Meet the Candidates - District 1

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Why are you running for the Austin ISD board of trustees, and what are your qualifications?	
I feel that students are no longer the primary focus of AISD. The focus on students' needs to be front and center. I served from 2002 - 2014 on AISD school board, three terms.	I am running for reelection because the work is not finished. I want every student, regardless of race, income, disability, language, or ZIP code, to receive an excellent education. I am running for reelection because the work is not finished. District 1 is home. I am doing what I've always done, which is trying to be a voice for people who may not have the voice or social capital to be heard. I have more than 25 years of experience as an educator, advocate, AISD parent, and community member. I have served as a teacher, instructional coach, administrative intern, teacher educator, and trustee. I understand AISD from the classroom to the boardroom. I have the experience to ask difficult questions, hold district leadership accountable, and govern during one of the district's most crisis-ridden periods since desegregation.

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What is the biggest challenge facing the district, and how would you address it?	
The biggest challenge is the looming TEA takeover and the budget. The budget needs to be addressed in a way that is best for students. As far as the takeover, I would not sacrifice students to thwart a takeover. This district has done this with each and every consolidation and it can be detrimental to families and communities.	Priority 1A is preventing or mitigating state intervention and preserving local control of Austin's public schools. We must act urgently at campuses facing state accountability consequences, closely monitor student progress, provide strong teachers and leadership, and demand clear intervention plans with measurable results. Priority 1B is still improving academic outcomes while rebuilding trust and maintaining financial stability. These issues are connected. Families must believe their children will receive strong instruction, effective leadership, and the support they need at every school. We must set clear goals, track progress, invest in what works, and be honest when we fall short. We also need to involve families before decisions are made. We cannot continue to surprise communities with decisions that directly affect their children.
What are the top priorities that AISD needs to focus on for the future?	
Does the district have the right leadership to move it forward. Academics and student outcomes. Ensuring students move to each grade on or above grade level.	AISD's top priority must be improving outcomes for all students. Every student should have access to strong instruction, effective teachers, appropriate support, and meaningful opportunities, regardless of their campus, background, or ZIP code. We must also rebuild trust with our community and staff. That requires honest communication, greater transparency, consistent leadership, and meaningful involvement before decisions are made. Families and employees should know that their experience, expertise, and concerns are valued.
AISD, like many districts, is dealing with a budget deficit and has had to make many cuts in an effort to balance the budget. What is your philosophy on how to balance the budget in AISD?	
Examine the district for inefficiencies beginning at the administrative level. The board can ask for each department's role to be defined.	We must focus on the basics. First, we have to fund what is legally required and ensure students can read, write, do math, and receive the special education and other services they are entitled to. We should not keep adding programs while failing to deliver our core responsibilities. What good is underwater basket weaving if children cannot read? Enrichment and innovation matter, but they must be built on a strong academic foundation. Every program and expense should be evaluated based on whether it is required, whether it supports student outcomes, and whether it is producing results. We must protect classrooms while closely reviewing

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	central-office spending, contracts, administrative structures, facilities, and programs that are not meeting those standards.
To what do you attribute the decline in enrollment in AISD? What ideas do you have for increasing enrollment?	
Affordability is one and that is a City of Austin issue. We need to look at reforms and fix what the team of 10 has broken.	Enrollment decline has several causes. Austin has become less affordable, and gentrification has displaced many longtime families. In some neighborhoods, families with children have been replaced by households without school-age children. The region's declining birth rate also means fewer students are entering our schools. Families have more educational choices, and AISD has lost the trust of some parents. Immigration-related fear and uncertainty have affected enrollment and attendance in some communities. Not every family feels welcomed, represented, or connected to their school.
How will you address the needs of all students while still delivering a consistent academic framework at all schools?	
Let's be realistic, we need to address the equity issue in the district. This has been an issue for years. A score card that holds the superintendent accountable for the academic framework.	We need to continue to use a unified, high-quality curriculum across AISD, supported by strong Tier 1 instruction. The first teach must be solid. Students should not have to wait for intervention or tutoring because they did not receive effective instruction the first time. Consistency means every student is taught the same essential standards and has access to quality instructional materials, regardless of campus or ZIP code. Teachers must also have training, planning time, and support to deliver that curriculum well. Once that foundation is in place, campuses can provide targeted intervention, special education services, language support, acceleration, and enrichment based on individual student needs.
How has history shaped the public education landscape for communities of color here in Austin, and how can AISD better support those communities today?	
The schools the district has closed have been predominantly black and brown student body. Closing schools is not the answer. Brick and mortar do not teach. We have to ensure that we are putting highly qualified certified teachers in those classrooms. The resources and supports need to be in place before the students enter the classroom. Title 1 and 3 funds should be allocated equitably. Principals and classroom teachers should be consulted on the needs of the campus instead of told what their needs are. The district needs to understand black and brown children matter.	Austin's schools have been shaped by segregation, discriminatory housing policies, displacement, unequal investment, and school closures. AISD remains a tale of two districts: one with well-resourced schools and another with under-resourced schools. For too long, many people in well-resourced communities did not engage with the challenges facing under-resourced schools. There were important exceptions, including individual advocates and parent groups, but the district as a whole did not build enough shared responsibility across communities. Now the consequences affect everyone

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	through declining enrollment, budget cuts, school closures, and the threat of state intervention.
What is your view on social studies instruction in AISD?	
It should teach the history of our country, the good and the bad. It happened.	Teach it all! The good, the bad, AND the ugly.
What can AISD do to retain high-qualified teachers?	
Pay equity and classroom support. Being treated as professionals with dignity and respect.	Teachers need more than a welcome session and a binder. Too often, new teachers experience what I have called baptism by fire. They are given a classroom without enough practical preparation or ongoing support. Competitive pay matters, but so do working conditions. Teachers need strong leadership, manageable workloads, planning time, mentoring, behavior support, and help meeting special education needs. Professional development should address what teachers actually face in their classrooms. Teachers stay when they feel respected, supported, and able to focus on teaching.
What role should the community play in supporting the education of children?	
I think we need to understand that all communities are not the same. Some communities have resources where they can help support schools in ways that other cannot whether it's monetary or the volunteering of time. We need to be mindful of that.	The community should serve as both a critical friend and an ambassador for AISD. Community members must hold the district and Board accountable, ask difficult questions, and speak up when students are not receiving what they need. They must also help tell the story of the entire district, not just one campus or one part of Austin. That means celebrating what AISD does well, being honest about where improvement is needed, and understanding that the success of every school affects the future of the whole district. Strong public schools require a community that stays informed, remains engaged, and accepts shared responsibility for all children.