

2025 ISD Candidate Questionnaire

This questionnaire is for candidates running for ISD and school boards, please complete questionnaire below. Submit a completed electronic copy by Thursday, February 27, 2025, to be considered for endorsement in the 2025 Municipal Elections.

Ileana Garza-Rojas *

Prisma Garcia

Are you a current member of Stonewall Democrats of Dallas?

Yes

No

Do you intend to seek the Stonewall Democrats of Dallas endorsement for the 2025 Municipal Elections? *

Yes

No

General Information

1. Office/District Sought *

Dallas ISD District 4

5. Please list some of your qualifications and experiences pertinent to the office you are seeking:

My education has been a juxtaposition. I attended Spruce H.S. (District 4), which experienced a rebuilding phase soon after my graduation. I walked onto a top 20 university, and it changed the course of my family's life forever. That is the power of education!

I have been a tireless volunteer that has done everything from support students as a mentor to organize park clean-ups to engage our youth. Together with other community leaders, I co-founded Community Does It, the first mental health clinic in the area code 75217. To launch this organization, we raised nearly \$2M for capital and operations. Community Does It aims to provide mental health services to youth with direct referrals from the neighboring schools. Metrocare has since also opened a clinic in the area and we are working together to tackle some of the challenges the community faces in Southeast Dallas.

I have over 10 years of nonprofit experience. I worked at The Concilio, a nonprofit focused on education, health and wealth. I engaged parents and students in dual generation programs. I also worked at Social Venture Partners Dallas and made many philanthropic connections in the city. During my time at SVP, I also learned the power of collective impact projects and was a part of several large-scale projects through my position there.

Through my work at corporations like MoneyGram and Pizza Hut, I know the importance of preparing our students for the workplace. During my time at MoneyGram, I advocated for the creation of internships and hosted students at the office for shadowing days. Students that come from backgrounds like me have sometimes never been in an office and the experience opens their eyes to all the different careers that are possible. I also supported organizations through grants that focused on workforce, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy. In my job at Pizza Hut, I work with teachers and parents in the BOOK IT! literacy program across the country. Corporations need connection to the students as they are looking to fill the positions of tomorrow.

I have seen how other school systems work, such as charter schools or Catholic schools. Having this context might seem irrelevant but it provides me some idea for what else is out there for PK-12 students and the reasons why parents pick these schools.

I have spent countless hours seeking many certificates. I have also completed my coursework for a PhD in Sociology from Texas Woman's University. My qualifying paper focused on Sociology of Education and the concept of Borderlands (Gloria Anzaldua), i.e. barriers in mindset for first-generation students.

2. Please share any experience that illustrates your understanding of and interest in the needs of the LGBTQ+ community in your District/Role sought.

I consider myself a diversity, equity, and inclusion professional. I have spent countless hours working on inclusion programs in the corporate sector. It is important to have a student-first approach. I believe that students should be in a nurturing environment that ensures mental and physical safety. Our LGBTQ+ students deserve to have advocates in the local schools but also at every level of government. I have had many interactions with students that are discovering their identity and struggle with feeling safe in our schools. I will make sure we do not stop talking about these instances because we have to keep the conversation going to have change. Advocacy should be for all those in the LGBTQ+ community.

3. As an organization affiliated with the Texas Democratic Party, Stonewall Democrats of Dallas will only endorse candidates who affirm an affiliation with the platform and policies of the Texas Democratic Party. Do you make such an affirmation? What is your previous voting history?

I affirm that I am a democrat. I am the precinct chair in 1104. I am committed to the party and hope that we address injustice in our schools together.

4. If you earn the Stonewall Democrats of Dallas endorsement how would you showcase your endorsement ? Would you include the endorsement in your campaign media?

I would showcase it on social media and all places where endorsements are listed.

Questionnaire

5. Once you are elected, what are some of your plans specific to your office's responsibilities?

I will always focus on the success of all students. However, I know that not all students are the same. We have to disaggregate data and work to find the resources necessary for their needs. I will advocate for teachers because they are an important part of the success of our kids. I will also make sure to fight for public education as a whole.

6. What are some of the biggest concerns that LGBTQ+ families are expressing within the school district? What are your plans to address these concerns? *

Some families need more information and care. They do not always know how to best advocate for themselves or find resources. There should be more policies that aim to protect students, especially in this political climate. We have to be sure that we address harassment and discrimination. Bullying is a big factor in kids leaving our schools. If we want kids to stay in our district, we have to address the problems.

7. Suicide rates amongst LGBTQ students are very high. Please list a specific policy that you would suggest or support to address the mental health needs of LGBTQ+ students. *

Due to my involvement in mental health, I have been a firm advocate for services in our neighborhoods. I have been a part of conversations where it is too late and I will make sure we address the root cause of these situations. We must push anti-bullying and celebrate our differences. All students belong at DISD.

8. Would you commit to allowing teachers to display pride flags and support the employment of a diverse workforce within the district? *

Yes

No

Other:

9. What do you see the role of the ISD in regard to protecting LGBTQ+ students and faculty members? Please elaborate on a policy that you would suggest or support to assist the district in this role. *

I would propose a policy that encourages a safe and inclusive environment. We should protect all LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination. I would uphold privacy and legal protections. I believe that it is important to address issues per individual through resource navigation and trainings that prepare faculty and staff on how to be inclusive and eliminate bias. I am in favor of pronoun usage.

10. Briefly explain your view of Charter Schools and the state moving toward the passage of SB2. *

I believe that we have to compete with charters and take our kids back. I know that one of the reasons kids transfer is due to bullying that is why I am actively working in my community to address the issue.

Dallas ISD is facing challenges in funding. The basic allotment (\$6160) has not increased since 2019 and it has not even accounted for inflation. This school year, the board passed an unbalanced budget (\$187 Million shortfall) that takes funds out of the reserve to cover the deficit. This is not sustainable long-term because we will run out of money in the reserve (\$552 Million).

The Texas legislature is planning on passing voucher-like program through SB2, which would be the largest universal school choice program in the United States. This program would provide 100,000 students with a voucher for private school. This will encourage some students to leave public schools. There should be a focus on increasing the basic allotment and increasing teacher pay since 90% of state students attend public school. We need our public schools to be top performing so that parents continue to choose DISD. I do not support vouchers or education savings programs.

11. How do you plan to address anti LGBTQ+ initiatives proposed at the district level? Will you commit to working with elected officials across all levels of government to facilitate a coordinated response to these attacks? *

I am in touch with all my elected officials because I know the power of collaboration. We cannot do this work without one another in the fight. If there is a policy or plan that attacks LGBTQ+ people, we need to fight back! We need continuous advocacy for our most vulnerable groups.

12. What do you see as the role of the ISD in protecting transgender students? What is your opinion of how your ISD currently handles issues related to transgender students? Is there anything you would change on how your ISD handles trans issues.

An ISD should protect all their students. Not everyone will be experiencing the same issues but it is my opinion that LGBTQ+ students need advocates at all levels. I would make sure that DISD is monitoring and adjusting policies. It is also important to have transparency and communication with all constituents.

13. What is your opinion of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives? Do you think they provide value in today’s academic environment? *

I am an academic. I believe DEI creates an enriching environment where everyone can learn. Research shows that diverse teams get more accomplished. We have to fight bans on K-12 DEI. There is value in students seeing themselves represented in the teachers and staff at schools. It is important for an ISD that prides themselves on success for all to care for all differences and tackle challenges.

14. What are your thoughts on efforts to ban books in schools? Would you support efforts to pushback against book banning in schools?

I will pushback on book banning. I believe the academic space needs to be one open for all thoughts.

All Candidates

All candidates will need to answer the following questions.

15. Is there anything in your past or background that has not been covered by the previous questions that might – without careful explanation - cause our organization to reconsider or withdraw our endorsement of you? *

N/A

16. I'm seeking an endorsement from the Stonewall Democrats of Dallas for the 2025 Municipal election. (Please type name) *

Prisma Y. Garcia

This form was created inside of Stonewall Democrats of Dallas.

