

Austin ISD School Board Trustee Candidate Written Response Questions

Please write your response to each question below and submit by
Wednesday September 30, 2020

Written Response Questions

1. What is one specific thing you would like to do differently to improve, create, build and maintain community trust and partnership with diverse families whose children receive special education services? **Improve the availability of the resources provided to the students and Parents so that there is less downtime.**
2. What is your definition of meaningful inclusion of children of all abilities including those with intellectual disabilities and those working on prerequisite skills and what are the benefits of including those students? **Meaningful inclusion of children is to include all children in interactive sessions and activities that provide meaningful learning for all.**
3. Do you believe children working on prerequisite skills and those multiple grade levels behind their peers can be included and educated in the general education classroom? **Yes they can if given the opportunity to do so. Normalcy is important to children with special needs and not treating them any differently can provide a great benefit.** How could this be accomplished?
4. Why should the district properly fund an inclusion model to include co-teaching and providing resources to properly modify, adapt, and accommodate all learners including those working on prerequisite skills and multiple grade levels behind their peers? **There is no reason why the District should not be properly funding an inclusion model because if All means All, and our goal as a District is to ensure all children have the resources available to be successful, then this is a must.** How can this funding be justified and accomplished? **It is justified because it's a child that we are educating**
5. What are your views on segregated placements like Life Skills, Social Behavioral Skills (SBS), Social Communication Resources and Services (SCORES), and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and the need to potentially, remove a child from the general education setting and/or their home school and community to be placed in these units? **I prefer that they weren't removed because a child having a sense of normalcy is important to their learning. So I would expect meetings with all stakeholders to ensure what may work best for the child in their learning.**
6. How do segregated placements affect the ability of students to benefit from SEL and other programs with their peers? **It can give the child a sense of displacement that they are not like the other children who are in the same school and getting the same level of learning.**
7. AISD has long given tremendous amounts of discretion to principals with vastly different levels of knowledge about disabilities, or none, to make decisions about the education and inclusion of students at their campuses. This has resulted in vast differences in the treatment of students with disabilities across AISD. This "local control" has forced parents to wage individual battles for services and inclusion on a campus by campus

and one student at a time basis. How will you address the fact that local control hinders students with disabilities and leads to inequities across the district? **Take a closer look at what is being provided from Central Office to the Campuses in regards to that which can include training**

8. There is overrepresentation in disciplinary removals of students with disabilities and a great deal of intersection between disability and ethnicity, with Latino and black boys being vastly overrepresented in disciplinary removals. How will you ensure that policies are in place and monitored across the district to ensure equity and reduce the numbers of disciplinary removals for students with disabilities and students of color? **By ensuring the identification of those students is more accurately documented and not simply a disciplinary issue by ensuring the policies that are in place allow for more clarity in those areas**

9. What do you see as the role of the district's Equity Office and its evolving Equity Plan and Special Education? **That the Equity Office is for ALL Students and that they are working with SPED to ensure they are part of the process in providing support to not only the children but to the Administration as well.**

Commitment Questions, if no, please explain

1. Will you commit to making special education students everyone's responsibility to educate, including general education teachers, administrators, and central leadership and not just special education staff? Will you commit to providing meaningful education on inclusion for special education students and on disabilities and behavioral support training to all AISD staff? **Yes**

2. Are you committed to funding training in best practices for students with disabilities and not training primarily focused on the district's compliance? **Yes**

3. Will you commit to ensure that the district studies whether access to segregated units leads to better outcomes for students? **Yes**

4. Are you committed to supporting legislative action to reform and increase special education funding in Texas? **Yes**

5. How do you commit to educating yourself about our disability community and how will you advocate to combat ableism in AISD? **Attending more meetings and getting more information through AISD and other outside organizations**

6. Are you committed to including in the Superintendent Scorecard metrics around disability to include literacy level, outcomes such as post-secondary program participation, meaningful employment, and independence, amount of legal expenditures, family satisfaction, inclusion time by PIEMS code, and disciplinary measures for students receiving special education? **Yes if the language is structured properly to obtain measurable data.**

7. Will you commit to a third-party audit of special education in AISD? **Yes**

8. Will you commit to a third-party survey to include teachers/staff and also families of children receiving special education? **Yes**

9. As you committed to increasing transparency with respect to special education expenditures (publicly sharing information on the budget with respect to special education income and expenditures, including how much is spent on attorney's fees, mediation, due process, litigation, how much is recovered from software that bills Medicaid)? **Yes**

10. Will you commit to pushing for the improvement of the working environment for special education educators to include increasing pay for Teaching Assistants, providing teachers with dedicated case management time and manageable caseloads, and improving communications between the special education administration and special education staff? **Yes**

11. Will you commit to improving communications with and support of families of students receiving special education by working on reinstating the Special Education Parent Support Specialist and related programs, strengthening the SEAC and ensuring that it has a role in providing guidance to the Superintendent and board, and pushing for honest/open/transparent communications from the district? **Yes**