

**Candidate Name:** Tracy Fisher

**Candidate Website:** <https://tracyfisher.org/>

**Tell us a little about yourself and why you've decided to run for a school board position:**

I have lived in Coppell ISD for more than 30 years and have dedicated the past 20 years to public education as a local, state, and national public education advocate. I spent my first term on the school board learning more deeply about Coppell ISD, and by my second term, I realized how dependent we are on our state and federal governments in the education of our children. That doesn't mean we can't impact those levels of government. It means we must. I'm running for my 4th term to solidify CISD's seat at the table in Austin and beyond. School Board governance is a marathon, not a sprint. We have onboarded six new school board members in five years. We have wonderful new trustees involved in our school district even before running for the school board. Informed and dedicated school board members are important to the children, parents, and educators of CISD. I am running to keep our schools great. Exceptional schools are my pledge to the CISD Community.

My husband, Andy, and I have two grown sons that attended kindergarten and graduated from high school in Coppell ISD, a wonderful daughter-in-law, and two young grandchildren beginning school in Coppell ISD. We are committed to this community and are here to stay.

**What unique qualities would you bring to the school board?**

Knowledge, wisdom, and the ability to connect the dots. 550+ hours of School Board governance training. I am a laser-focused advocate for students, educators, staff, taxpayers, and our exceptional Coppell Public School District. I have served as both President and Vice President on the CISD School Board. I am a state-certified Master School Board Trustee and the 2019 recipient of the Leadership Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) "Celebration of Leadership." I currently serve as one of four elected school board members across the state on the TASB Legislative Committee, representing Coppell ISD, Region 10, and 5.4 million school children across Texas. I am one of 30 Trustees from Texas selected to go to Washington D.C. for the National School Board Association's Advocacy Institute in 2018, 2020, and 2021.

**How have you been involved with Coppell ISD prior to running for school board?**

Prior to first serving on the Coppell ISD school board in 2012, I got very involved with Coppell ISD. I volunteered in and championed new programs for our children's education. Examples are that I served on every CISD Strategic Planning Committee since 2003, was on several District Bond and Facility Committees, regularly attended school board meetings since 2006, graduated from the Inaugural Class of iLead in 2011, founded the Coppell Gifted Association (CGA), and MOSAIC Local Summer Student Enrichment Camp, PTO Service (three campuses), Coppell Band Booster Board, International Baccalaureate (IB) CHS Parent Group, and Coppell Education Foundation, etc. Statewide, I was a board member for four years on the Texas Association of the Gifted and Talented (TAGT) Board, have served as chair of both the Membership and Parent Divisions of TAGT, and was named TAGT 2012 "Parent of the Gifted," receiving a lifetime membership. You can read more about my prior to the CISD and community involvement at TracyFisher.org.

## **What do you see as the biggest challenges for the district in the next five years?**

The three biggest challenges for Coppell ISD in the next five years are navigating state constraints, maintaining our visioning culture, and providing more local student choice.

**Navigating State Constraints** - The legislature passes laws that directly impact both funding and education policy that we have little control over without intentional advocacy. School board roles and responsibilities have evolved, and solid local advocacy efforts in Austin are vital to the statewide public education conversation. As one of four Texas school board members elected to the Legislative Committee for Texas Association of School Boards (TASB), I have firsthand knowledge and expertise in advocacy strategies and insight having served in this role for more than five years.

Unfortunately, all state laws are subject to unintended consequences. A relevant example is our current 2021-2022 budget. In August, the school board asked to begin the budget process six months earlier than typical because the impact of HB 3 was still unclear. HB 3 was the most comprehensive education funding bill passed since 1994. It reduced tax rates, Robin Hood - for a time, and gave teachers more pay. It also took away local control and the ability to see very far in the future. Some school districts were even forced to pass budgets without knowing their tax revenues. Starting in December, our board has had three budget meetings. We are making good progress by including board suggestions for areas to consider, including revenue strategies and cuts that don't reduce our kids' services. Budgeting is a long process, but I am confident, as always, that our staff and board working together will solve any funding gaps. We are also working this session to influence the 60-page "Clean-Up Bill" for HB 3 that will hopefully address special ed funding and other details that need to be ironed out for every district. Stay tuned.

**Culture of Visioning** - Our visioning culture has been strong for more than fifteen years. This culture came about through student, educator, parent, and community involvement in our strategic plan. We have seen CISD grow to be a professional educator destination. Our professional learning community is second to none. We have long lists of educators seeking to hone their teaching skills here and then stay. Our turnover in comparison to other districts is low. Our educators provide professional development at many education conferences throughout our state and beyond. Their techniques and lesson design are exceptional, always learning and improving. We are grounded in our core values of relationships, engagement, great teaching, and redefining success. We are rated an "A" district by our state, but that is not enough. CISD believes in a Community Based Accountability System (CBAS) to measure growth and identify opportunities for improvement. CBAS matters because it means our community, including our parents and guardians, students, staff, local businesses and organizations, and taxpayers without children, hold the district accountable. In support of CBAS, the district administers the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress Growth (MAP) assessments. It is imperative to know kids are growing. State standardized tests don't inform instruction or measure growth.

**Local Student Choice** - If we have learned nothing about traditional, classical education over the past 20 years, we have learned that it is not enough. What child or parent is satisfied with the old school, traditional education their grandparents had? We live in 2021, not 1960, and many charters and some private schools haven't realized that. Integrating technology must empower learning, not just replace pencils and paper. Our community expects "better basics." We want our kids to run into every school as fast as they run out. We must offer virtual and blended learning experiences and project-based learning choices like RJ Lee Elementary and New Tech @Coppell. We need to ensure we offer broad opportunities for deep, profound learning as provided by choices like the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, language acquisition through Dual Language Immersion (DLI), and expanding our Career and Technical Education offerings and our fine arts opportunities to include an orchestra program and an elementary fine arts magnet. Growing up, I was athletic, playing basketball and softball. Today's athletics are very competitive. I want to expand our student athletic opportunities in sports where there are fewer entry barriers like tennis, wrestling, ultimate frisbee, running, walking, and cricket. Students learn important skills like persistence, team building, and risk-taking by participating in athletics. All children need to be physically, mentally, and academically successful.

## **How important is serving the needs of gifted learners in Coppell ISD? Why?**

Serving the needs of gifted learners removes the educational ceiling for all students in Coppell ISD. Education strategies for gifted learners have been used for years at every level of student ability. I view GT education as research and development. Differentiation is a great example of an education strategy that benefits all. Every child should have at least a year's growth in their education every year, including gifted children. Some students don't need as much repetition in their learning journey as others. All deserve the right amount for them. Many of our academically gifted students have special processing challenges like dyslexia and ADHD, making them twice-exceptional and often undiagnosed. One of my own children masked his dyslexia until he was in the sixth grade. Dyslexia is a processing difference that should receive support services. Many of these children are also academically gifted and should be served in both areas. We have come a long way in Coppell ISD as research is highly-valued and followed in the services CISD offers.

## **How does Coppell ISD currently serve gifted learners and how does that compare to other districts?**

The CISD Mission focuses on deep, profound learning for every child. In 2012, CISD assessed its performance to the Texas State Plan for the Gifted with educators, experts, parents, and community members and found opportunities for improvement. Opportunities with cluster grouping, assessment, and services, etc. Our elementary tiered services model was born out of that work. The CISD GT tiered services model (not a program) is now an exemplar in the State. Our GT services, like other services in CISD, are value-driven and data-informed. We reach kids where they are and let them soar. Formative assessment and strategies are critical for each child. We don't let GT kids sit and wait for others in their learning journey. GT kids are more asynchronous in their development, so we also prioritize their social-emotional needs. In 2019, the Texas State Plan for the Gifted was updated by the Texas Education Commissioner's Advisory Council for Gifted and Talented (CAC). I have served on the CAC since late 2019. CISD has plans to assess our GT services again in 2021.