

Questions for School Board Candidates

1) What population do you see as being most underserved in AISD at present? What do you intend to do about it?

The most underserved populations at present are Black students and students that received special education (SPED) services. Black students receive disproportionate disciplinary actions in both frequency and duration of punishment. There are also vast differentials in the reading levels of elementary age Black students compared to their white peers. I will address this by focusing on research-based early literacy instruction that is not “teaching to the test”, implementing cultural proficiency training for all teachers, recruiting and retaining more teachers of color, and transitioning funds to mental health services within schools. To address the deficiencies in AISD’s SPED services, I will advocate for a districtwide Inclusion Plan and for structural administrative changes that ensure SPED is integrated into each component of the district’s planning.

2) A month after the school year has started, we’ve had an opportunity to see how our reopening strategy has worked here, and across the nation. Based on this information, what, if anything, do you think we need to do differently in January?

We need drastically better communication with principals, teachers, and parents. We need to follow public health guidance and advocate for local control of reopening plans. Teachers are doing a phenomenal job providing remote learning content and making the best of the situation. We must support teachers by ensuring they have the time and resources to adopt best practices of peers as they are developed in real time. We must also develop a plan for safe and meaningful in person instruction for students who need it most. Our youngest learners, SPED students, and students who do not have access to a safe and secure home are in particular need of in person instruction.

3) As you all know, the decision of the board to move forward with the school closures, principally in East Austin, has caused considerable controversy. If elected, how will you work to ensure the affected students have their social, emotional, and educational needs met?

AISD has an obligation to meet the educational, social, and emotional needs of every student. The school consolidations in 2019 impacted approximately 600 students. AISD now has 78,000 students that are experiencing some level of grief and trauma due to the impacts of COVID and the loss of in-person school. I will advocate for continued partnerships with community partners like providers like Vida, United Way, the YMCA, Communities In Schools, and Austin Voices to provide whole-child services to students. Parents choose AISD schools for academics and community. These invaluable organizations help us build community and support families. I will

also hold the superintendent accountable for delivering on the commitments made to students affected by school consolidations.

4) Everyone swears their oath before the school board intending to take action on a whole host of great things, but often new members are confronted with the perennially precarious position of the district's finances. What will you do to ensure our finances do not hinder our goals, but work in service of them?

I will work to "grow the pie" and expand the district's finances through continued advocacy for future bond investments, strong legislative advocacy, and continued community partnerships. I will focus on strategic investments in programming that attracts families to AISD, such as dual language, fine arts, and athletics. Further, continued bond investments allow the district to reduce maintenance costs that are paid for with dollars subject to recapture. AISD processes around 80,000 work orders each year to repair our aging campuses. Bond dollars are not subject to recapture and are therefore a much more fiscally responsible and efficient use of taxpayer funds. The district currently has about \$3 billion in facility needs. Building community support for future bonds is a critical component of ensuring that AISD is able to compete with charters, private schools, and nearby districts.