

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

Special education students and low-income, emerging bilingual students.

What do you intend to do about it?

For our special education students, the board must establish clearer guidance to the district and re-assess existing policy to ensure that our Special Education department has the leadership and resources available to serve our SpEd students and families. Right now the SpEd department is suffering from low morale and is overworked (unreasonable caseload ratios), and this problem has been happening for years and has gotten worse over the last few years. We must invest in training our general education teachers about SpEd and commit to more inclusive instructional design. These investments will be a win for general education and SpEd students as well as our educators and campus staff.

In terms of our low-income, emerging bilingual students, we must ensure that dual language program fidelity is followed at all campuses. Campus leaders often feel pressured to exit "ELL" students early in order to push hard on standardized testing. We have DL advocates who have been telling the district what is needed, and there has been slow movement on the district's part to truly commit to 50-50 DL instruction. I look forward to working with the board, district and DL advocates to ensure we are more faithfully adhering to effective program models.

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?

AISD has only been open for 9 days of virtual learning. Our new superintendent plans on phasing students back in early October. I am concerned that the plans for in-person instruction still do not appear to demonstrate a strategy that will be safe and educationally engaging for students. I think face-to-face instruction will look more like virtual learning in a classroom setting. I would like to see the district continue to collaborate with child care providers and community organizations to give parents/caregivers real options for daytime child care and in-person (small group) virtual learning assistance. Until a vaccine for COVID-19 is widely accessible and accessed, I am concerned that we will set ourselves up for unintended consequences --negative impacts on public health and no net positive on instructional gains.

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?

I co-founded Save Austin Schools in response to the school closure plan that was recognized as 21st century systemic racism by the district's own Chief Equity Officer. I have been active on countless public education advocacy groups pushing for safe and innovative school re-opening plans, proactive communication with the community, increased transparency and improving board priorities as we all move through the changing landscape that's become more complicated by a global pandemic. I will continue to advocate for communities that have been historically marginalized. In terms of the students directly impacted by school closures, Sims, Metz and half of Brooke students will be zoned for or attending a modernized campus. We cannot equate a modern building with a modern education. As trustee, I will work with my colleagues to ensure that we recruit and retain Black and Hispanic teachers, that we continue to enhance and grow our "Ready, Set, Teach" program and that we collaborate with other organizations to provide mental health resources to teachers, students and families. I will work with my board colleagues to push for enriching academic offerings rather than narrow, test-based instructional exercises. I will also encourage that our district work very closely with the impacted-communities to determine what will be done with the land upon which the closed campuses sit. We need to make good on the promise that school closures will yield positive results. Thus far, we have not seen that occur.

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?

A) I will encourage our board to be more actively involved in legislative advocacy and education of legislative staff, and building stronger alliances with other districts. Overhauling the school finance system is a bipartisan issue, but it is complicated and we need to be steadfast in our push for change. This is most especially important as we head into a legislative cycle that will undoubtedly be heavily focused on lean budgets (budget cuts).

B) The board must establish a strategic plan for bringing students back to AISD (funded per student) and we need to do this ASAP.

C) We must evaluate and eliminate redundancies that cost our district unnecessarily, and we need to retool our contracting practices to ensure that we are using gold standard procurement processes. We can have a leaner budget if we are committed to cutting bloated budgetary expenditures. So much money was wasted on upcharges

and delays to the AISD HQ building. That occurred at the same time as we closed schools serving Black and Hispanic children. This is unacceptable.