Meet the Candidates - District 4

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Note: Edward M. Bradfield did not respond to ACPTA's requests.

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Why are you running for the Austin ISD board of trustees, and what are your qualifications?	
My 50 year history in D4 gives me a deep investment in how well AISD and Texas public education navigate their current crises. I attended four of the twelve D4 schools, and my two grown "kids" are L C Anderson High School graduates. As an empty nester, I have the bandwidth and a level of objectivity to consider a broad range of stakeholder interests. I have the strongest finance and operations experience of the D4 candidates. I have an MBA from Rice University; 20+ years' experience running an outpatient mental health care clinic; training in public policy dispute resolution and large group decision making processes; work experience in measurement, evaluation and quality improvement; and decades of community service work. My unique and multi-disciplinary background gives me confidence to analyze and solve problems.	I'm running because: 1) I believe in public education as a public good guaranteed to every Texan under our state constitution and want to fight for the public schools our kids need and deserve. 2) I have unique skills and experience that will be valuable for the board, and strong relationships throughout the district that will help me lead in this challenging moment for AISD. As a practicing attorney I bring almost 10 years of construction and real estate law experience, which means I understand construction projects and their related risks as well as the process for buying and selling real estate. Both of these skill sets will be valuable with respect to overseeing bond implementation and the repurposing of the many recently closed schools due

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What may not show up on my resume are my personal and interpersonal capacities to hold space for complexity, uncertainty and grief. I want to represent all voters, not just school families, and improve parent and community engagement, communication and transparency.	to consolidation. I currently have my own data privacy law practice where I help businesses navigate complex regulations and build responsible governance frameworks for emerging technologies, a critical skill set as the district faces decisions around AI in the classroom and protecting student data. More generally, as a lawyer I've honed the ability to sift through large amounts of information to find what's important and explain complicated systems to people in a clear and direct way. As someone with both litigation and transactional experience, I know how to advocate to win and how to negotiate collaboratively to get the deal done. Perhaps most importantly, I know which mode a particular moment calls for. I have over a decade of cumulative experience on various school councils (ex. Campus Advisory Council, Library Advisory Committee) and PTA boards. I'm perhaps most proud of my time as Advocacy Chair at Highland Park Elementary School and Lamar Middle School where through short, 101-type presentations and easy to execute calls to action, I helped families understand how public education in Texas works, and the challenges it faces, and then empowered them to advocate for change at the district and state level. I help people see the whole system and find effective ways to plug in and make a difference. Most recently, in the aftermath of the turmoil and trauma we experienced when AISD considered combining Dobie and Lamar Middle Schools, I teamed up with an east-side mom and educator to start ATX116, an organization that believes all AISD schools have one future and are stronger together. We bring folks together through things like storytelling and listening circles to build relationships across the district with the aim of strengthening the connective tissue of the AISD community. We also do education advocacy. This summer we built a toolkit folks could use to host an event at their home or in their community to share information about what a state takeover could mean for AISD and ways to plug in and take action. ATX116 is a member of the Keep Austin Schools Independent (KASI) Leadership Council. I believe I have the skills and experience to lead through this moment and fight for the public schools our kids need and deserve – no matter who is in charge.
What is the biggest challenge facing the district, and how would you address it?	
AISD's biggest challenge for the 2026-27 year is to continue moving forward with district operations, under the high possibility of a potential state takeover. As Superintendent Segura says, we need to keep "a laser focus on the students."	AISD's biggest challenge is finding a way to achieve its vision of preparing every student with the knowledge and skills to thrive in college, career, and life, with mounting stressors from all directions: decades-long underfunding, a punitive state accountability system, charter schools that pull students but don't have to serve every child, and a voucher program that pulls billions in

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Bringing up our accountability ratings is absolutely achievable. Averaged, our sixteen 'F' elementary campuses have a score of 57; the four middle schools have an average of 55. I love the work the district has done this past year to invest in more focused academic monitoring and coaching. I expect that teachers will continue to gain traction, leading more students on each campus to improve enough to break accountability chains. Trustees can monitor, support and publicize this work. For example, if Burnet Middle School can increase its "STAAR Performance Approaches" score ten points, from 45 to 55, the overall campus score would increase to a 61/ D*. Student confidence grows through such steady incremental progress. . Our 2025-26 campus accountability grades already reflect progress. My intuition and experience tell me that more time, more iterations of teacher feedback, plus more opportunities for students to practice new skills and experience success, will all contribute to the upward trajectory. *Source: TEAL - State Accountability System	public funds to provide limited funding for a small amount of students to attend private schools that also don't have to serve every child. This is all piled on top of being a large urban district that serves a very diverse population culturally, economically, and with respect to those that need special support (e.g. above average populations of English language learners, students with dyslexia, and gifted and talented compared to the rest of the state). As a trustee, I would address this by pushing for district policies that ensure that there is honesty and transparency regarding where the district is falling short and how, and that struggling campuses get the resources they need based on meaningful communication with their community and those directly serving the campus (teachers, staff, wrap-around services). I would also engage the broader Austin community (businesses, families, community leaders) in supporting those campuses, holding AISD accountable, and finding creative solutions to counteract the external pressures listed previously. Vigorous advocacy at the state level for public school funding, reforms to the state's punitive accountability system, and ending the voucher program would also be needed.
What are the top priorities that AISD needs to focus on for the future?	
Along with Hurricane TEA, the budget and student achievement are top priorities. AISD must whittle down the budget to match our current miserable funding constraints. I look forward to analyzing every single line item for alignment with the district's and community's highest vision. I am not seeking any candidate endorsements, because I want to be free to put all possible cost-savings and improvement solutions on the table. Even if Austin ISD retains local control, we are still in crisis. We need trustees who know the district's history and can balance the emotional parts of the job with the practical. I will bring a fresh set of eyes and heart to pre-existing assumptions. I can make hard decisions. "The District" is dynamic and continually changing. I will hustle hard to occupy and embody the trustee role, humbly and continuously building my knowledge, skills and community network. I am committed to being available and curious, integrating diverse stakeholder perspectives into my final voting decisions.	AISD's top priorities should include 1) providing greater stability to all our campuses, including facilitating a collaborative culture with strong and supportive leadership, and having every campus provide certain baseline academic offerings to help ensure they meet a minimum standard of excellence; 2) doing what it can to balance the budget and seek additional resources to help it achieve its mission; 3) meaningfully engage the community as a collaborative partner at both the campus and district level to address each school's unique needs and to resource schools appropriately.

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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?	
Austin ISD will definitely continue to face budget problems. The district is obviously overextended, and it's not sustainable. You balance the budget by finding efficiencies and cutting expenses. AISD has already begun this difficult work. We have to get through the 2026-27 budget year and plan for a similar 2027-28 year. The entire community needs to adjust expectations about what AISD can provide. AISD must continue the financial discipline they began in 2024, when they publicly disclosed a routine, historic district practice of exceeding budgeted spending amounts. Recently, AISD's preliminary FIRST rating declined from a '94 /A' to a '88/ B,' based on 2024-25 financials. The trustees' June 2026 votes to reduce our fund balance mean that AISD must borrow in October to continue to make payroll, until Travis County transfers property tax funds. While trustees must continue to explore every idea to support students, I know this crisis is also an opportunity for more affluent Austin communities to grow an "our schools" perspective, vs. "my school," especially when just one underperforming school can trigger a TEA takeover and public education itself is in peril. I know we have the resources to emerge stronger from these crises.	This year's budget came way too late. Strong engagement with the community in developing the budget and regular reporting to the board on a line-by-line version will help identify issues early and allow time for input from key stakeholders to arrive at well-reasoned solutions. Explore deeper partnerships and funding support from the Austin business community. Invest resources in the Austin Ed Fund to substantially increase its fund-raising capacity. Take a business savvy and community-centered approach to repurposing the many recently closed campuses. All that said, the budget issues are due in no small part to the drastic underfunding of public education from the state for decades. Changing that through raising the basic allotment to align with or exceed what most other states fund will be critical to alleviating a lot of the budget stressors. Making that change requires rigorous advocacy at the state level.
To what do you attribute the decline in enrollment in AISD? What ideas do you have for increasing enrollment?	
Part of Austin ISD's student enrollment decline is demographic. Another part is from deportations. But the part we have the most control over is AISD's success in meeting families' needs. As the district balances its many urgent, competing commitments, transparency and clear communication are paramount. Our district will still be viable and attractive if we listen to families. D4 voters are skeptical about changes they haven't had a chance to weigh in on. For example, when a Summitt Elementary family enrolled in the only Vietnamese two-way dual language program in the U.S. is told that AISD may change middle school feeder patterns, that is a family who may leave, especially if the district isn't offering assurances about continuity. Additionally, the disparities between our campuses are a vulnerability. We can stabilize enrollment by offering a consistent academic experience on every campus and changing the reality that there are 'good' and 'bad' neighborhood schools.	I believe declining enrollment is a result of many different factors including not meeting student needs and a high level of campus and district level instability. External pressure from the state such as insufficient funding, a punitive accountability system with overemphasis on STAAR scores, and a voucher program compounds factors. To address this, I would encourage establishing a clear academic baseline and doing more to support campuses in providing high-quality instruction. Provide consistent baseline academic offerings across the district that are aligned with its mission and then clearly and simply outline those offerings to parents. This will help families know (not just be told) that no matter where in the city they live, their child is getting the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college, career, and life. Supporting campuses looks like listening to teachers, principals, and staff and meeting their needs around curriculum, planning time, and professional development, among other things. Build trust with the community through 1) a clear and defined process for engaging the community and incorporating the resulting input/feedback into its

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	decisions and 2) timely, clear, and honest communication around both surprises and missteps that might impact the district in achieving its vision and goals.
How will you address the needs of all students while still delivering a consistent academic framework at all schools?	
I don't actually think it is possible to address every student need, and that's part of the tradeoff and growth opportunity of public settings. Qualified teachers strive every day to make the right judgement calls, use time wisely and provide a level of challenge that encourages student learning without overwhelming. As a volunteer classroom tutor in a 6th grade ELA classroom at a 'failing' school last year, I had an opportunity to see how an extra adult in the room made a big difference in students' focus and confidence to take risks. I want to see more community members supporting the students in our district who are developmentally ripe for that kind of extra attention, to build their esteem and prepare them for more advanced work. I want to help build a stronger parent engagement culture, especially around tiny habits that can add up over time. The trustee role is important, to advocate for families whose needs are not being met well enough. I will remain humble, curious and open to ways that we could do a better job and provide more consistent structure and leadership.	Any good framework should provide consistency while also being flexible and adaptable. As a trustee, the first part of meeting this objective would be to ensure the right policies are in place so that developing and implementing such a framework is prioritized by the district. Then, as part of our oversight function, confirm there are both clear mechanisms for demonstrating the proposed framework meets its goal, and that there is review, analysis and reporting to make sure it continues to work as intended. Analysis and reporting could include reviewing growth metrics such as state academic growth reports along with internal district reports. We could lean on the internal reports to monitor differences across schools including what teacher retention looks like, how the curriculum is working, etc. We could also continue to look at dis-aggregated data to make sure implementation is consistent across the student population (SPED, ELL, EcoDis, etc.) and so we can advise on resource (re)allocation if necessary. It will also be critical to this process to maintain an understanding from staff and families as to how a campus is performing and if it is being given the proper resources it needs to grow. The closure of Paredes demonstrates that the current systems in place are not catching everything so it will be important to look critically at the existing reporting for improvements that will help identify and address problems early.
How has history shaped the public education landscape for communities of color here in Austin, and how can AISD better support those communities today?	
As a student who attended at L C Anderson in the 1980s busing years, I am familiar with the lasting impacts of slavery and segregation. Our current school disparities show that AISD and the Austin community co-own roles in segregating and marginalizing students by ethnicity, race and economic status. I am passionate about democracy, education, and the role public schools have to help a child develop a public self and resume that can transform into a ticket to adult opportunities. Every child deserves that, and as a society, we must make those investments to care and deeply connect.	It is no secret that our education system is shaped by a history of segregation that has resulted in lopsided resourcing. This includes the redlining of the 1920s, which impacted where black folks could buy homes. This in-turn impacted the value of those homes and the resources those neighborhoods received, including for their neighborhood schools. We know that kids' success in school has as much or more to do with how they are supported (or not supported) outside of school than how they are supported in school. A recent article in the Austin Current sums it up well, "For generations, I-35 has symbolized Austin's economic and racial divide. Researchers, historians and community advocates have long pointed to the highway as the boundary separating many wealthier, predominantly white communities to the west from

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AISD gave me a lifetime gift through opportunities to go to school with students from different backgrounds than my own and, at age 14, to challenge my own biases. Those experiences changed the trajectory of my life and development. The work never ends. We can never relax, we can never assume we know how students are experiencing their learning environments.	many low-income communities of color to the east. This year's accountability ratings largely mirror that geography." AISD can better support these communities by providing them with more resources, at a level that meets the needs of the kids at those schools. First and foremost, this should mean listening to the community directly as to what its needs are and prioritizing them. This could include well-paid, highly-qualified teaching staff, strong campus principals, culturally proficient staff and curriculum, sufficient wrap-around supports, and more. But I don't believe AISD alone can bridge this gap -- is needs to also meaningfully engage the community at-large to address some of the needs that must be met outside of school and the community needs to head that call. Transportation is an example where the state is dramatically underfunding the expenses and the city has not invested in public transit that may more efficiently move kids and their families from historically underserved communities to other parts of town -- where perhaps schools are consolidating. The district needs creative partnership and investment to help offset some of these challenges. This is the moment the city, as a municipality, needs to start seeing itself as integral to the solutions, and we (all, as a community) need to expand our idea of who our kids are.
What is your view on social studies instruction in AISD?	
I have a bachelor's degree in American History and want AISD to continue to provide fact-based, diverse perspectives.	I would like to see social studies instruction in AISD maintain a broad, multi-faceted, and inclusive view of history and citizenship. The people of this school district, the state of Texas, and the United States all contain a rich array of cultures and backgrounds, which is one of the things that results in so much of the creativity and innovation we are known for. Having a curriculum with both an honest and nuanced view of history, and exposure to worldwide current events will best prepare our students for life and careers in today's fast-paced, interconnected global economy.
What can AISD do to retain high-qualified teachers?	
I know from conversations with teachers that they are bearing the burden of underfunding. AISD is already exploring creative ways to attract teachers, such as partnerships with UT, ACC and TSU. As a trustee whose job is to advise AISD as an employer, I will use my own experience as a business owner, keeping a keen eye on teachers as treasured assets and essential investments. I will scrutinize and advocate for the highest level of respect, support and benefits our community can possibly provide.	This is a big challenge for the district under the current circumstances. Retaining high-quality teachers means doing what you can to demonstrate that you recognize their value through things like compensation, job-security, work-life balance, and a supportive work environment. This includes meeting their needs around classroom resources, curriculum, planning time, and professional development. Putting teachers in a position to do their best every day will generate the most positive experience for the children they interact with. My mother was a speech pathologist in public schools for over 30 years and watching the tremendous amount of energy she put into engaging her students with joy and enthusiasm, meeting them where they were, and

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	supporting them in their growth on “The Road to Good Talking”, is something I’ll never forget. That level of performance is not something that would have been sustainable while having to work a second job to meet a basic cost of living. While AISD cannot control everything, doing what is within its power to ensure teachers are valued and supported in their work is absolutely critical to the success of the district.
What role should the community play in supporting the education of children?	
Raising and educating children is the most important work and investment in the world. Communities can support the work by supporting parents: Slow down in school zones, keep an eye out for kids, volunteer. Donate your time. Donate to fundraisers and book fairs. Join PTAs. Buy the teacher’s wish list. Go to sports events and fine arts performances. Read the student newspaper. Stop your car and get out your dollar when you see a lemonade stand. Buy the Girl Scout cookies and/or the Cub Scouts popcorn. Coach a team. Send the appreciative text or email or snail mail card. Take photos of teachers, they are too busy and will want to remember. Listen to a kid. Let their parents finish a thought or sentence. Yield. Let them have the parking spot. Vote, keep up with public education news, serve. My #1 favorite parenting book is “Parenting for a Peaceful World,” by Robin Grille. Grille argues that every advancement in democracy, social justice and better treatment of the environment was preceded, by 20-30 years, by an improvement in the treatment of children. Investing in children is my life's work. That is why I am running.	The community has a substantial and critical role in supporting public education at many levels. At the state level, per the Texas constitution, the state legislature must provide a free public school system. It is the job of the people to hold the state accountable to that duty. As we see the state implementing policies of privatization that undermine a free public school system, it is the community’s role to call that out and demand change. Accountability is also key at the district level, and having a community that engages with the district not only in providing feedback, but also in meaningfully shaping the district's vision, direction, and high-level goals is critical to ensuring the district meets the educational needs of the people it is designed to serve. I believe broad and robust community engagement at a district-level, paired with meaningful outreach and transparency by the district itself, can result in a more stable, well-resourced, and successful school district. This belief was foundational to the creation of ATX116. At a campus-level, having a surrounding community that invests in a school through in-person volunteering, engagement, and resource support is typically a key factor in creating a vibrant campus with thriving student and teachers. The keys here are collaboration and trust between the community and the district. The community that is engaged, supportive, pro-active, and respectful should be matched with a school district that is transparent and responsive; one that provides genuine opportunities for input along with mechanisms for incorporating input in a way that shows it is heard and valued.