen ministries, plus 12 yrs experience in biotech lab research

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**Motivation:** Why? Honestly, it's really simple: I'm all about the kids. I'm passionate about creating a school environment where kids can thrive—not only academically, but also in terms of mental health, social development, preparation for adulthood, and overall happiness. One of the reasons I'll make a great trustee is that I'm a good listener. I promise to listen to those on the ground level who spend hours in person with these kids most days, and that's teachers and parents. I also have a proven track record as an advocate for students, and an ability to analyze the facts in an unbiased manner.

**Controversy:** It is the school board's responsibility to govern the district in a manner that is in alignment with the community's values. While the TEKS (the basic academic objectives for each grade) are set by the state and are nonnegotiable, the exact tools and assignments used by the district are often flexible. A parent's right to opt a child out of any specific assignment should always be honored. If a parent has a concern about the appropriateness of a book or any other learning material, their concern must always be listened to with consideration and respect, not dismissed.

**Employees:** Unfortunately, teachers continue to leave the pressures of the FISD work environment to find relief. While increasing pay is appreciated, it is not enough. Teachers need to feel truly supported. They should feel empowered and not micromanaged. All staff have the most energy and enthusiasm to give to students when they are happy and supported. I would love to see the district create a Teacher Advisory Committee to the superintendent, comprised only of teacher volunteers. We also need to cut back on any unnecessary documentation and student assessments that take away from actual teaching.

**Readiness:** FISD currently gives no final exams in high school, and allows unlimited retakes of any quiz or test (often all the way up to 100%), and no consequences for late work at most campuses. We've overcorrected in our attempts to focus on standards-based learning, and these current practices simply do not optimally prepare students for the realities of college or the workforce. Those things need to be adjusted so that students are motivated to work hard and show up prepared each day.

**Planning:** FISD continues to have huge year over year growth. Due to the community's desire to keep with a "small school" model, rezoning has to occur somewhat frequently, as new schools are built and over-packed existing schools are relieved. It's a very complex numbers game, but I would suggest two simple things we can do to minimize the negative impact on students and their families: Grant rezoning immunity to families that have already been rezoned twice, and send out a survey with the top 2 or 3 rezoning map options to affected households to proactively gather their input before making decisions.

**Finance:** We need to budget more funds to giving teachers year over year raises that are more in line with other professional industries, as well as appropriate funding to increase the pay for

subs, paraprofessionals, and bus drivers. But I believe we can do so without having to raise the current tax rate. This can be accomplished through more frugal spending in other areas, such as expensive online programs and Chromebook app subscriptions that don't provide enough irreplaceable added benefit to actual student learning.

**Pandemic:** The learning deficits we're seeing aren't going to be erased in one school year. One of the best things we can do for our students is just to calm down and be patient with the process, rather than contributing further to the stress of students and teachers. Numerous studies have shown that establishing a foundation of good mental health is critical to effective academic learning. We shouldn't just be trying to do more and do it faster--we should be looking at how balanced the school day is and whether our kids' natural needs for movement and social interaction have been adequately met.

**Other issues:** The use of digital learning platforms has really gone overboard in our district, and it needs to be reined in. Despite compelling evidence that overuse of screens negatively impacts children's eyesight, sleep cycles, absorption of new concepts, and social/emotional wellbeing, FISD continues to heavily push for more Chromebook use, especially for our middle and high school level kids, who spend 5-6+ hours a day staring at their school-issued Chromebook screen. FISD has to become more concerned with the wellbeing and learning of its students than with maintaining a modern tech-centric image.

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**Gopal Ponangi**  
**Frisco ISD Trustee, Place 1**

**Education:** Bachelors in Chemical Technology and Masters in Business Administration

**Experience:** Over 20 years experience in Program Management and Project Management in Retail, Banking, Telecom and Healthcare industries

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**Motivation:** I've been a FISD Board of Trustee for the past 3 years. Education is my passion. I have been living in the area for more than 18 years with my children in the District. Prior to becoming a Trustee, I was a member of FISD's Long Range Planning Committee, Bond Committee and was on the Advisory Board of Frisco Education Foundation. My non-profit has been providing scholarships to FISD Seniors for the last 5 years. I have great partnerships with the City Council and a few State Legislators. I would like my rich experience and passion to help serve our vibrant community of learners and educators

**Controversy:** In a diverse community there is every likelihood that certain issues come up. I would like to focus on what is good for the Students, Teachers and the community within the

purview of the law and policy. I will also seek advice from community members and leaders. During my role as a Trustee, I have met the community members to understand their concerns and have also stated the position of what the School District can do and cannot do within the limits of the law, state ruling and the policies

**Employees:** Teachers and Staff play a very important role in our School District. More than 80% of the budget is allocated towards payroll. During the Pandemic, few bonuses and stipends were also offered to Teachers and Staff. I would like to focus on: Balance of work for the Teachers and Staff while the district innovates and offers new programs to the students; Support the staff from counseling and mental health standpoint; and Reach out the Legislators (that I am connected with) to look at the possibility of a funding formula adjustment to address the current inflation.

**Readiness:** I am a strong believer that the students should have entrepreneurial skills along with Academics, Sports or Fine Arts. I will encourage programs that will help them embrace challenges, collaborate, communicate, problem resolution, innovate and contribute. This will help them to be Future Ready. I would like the District to consult with industry and workforce experts to evaluate the 13 career clusters available through our Career and Technical Education Center. I would like to strengthen the Mentorship program that will allow industry experts to help mentor our students

**Planning:** One of the challenges is to prepare programs and courses to match the needs of future workplace and industry needs. Partnerships with the industry and workplace experts have to be strengthened to address this. Another challenge is the constant growth of our School District. On an average 2000 students are being added every year. A history of strong academics and ever-expanding opportunities for students are driving the growth. We manage this with a keen eye on changing growth patterns making adjustments where needed to build new schools & reconfigure existing schools without reducing class size

**Finance:** Fiscal responsibility; ensuring prudent handling of district finances with no major increased impact to taxpayers is a very important aspect that I would like to focus on. Frisco ISD has experienced dynamic growth in new property values as a result of new commercial and housing developments throughout the City of Frisco and neighboring areas. Our Revenue 655k is better than our Expenditures: 651k Partnerships with Frisco City help our students to use world class facilities for our students like The Star, Toyota Stadium, Comerica Arena & PGA. I would like to focus on such partnerships as well

**Pandemic:** School District need to continue to assess the students and provide some lessons from the previous year in order to reduce the learning gap caused due to COVID-19. This needs to be monitored and continued to ensure that the students are well caught up. Proper use of Esser Funds to ensure programs like Ethos for Self Esteem and add Support specialists to help handle the mental health issues. I would like to look for opportunities within the community to see if any entities will be willing to share their resources to help our students

**Other issues:** I would like the district to further explore private industry to add appropriate programs and courses that ensure students are proficient in the future-ready skills of leadership, collaboration, communication and problem solving. I would like us to continue optimization of technology use to ensure students, teachers, and staff have access to the latest technologies. This enhances the experience for teachers and students and helps staff achieve directives more efficiently.



**Natalie Hebert**  
**Frisco ISD Trustee, Place 2**

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts, from Austin College, Masters of Education from UNT (will complete in June 2022)

**Experience:** Classroom Teacher, FISD Trustee

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**Motivation:** My number one reason for serving the Frisco ISD community is the same as it was three years ago; it is for the students. I have dedicated my entire adult life to my family and public education. I am a former Frisco ISD classroom teacher. I have drawn on my direct experiences in the classroom to share with other trustees when making decisions that impact our community. My sole focus is on the district as a teacher, a parent, and an advocate. I bring knowledge from my work in the classroom, the Frisco community, and my time in Austin, learning and advocating for our teachers and students.

**Controversy:** With Covid protocols, we did what we could to keep as many kids in school as possible while also following the law. We are an incredibly diverse community. We hired a DEI strategist. Like the laws, we do not pick and choose our students. We take them all, we teach all of them, and we are inclusive of them. We have a policy in place to ensure we provide age-appropriate books for our students regarding library books.

**Employees:** We have provided several monetary incentives to come to our district and stay in our district. But, unfortunately, money can only go so far and do so much. As we have grown and the political climate has shifted its focus to demonizing public education, staff has become incredibly exhausted. We need to set a goal to lighten the load for all people in our district. To recruit people to our district, I support opportunities to enhance teacher preparation programs and incentivize highly qualified students to enter the teaching profession.

**Readiness:** We have a 99.4% graduation rate. We have a large population of students in gifted and talented. I would like to see us enrich our Gifted and Talented program at the elementary and middle school levels. We also have beautiful programs to help ensure our special needs students are independent and ready for the workforce. I would like to see us expand on those opportunities, as well.

**Planning:** Growth. We continue to have a significant increase in students each year. In my three years on the board, we have welcomed 10,000 more students to our district. Our biggest challenge is getting schools built fast enough to keep up with our growth while making sure we do not overbuild and end up with empty classrooms in the future.

**Finance:** I don't have concerns. Below are FISD's Financial Sustainability Indicators:

Certificates/Ratings

GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting

ASBO Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting  
GFOA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting  
Moody's Ratings: Aa1 Underlying / Aaa Enhanced  
Standard & Poor's Ratings: AA+ Underlying / AAA Enhanced  
Transparency Star for Traditional Finances from the TX Comptroller  
Transparency Star for Debt from the TX Comptroller  
Transparency Star for Contracts & Procurement from the TX Comptroller

**Pandemic:** For learning loss in IEP entitled students: Additional compensatory services, including speech therapy, physical therapy, and academic and behavioral remediation. For learning loss in identified non-IEP entitled students: Free credit recovery and expanded summer programming that provides targeted intervention in math and reading.

**Other issues:** Partisan politics. Public education is under attack in an attempt to push to privatize education using public money. We address this by providing the facts. Our schools are not in decline; FISD continues to thrive.

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**Kelly Karthik**  
**Frisco ISD Trustee, Place 2**

**Education:** Parkland College, Criminal Justice Administration

**Experience:** IT Start-ups, Television and Marketing, University Research Institute, President and Chief People & Growth Officer

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**Motivation:** I want to help make sure that the communication between the board of trustees and the taxpayers of our community remains fluid. My diverse background brings many things to the table. Most importantly, my experience as a culture coach will help build a stronger bridge that opens up more dialogue between the board and the families of our community. By practicing active listening between our vital and informed citizens and the school board, together will achieve great things.

**Controversy:** The best way to address controversial topics is to gather reliable facts and engage in respectful listening with all of our teachers, parents, staff, students and administration while analyzing the data to make the best decision for everyone involved in the most fair, unbiased and nonpartisan way.

**Employees:** Benefits like retention bonuses, staggered financial aid assistance, extended bereavement days and continued adult education support would be a few very appealing ways to draw in the best of the best to FISD. Fully-funded smaller classrooms would also be



advantageous in keeping our teachers feeling more content and supported across the board. Additionally, teachers aids are something that could also be explored. Regular cost of living increases or yearly merit bonuses should also be considered.

**Readiness:** I would love to see the addition of 2 classes: Money management and technology in careers. Even the smartest kids can make a turn down the wrong road if they do not understand things like taxes, interest, banking, savings and accounting. In addition to teaching money management, we need a class that provides a more accurate account of the role that technology is playing in the career choices of today and tomorrow so our students can make better informed choices about their future career paths.

**Planning:** When schools experience overflow, I feel the best solution is to have temporary classrooms placed outside of the school vs. moving kids all around the district, disrupting relationships and causing hardships for the students and families. Additionally, future empty schools could serve the community in many different and creative ways that need to be examined more closely. The opportunities are endless if we prepare in advance for a situation that is surely to come our way. Let's talk about retirement centers, store-fronts, technology centers, office buildings, work-out facilities and more!

**Finance:** Frisco ISD's Current General Operating Budget is: \$651,299,710 with a current Revenue of \$655,072,200. Currently, the district spends \$8,586 per student. Our Combined Tax Rate is \$1.2672 (2021). Considering the above facts and the current infrastructure, I think FISD is in a good place. We have amazing schools, facilities, programs and future-planning initiatives. FISD has an exceptional handle on their capital expenses. As a community, we have been very fortunate to have some exceptional key people involved in planning that have kept their finger on the pulse of our booming city.

**Pandemic:** COVID caused many of our children to slip behind academically. Fortunately, federal funds have been received to assist our children in academic tutoring and mental health assistance. With a little time and effort, I am confident our children will be back to where they were very soon!

**Other issues:** The State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) Test is used to rate schools and districts in the state's accountability systems to help identify if a school is in need of a state intervention. To prepare students for STAAR testing requires a month of instruction and practice to prepare the students for this test. This test is not accurate or useful to our children. STAAR testing does not educate our children or prepare them for college. These test results can not be used for college entry or job placement. Students and teachers alike, find this test stressful and unhelpful.

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**Marvin B. Lowe**

**Frisco ISD Trustee, Place 2**

No response received

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**Stephanie Elad**  
**Frisco ISD Trustee, Place 3**  
No response received

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**Dustin Paschal**  
**Frisco ISD Trustee, Place 3**

**Education:** BBA - Human Resource Management, Baylor University; J.D., Baylor School of Law

**Experience:** FISD: Long-Range Planning Committee; District of Innovation Committee; Legal & Legislative Committee; FISD Independent Study &

Mentorship Mentor (too much more to include – please see my website).

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**Motivation:** I'm running to ensure that every FISD student has the same opportunity I had as a public education student. I don't come from a background of advanced education; my father is a retired firefighter who never attended college; my mother is a retired office administrator who graduated from junior college. Public education molded me, expanding my horizons. I firmly believe that my education at Garland ISD is what propelled me on the path of success to college, and ultimately to law school. Our schools need to be defended from politicians that want to weaken public education's noble impact.

**Controversy:** While certainly challenging, these topics are only controversial because they've been intentionally made so by anti-public-education instigators and the politicians who thrive on the votes of that base. The first step should be to prevent those who are not acting honestly and with integrity from paralyzing the entire ecosystem. Frisco ISD has done a great job of returning these "manufactured chaos" situations back to their correct place; I hope to help continue that effort when the next drama comes along, by staying focused on what truly matters: educating the 66,000 students in our district.

**Employees:** Something for which Frisco ISD should be recognized more often is how they go beyond the required minimums for staff. Current leadership works hard -- even more noticeably in the last 2 years — to protect and boost staff compensation, PTO and professional development, and in trying to provide support that will balance out unfunded mandates required by the state and federal government. I will continue this focus on creativity in utilizing resources to retain staff. We must also focus on development and training in the areas of workplace culture, work-life balance, and employee engagement.

**Readiness:** FISD does a great job at career-, college- and military-readiness now. Our CTE Center offers 30 programs of study and 28 professional certifications and will add over 40,000

sq. ft. soon thanks to voter-approved bond funding. Another program that boosts both college- and career-readiness is Independent Study & Mentorship which helps HS students experience careers (for which I'm proud to serve as a mentor). I do think there is opportunity for us to help students develop more financial literacy, and to get community and employer feedback on what programs are desirable to add at the CTE.

**Planning:** I believe Frisco ISD's biggest challenge in planning for our future population is managing the ever-changing facilities demands. We are 1 of only 3 districts in the entire state that grew our student headcount during Covid; not even a pandemic stops people from moving here for the high-quality school district and opportunities. In the next two years we are opening our 12th high school, plus an elementary, a 5th-6th grade campus, and a middle school. It is an ongoing challenge to anticipate, plan for, and fund this growth while using taxpayer dollars in a balanced way while not overbuilding.

**Finance:** Frisco ISD has worked hard to have one of the lowest tax rates across Collin & Denton Counties; the challenge will be to help taxpayers continue to realize the actual benefits here by ensuring that the effective rate stays as low as possible. We need to continue to partner with our state legislators on meaningful school finance reform; HB3 in 2019 was a good start but there is a lot more to do, and there were some expensive unfunded mandates passed in Austin in 2021. It's important that we continue to prioritize budget dollars toward classroom spending and aiding in teacher retention.

**Pandemic:** While other districts are reporting a broader gap in the area of academic learning loss due to Covid, it's still something that Frisco ISD has to address. This is particularly so in the areas of math and science, where education experts indicate the learning loss is more prevalent. The best way to remediate will be funding instructional support staff, while allowing our teachers the instructional time they need to help their students – which then calls upon FISD to help relieve staff of superfluous and burdensome tasks so they have the time and ability to focus on what they are trained for.

**Other issues:** While academic learning loss must be a focus, we also need to consider our students' mental health coming out of Covid, which has been called a national crisis by many experts. A host of issues arise from this, including detachment, depression, bullying, and more. If we want students to focus successfully on learning, we must address the relevant mental health concerns. It's important that we work with our legislators to ensure funding for mental health support staff across the district – but while we await that help from Austin, it's crucial we come up with creative solutions in the meantime.



**Timothy Soto**  
**Frisco ISD Trustee, Place 3**

**Education:** ORAL ROBERTS UNIVERSITY

**Experience:** 10+ YEARS OF SALES AND ACCOUNTING

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**Motivation:** To secure a strong education for our future leaders. Reasonableness and determination are qualities that help get things done. Dependability is very important because it leads to trust.

**Controversy:** Library books need to be screened for age appropriate content and categorized accordingly. Any viral outbreak needs to be addressed immediately to protect our children and collaboration with the parents is key to prepare for such threats to health and safety. Defining diversity and inclusion usually clears misunderstanding and misconceptions, and we can then touch on the related topics and address them with our parents together.

**Employees:** Job fairs, recruiting bonuses for employee referrals and yearly bonuses if those new referred hires stay for each year. Make the referral bonus a percentage of the new hire wages. Such a program will incentivize employees to promote retention. Provide a clear understandable position description, a career learning plan, and collaboration with local higher education institutes for reduced or waived tuition. Our students feed the local colleges and it is fitting that the colleges incentivize the district that prepares the students. Job swap programs with other districts for relocating employees.

**Readiness:** Every core subject should have an element of practical application. Too many times we hear students ask "why do i need to learn this?" From algebra to zoology, there is practical application and we need to close the gap between learning and applying. Connecting students to events, activities, businesses and organizations-students will not know what they want to be or do unless they know what's out there. Programs for cryptocurrency, pre-med, 3D-CAD engineering, drone piloting, gaming, biotech. Having police officers speak on safety. Personal financial planning. Self care and self sufficiency.

**Planning:** 2018 bond program for \$691 million is to carry 72,000 students until the end of 2025-26 school year which was 61% voter approved, a 16% decrease from the 2014 bond approval. As costs rise for the expanding district, voters are becoming not as interested in increasing their property taxes as much as before. Rezoning is always a moving target and balancing the flow of students through the schools is always challenging. Options to attend other locations help balance attendance. Provide policy exemption on in-class attendance for qualified students. Collaborate with city officials on expansion.

**Finance:** Two-thirds of property taxes go to the ISD, the rest goes to city/municipalities. 2018 bond called for replacing 2,400 security cameras and added 4K cameras in high-traffic locations for a cost of \$8.3 million. 4K resolution monitors are needed to see 4K cameras- is every monitor 4K ready? Because if not, then its funds wasted. Items like these are proposed in bonds that may be good ideas but the District might not be ready for such additions and upgrades. Renovations and indoor sports facilities are taking too much of our budget. Taxpayers don't want to pay for every school to have a dome.

**Pandemic:** The State Governor suspended required reports to the TEA because of the Pandemic so we cannot evaluate the current rating. Feedback forums and surveys are a great way to hear what our families are experiencing. This is the best starting point in addressing the learning loss. We need to know if our children are emotionally ready to press on and continue as we increase the learning requirements and standards.

**Other issues:** Transparency and feedback appear to be major issues with the district. Parents are not made aware enough of the options they have to be involved in their children's education which puts the stress on teachers who are looking for help. Public education is filled

with content provided by the lowest bidder which usually means the material is not rich in content. It might meet TEA standards but is well below the standards of the market these future leaders will compete in.

<p>You may bring this <i>Voters Guide</i> into the voting booth! In 1995, the Texas law prohibiting use of printed materials, such as this <i>Voters Guide</i>, in the polling place was ruled unconstitutional (<i>Texas Election Code, Section 61.011</i>)</p>
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**Your vote is your voice. Be heard.**