

Austin Succeeds AISD School Board Candidate Questionnaire

Leadership & Governance

1. What perspectives or experiences do you bring to the school board and what is your broader vision for the district? Please cite both the challenges and opportunities for Austin ISD that you would like to address as a trustee.

My perspective and experiences are span many years. I attended Odom Elementary, Covington MS, and graduated from Bowie High School in Austin Texas. Now as a parent of a recent AISD graduate and two others in High School, I have the perspective of experience of K-12. I have experience in campus level volunteerism and district-wide committee work. Two specific challenges to address include educating our student during this Covid Crisis, in a meaningful way and addressing our academic achievement gaps. We have an incredible opportunity to leverage the community business relationships and institutions of Higher Education to ensure our students graduate college, career and life ready.

2. How long have you been in the Austin ISD community and what is your history in advocating for changes or improvements in the district? Include specific examples, like organizing groups for a specific purpose, advocating for a particular policy, lobbying for/against a particular change in state/district policy, etc.

I graduated from Bowie High School in 1992. When my son began kindergarten in 2007, I became active in our elementary school in the PTA and Campus Advisory Committee. I have served on AISD's FABPAC since 2015, a district wide committee charged with creating a 20 year Facility Master Plan. In 2017, FABPAC's work proposed and the \$1.1 Billion Bond that won voter approval by 72%. In that FABPAC work we met with many communities and neighborhoods all around the city to understand their needs and wants. The process was transparent, community led and informed and successful.

3. Describe how you see the current relationship between the board and these key stakeholders and how should it change, if at all:

a. Superintendent

The new superintendent has a fresh beginning with our current board. The board is allowing her administration to begin to lead our district and I look forward to learning more about her vision.

b. Teachers

I know of many board members who have great relationships with personal teachers and seek their input on matters involving the district. We currently have two teachers on the dais, Trustee Ashy and Trustee Teich. They both bring the teacher advocate voice to the discussion. I hear from other teachers that they don't feel "heard". This often occurs when communication is not timely or direct.

c. Families/community

The board serves the community. There can always be more community relationship building.

d. Other board members

A board functions best when there is respect among the group and a healthy discourse of ideas and opinions. At times, this board gets distracted on issues that is not advancing educational learning or opportunities for students in the district.

4. Define educational and racial equity. How will you use an equity lens in your policy decision-making? If you have a specific example of an equitable/inequitable policy directly related to Austin ISD, please include it here.

Educational equity is providing every student what they need to be successful. Data presented to the district should be disaggregated and it will tell a story of equity or inequity. The way the district allows discretionary suspensions and removal from class is not equitable. Students of color are disproportionately impacted by this policy.

5. One of the major responsibilities of being a Trustee involves approving the budget. What are your current thoughts on how the budget is allocated and how would you change it, if at all, to support the students who need resources the most? How would you determine the best way to allocate resources? Please be specific around where you think more resources are needed and where you would acquire more resources to support those students and communities that are underfunded and/or in higher need.

87 percent of the AISD budget is staffing. Budget allocations are decided based on the number of students. We could allocate based on the needs of kids. In our current system, defined by the state, our funding is determined by our enrollment. AISD has had declining enrollment since 2013, we must begin to reclaim students who have left the district.

6. What metrics should we be looking at to determine student and district success and to guide the policy decisions that the Austin ISD board makes?

Outcomes drive policy. We must disaggregate the data and address the disproportionality of outcomes.

Polymaking

7. What are your thoughts on Austin ISD's current pandemic plan regarding student learning and a potential return to in-person instruction? What, if any, changes need to be made to ensure that distance learning better meets the needs of all students and that students, teachers, and staff are safe when in-person instruction resumes?

The district is right to move forward with remote learning for the first 4 weeks of school. I appreciate that there is a plan for some in-person class after those four weeks. Students have experienced 7 months of isolation and no learning. During this remote learning time, we must ensure our students have the technology and access necessary. We need to have strong protocols in place when we return to in person instruction, and that includes PPE and infection control procedures.

8. School closures are a contentious issue. What does your decision-making process look like for making impactful decisions and how would you go about deciding on future school changes? Please also include specific thoughts around the 2019 School Changes Plan released by the District.

School closures are contentious and traumatic. My decision making will include listening to all impacted by these decisions and look at the root cause of why we are facing this issue. I will look for other solutions to closures. Some solutions include specialized programming at a specific campus, and actively recruiting students back to AISD. I did not support the School Changes document released by the district. It lacked transparency and community engagement.

9. Which policies do you support to improve diverse teacher recruitment, retention, and compensation in Austin ISD and how would you reward and retain teachers who demonstrate their proficiency in the classroom?

I support strengthening and investing in our Ready Set Teach programs in AISD. Our leading campuses in this area are Akins HS and Navarro HS. Both programs have many students of color who want to teach AISD. We should formalize this program and offer these AISD students their first teaching job. To reward teachers we should support their work, encourage them and continue to fund innovation and creative teaching.

10. What is your background and knowledge of the complexities of special populations of students in Austin ISD and what programs/policies do you support to serve these students? Please address specific special populations of students, including special education students, bilingual/ELL students, low-income students, and Black, Indigenous, and students of color.

Populations described above benefit from specialized student-centered learning. Our work on the FABPAC incorporated new bond projects that met the needs of our students today. This includes small group learning, and one on one interventions.

11. From a policy perspective, how would you leverage SB1882 and HB3 to benefit Austin ISD? Please be specific around your thoughts on both pieces of legislation and your policy plans you would champion as a Trustee.

SB 1882 partnerships may benefit the district in certain limited circumstances with a not for profit. For example, AISD partnered with United Way for early childcare services on one of our campuses. Those students could then enroll in our school when they reached 5 years of age. This is an example where AISD will benefit with increased enrollment.