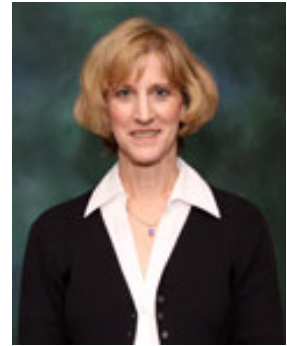


## A Letter from Keller ISD Board Trustee Melody Kohout

I grew up in a small Midwestern town of about 3000 people. We were just far enough from a big city to make it a treat to get to “go into town”. We didn’t have much in the way of local entertainment, so the community embraced the activities of the school. The town supported the Bulldogs come good season or bad, our plays and concerts were held for standing room only crowds, and the community cheered the students on when award time came. Needless to say, the election of our School Board Trustees was much akin to electing a new president in the eyes of our little town, it was serious business; citizens knew that if the school was successful, our community would be more attractive to people looking to move into the area and that was vital to their future security.



Sound familiar? Keller, the 7<sup>th</sup> Most Livable City in the United States, is not known for its great restaurants or shopping. It will never be a vacation destination. Keller is most recognized for acknowledging and embracing family and community. Residents, community and business leaders strive to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for people to live and raise a family here. This is where Keller ISD plays a central role by creating an educational system that is “Intentionally Exceptional”. Like our partners on the City Council, the Keller ISD Board of Trustees strives to bring the most highly qualified people to the best facilities possible in order to provide our community with an outstanding learning, working and living experience.

We are entering the time of year when we elect members to the Board of Trustees. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you the basics of our work as Trustees. I believe understanding the role of a School Board member is the key to electing the right person to serve in this important capacity. Having just finished my first year as a Trustee, here are some of the questions I have been asked, thinking through these questions helped me have a better understanding of what we do and don’t do.

*1. What exactly does the school board do?*

School Boards have a unique place in local government. Our first job is to be responsive to the community. Within our district, we perform judicial, legislative and executive functions. Judicial, by judging the best goals and objectives for the district and hearing Level 3 Grievances; legislative, by adopting district policies that help us attain the goals; and executive, by our oversight management of the superintendent in terms of attaining the goals and objectives.

*2. Why can’t you help me if I have a problem at my child’s school?*

Even though teachers and principals are employees of the district, as a Trustee we only have one employee that is hired by and reports directly to us, and that is our Superintendent. As Trustees, we have no authority to act, except when we are in a properly called meeting and act as the board as a whole (body corporate).

3. *We seem to be short on money all the time. Isn't there anything the School Board can do to fix that?*

Working within the capacity of our Trustee position, we can direct the Superintendent to identify and implement any and all financial efficiencies without compromising the quality of education we provide all students – in other words, continue to bring us the level of service we have always provided without spending any more and cut costs where you can. The state controls the amount of property taxes we retain and how much we send to them. Our hands are tied as far as fixing the school finance issues. The only measure the state offers School Boards is to call a Tax Ratification Election; we could then seek voter approval to increase the local property tax rate and generate more income for the school district.

4. *Why would someone want to serve on the School Board?*

Many Trustees have educational or vocational training that they bring as assets to the Board; others have interest in the community. School Board members must be willing to work within the constraints of their position (and there are many), be open and responsive to their community, but most importantly, they must always make their decisions based on what is in the best interest of our students. To be a part of securing a quality education for the next generation should be the main reason.

Election brings changes to the face of the board, but its heart should remain with the best interest of our students. You have an opportunity to cast your vote on May 8. I would encourage you to contact the candidates and ask them questions, and then make an informed choice at the polls. It is a privilege to be elected by you to serve you in this position. It is an honor to serve our children, a responsibility which a Trustee should never take lightly.

