

## Carmel Clay School Board Candidate Questions

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<b>Name</b>	Eric Morris
<b>Address</b>	1075 Arlington Ct Indianapolis Indiana 46280 United States
<b>Educational Background</b>	<b>&lt;span class="ILfuVd"&gt;United States Army The Judge Advocate</b> Officer Basic Course,</span> Charlottesville, VA, graduated 2007 <b>United States Army Field Artillery Officer Basic Course</b> , Fort Sill, OK, graduated 2006 <b>&lt;span class="ILfuVd"&gt;&lt;/span&gt; University of Wyoming</b> , JD, May 2005 <b>&lt;span style="font-size:12pt;"&gt;University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill&lt;/span&gt;</b> , BA Geography, May 2000 <b>Mt. Pleasant High School</b> , Mt. Pleasant, NC, diploma June 1996
<b>Years as a Carmel Resident?</b>	I have been a resident of the City of Carmel since March 1, 2018, when Carmel completed its annexation of "Home Place". However, and most importantly and pertinent to this question, I have been a resident of the Carmel-Clay School District for six years, since June 2012.
<b>Community Involvement Activities (Volunteer)</b>	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, Parish Council Catechist (Sunday school teacher) for middle school, St. Elizabeth Seton Volunteer at the schools which my daughters attend, Highland Latin School and St. Elizabeth Seton preschool and Kindergarten
<b>Community Involvement Activities (Paid)</b>	None
<b>Leadership Experience</b>	I was an officer in the Wyoming Army National Guard, serving as a lieutenant and captain leading Soldiers both stateside in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Along with my wife, we lead our family of three young daughters.
<b>Professional Designations</b>	I have a law license with the State Bar of Montana. However, I have no intent of practicing law again so stopped paying dues several years ago, so my license is technically suspended for nonpayment of dues. I was a certified Judge Advocate (JAG) and Field Artillery Officer in the US Army through the Wyoming Army National Guard.
<b>1. What is your number one reason for wanting to serve on the school board?</b>	I believe the current board, including the incumbent in my district, Mike Kerschner, have exhibited several leadership failures over the past few years. Our community and school system are rightly rated excellent by both most people that live here (including myself) and outside organizations and publications, yet the current School Board has failed to reflect that excellence itself.

**2. What role does policy play/have in the function of the board?**

Pursuant to the powers granted by the Indiana legislature to school boards, especially Indiana Code section 20-26-5-4, policy is vital to ensuring the will of the community as expressed through the School Board is carried out at the teacher-student level. As an example of a recent and significant failure of the incumbent School Board regarding policy, the system did not have an effective non-fraternization policy. As an attorney, one of the first things I did in new jobs or with a new Army command was to review existing policies. The school system has relied on the advice of the same attorney for years, David Day. He either failed to perform this basic step, or the board failed to heed his advice. Either way exhibits a failure at the Board level, by maintaining ties with the same law firm for years and receiving ineffective counsel from them, or by disregarding effective and appropriate advice. The old saying "Personnel is policy" applies here; if I am elected, I will vote against retaining David Day as legal counsel and bid-out to other firms, or depending on cost and need, seek to hire in-house counsel.

**3. What legislative action at the state level would you support to improve education in our community.**

First, I am running for School Board and not against Jerry Torr for State House, and state senator John Ruckelshaus is not up for election. I believe too much emphasis by candidates for the School Board have been focused on "changing the state". If people want to change state policy, they should run for state legislature. With that caveat, obviously School Boards can help influence some change at the state level. In order of preference, here are my personal views: 1. Eliminate state involvement in local education. All funding for local schools should come from the districts themselves. For example, local control of the Teachers' Union seems to have benefited everyone. This would probably require an elimination of the property tax circuit breakers, but would result in a concomitant reduction in state income taxes. 2. Reduce state per pupil funding to the lower bound, where Carmel-Clay and Zionsville are, and equalize across all districts, but maintain the right to local referenda. 3. Increase per pupil state funding to the current highest bound for all districts across the state equally, but eliminate the opportunity for local operational referenda. Finally, I would urge the state legislature to end TIF, redevelopment commissions, and tax abatements. Numerous studies have shown that these are neither necessary for the stated goal (economic development that otherwise would not occur) nor helpful to the tax base of the school systems. <https://www.lincolinst.edu/news/lincoln-house-blog/why-tax-increment-financing-often-fails-how-communities-can-do-better> <https://projects.cberdata.org/reports/FiscalTIF-20160129.pdf> At the least, the School Board member should have a vote on the redevelopment commissions.

**4. What do you think is the biggest issue facing your district?**

Generally our system, especially at the teacher-student-parent level, which is the most important aspect, there are few major issues facing our system. However, the Board, and the highest levels of the central office, are not performing at those same high levels. We teach our students to think critically, but also be willing to make hard decisions. For instance, the supposed impetus for analyzing whether any elementary schools needed to be closed or shifted was overcapacity based on a demographic study. The hard decision would be to follow that logically to conclusion and reduce capacity to match needs. However, the Board made the easiest possible political decision, which is to diminish the views of the politically-weakest and least wealthy part of our district, Home Place/Orchard Park, and borrow more money to placate the politically-strong central core and the wealthy and growing west side. A hard but based-on-facts decision could have been to close one or two schools. An even better decision would have been to demand more facts, such as an additional demographic study alluded to by the one dissenting vote, Pamela Knowles, and delay the project and work with all the communities for a solution from the “bottom-up”, rather than “top-down”. My understanding is neither school is at risk of being less than ideal for learning in the near-term, so further analysis is often a better decision. Using the canard of “inflation” and increased costs is a scare-tactic used to justify immediate (over)spending of money, often on projects that are not fully vetted by stakeholders. Inflation occurs because of the Federal Reserve, but generally spreads fairly equally across the economy. Therefore, the real rather than non-inflation-adjusted cost of waiting would probably be fairly neutral for taxpayers and is not a solid justification on its own.

**5. If you were elected what one thing would you like to accomplish during your term?**

We should focus on issues raised by parents, students, and teachers. I get the sense no parents in Orchard Park or Carmel Elementary were suggesting that the schools needed to be replaced; I get the sense there was no push from the same to end the High Ability program. Were parents on the west side demanding a new school closer to them? These ideas were pushed by the central office. As was demonstrated by the lack of backfilling of the superintendent and HR director positions for several months, there is no demonstrated need for fully re-filling those roles. In fact, what has been suggested by the overstaffed central office may actually be detrimental to student performance. My goal would be to ensure the central office is not overstaffed and therefore unnecessarily meddlesome in classroom operations. Our goal should be to defer to parents and teachers, and not be overly reliant on “experts” (in quotes because I am not sure about some of the expertise at the central office) and consultants/advisors (including attorneys).

**6. Do you or have you had children in the Carmel Clay school system?**

NO

**Preferred Contact Information (How do you want voters to contact you?)**

Either ericsmorris@hotmail.com or 970-846-1474