



## **Association of Brownsville Educators**

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### **BISD Board Candidate Questionnaire**

1. Please provide a brief biographical information essay about yourself, your family, your educational background (including elementary, middle & high school), employment, organizations you belong to (professional, community, social), etc.

My name is Victor M. Caballero. My parents Benjamin and Maria Magdalena raised a family of 5 boys. They instilled in us the value of family time, responsibility, and strong work ethics. I am the oldest of 5 brothers and have always been a role model for them fostering a solid sibling bond. I have been married to Corina Caballero for forty-two years. She worked for Brownsville ISD for 36 years and is a retired educator. We have two children, Cristina and Victor Jr.

I am a product of the Brownsville ISD schools. I attended Cromack, Faulk and Porter High School. I worked for Brownsville ISD for thirty-seven years as a Teacher-aide, Teacher, Assistant Principal, and Principal. I also worked for Mathis ISD for three years as an Assistant Superintendent. My total work experience in the field of education was for forty years until my retirement three years ago.

I started my experience in education in the following campuses:

1981-1983- Castaneda Elementary-Teacher Aide  
1983-1988- Castaneda Elementary-Teacher  
1988-1990- Vermillion Elementary-Teacher  
1990-1991- Porter High School-Assistant Principal  
1991-1992- Garza Elementary-Assistant Principal  
1992-1998- Burns Elementary-Assistant Principal  
1998-2000- Resaca Elementary-Principal  
2000-2007- Perkins Middle School-Principal  
2007-2012- Garden Park Elementary-Principal  
2012-2015- Mathis ISD-Assistant Superintendent  
2015-2021- Garden Park Elementary-Principal  
2021-Present- Retirement

## 2. Why are you running for school board?

I am seeking the position of school board trustee to contribute and enhance our educational community. As a candidate, I can contribute my educational and business knowledge, and life experiences to the field of education. It also provides me with an opportunity to collaborate as a team with other board members and the superintendent of this district.

My ultimate focus will be the students of this district. Our students participate at the highest levels of state competitions in such areas as Academics, Athletics, Fine Arts, U.I.L. academic events, Chess, and Destination Imagination. I would ensure that all programs are fully funded by the school district's budget.

The staff must have a better working environment that ensures that teaching is taking place from bell to bell to make certain that students are progressing at the highest achievement levels. The budget must reflect that we are fully staffed to guarantee that we do not overwork our staff as we currently see. Today we do not provide enough assistance to our staff with how to prepare for their retirement planning at the district level. We must work together to ensure that the district employs a retirement specialist within the Employee Benefits

Department, so our staff manage their own retirement future. This has been absent from the district and is only available through a third party to provide financial assistance, which is not in the best interest of the employees.

To the taxpayers, I intend to safeguard that all funds are properly allocated and spent to promote a healthy school system for our community. All decisions with regards to money shall be public and not behind closed doors to ensure transparency as to how we as a board function. We must come together to collaborate with each other to achieve success.

In conclusion, our board should not have time limitations to discuss board agenda items and to have two minutes to rebuttal other points of view. This is not enough time to make decisions on multi-million-dollar contracts. Discussions of only 2 items on the agenda by each board member is not a manner in which to conduct and make business decisions for our district as every board member should have an opportunity to discuss all items on the agenda.

3. What do you see as the three biggest problems confronting the district? Prioritize and explain.
- a. Staff - Shortage of staff at different campuses.
  - b. Goals - No evidence of school board goals and no evidence of school board setting goals for our current Superintendent.
  - c. Budget - School closures were made, and budget cuts were enacted. The budgetary process showed staff positions closed, programs for students were not funded and vendors were not cut. This is a big problem for me as a candidate.
4. What are your goals for BISD?

As a reminder, a board member represents one vote. All school board members should represent the district's interest by becoming aware of laws and policies that are affecting our public education today. The board must collaborate with teachers, administrators, and community to establish goals for the district and our decisions should be based on these goals and objectives. This process ensures that we work together towards a common vision. Today, this is not happening as this process is not in place and has created many issues within our community. The school board is responsible to ensure that the Superintendent is hired to run the daily operations as that is their function. The school board is not responsible for this action, and they need to step aside. Meetings outside a board driven agenda are not in the board's role and are illegal. This is the reason that goals for a Superintendent are needed to hold him or her accountable. For this reason, a Superintendent should never be referred to as a team of eight as he is not an elected official.

The rationale should be, so he/she can perform at a higher level to work for students, staff and community in a more productive manner and not be involved in political issues. The school board should focus on ensuring that they build a relationship with all stakeholders, making sure that students learn what they need to learn to be productive citizens and that they build a link between the school and the community by reporting the progress of our district to the public.

5. One of the biggest issues confronting the district is the drop in student enrollment. What solutions do you have to help attract and retain students in BISD?

This question is something that I do not think is a board role. This is something that is more of an administrative team function. The administrative team should be developing committees at all levels and with the community to provide an assurance that all stakeholders provide input. This plan comes to the board as a presentation, so the board can make sure that the district maintains our students in the school district. This plan should include data that the different stakeholders provide to the committees and have people monitor its progress.

6. How do you plan to engage parents, students, and community members in the decision-making process, and what steps will you take to ensure transparency in school board decisions?

School board members can engage parents, students, and the community by:

- a. Holding public meetings such as workshops and input sessions where community members can share their opinions and feedback on proposed policies.
- b. Provide expanded volunteer opportunities to increase community engagement
- c. Getting information out to the community on a timely basis.

There should not be any behind closed door decisions with members of our board coming out with prepared statements before or after a closed meeting as to how they came to this decision. It gives the impression that the decision was made before the actual meeting took place. The only decisions that should be held behind closed door sessions are those involving negotiations with regards to real estate, personnel matters, and litigation issues.

7. How do you plan to address the issues and concerns with the leadership and membership of our employee union, Association of Brownsville Educators - AOB/E/TSTA/NEA?

A more effective manner to get teachers involved in the educational leadership of our school district is to have teachers learn where candidates stand on issues. That language should resonate on who they elect for their school boards. The most significant impact as a teacher leader is one who leads by working to secure the right candidates for your school board. They can do this through contacting their members of the organization, campaign for them, making phone calls, and promoting candidates through social media. In this manner, teacher organizations can start having more meaningful discussions with school board members who talk the same language as they do.

I will assure that the members of this organization and the leadership will always have an open line of communication with me. Today, I understand more than ever how the staff feels regarding all the challenges that exist. I stand with my ex-colleagues in your journey to teach all our students and make this profession the best. I also stand with those that strive to improve others and work diligently to make students' futures brighter.

8. Would you consider bringing back the annual step increase to the salary pay table, and if so how would you go about it to bring it back?

This step increase was deleted many years ago. Two years ago, it was being discussed to bring it back, but the majority on the board decided against it. I am in favor of this action for employees as inflation has been at 7.5 percent. We need to bring this back as our teachers are not staying in the profession for lack of pay, too much paperwork and not enough time teaching to the TEKS, we need a compensation program to ensure that the salaries in Brownsville ISD are once again the best in the Valley. We need to stop bleeding talented staff from the district depriving our students of a good education.

The item needs to be brought to the administrative team and placed as an agenda item for discussion during the budgetary process. We also need to be careful as we are operating in a deficit, and we must ensure that we coordinate our budgets accordingly. We cannot afford to provide pink slips or run our emergency fund below the required threshold. For this reason, more constraints are needed in how the budget is developed by the administration and approved with the guidance by the board.

More checks and balances will also need to be implemented to ensure that overspending and contracts are not inflated with certain vendors. Much work is needed in this area.

9. TIA has been an issue with many of our members. What are you going to do to ensure that teacher incentive allotment is implemented with fidelity and consistency across the district?

First, I have to say that this is an arena that I need more facts as to what teachers are experiencing. We need to engage the administrative personnel as to what procedures the district has chosen to use. A conversation needs to take place so we can address what are the concerns that the staff is experiencing. This is a conversation that impacts the administration and teachers as it relates to income compensation for all staff members. Based on the instruments being used to determine the ratings, it is crucial to know how teachers qualify for the TIA and if it is too subjective. I would like additional information and to engage different parties as to how this process is currently working. I strongly believe the administration and T.E.A. need more exploration.