Meet the Candidates - District 7

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Jimmy Counihan

jimmyforaisd.com



Laurie Solis

laurieforaisd.com



Why are you running for the Austin ISD board of trustees, and what are your qualifications?

I'm running for the Austin ISD Board of Trustees to represent District 7 because this community raised me. I'm a proud third-generation AISD graduate and product of District 7 schools, having attended Mills Elementary, Gorzycki Middle School, and Bowie High School.

Drawing inspiration from my mom's experience as a Special Education teacher at Mills Elementary and Principal of Baranoff Elementary, I served on the District Advisory Council (DAC) from 2014-18 as a student representative, and again from 2021-22 as a community representative. The DAC fostered my passion for policy-making and encouraged me to study government and social work at UT Austin.

Since 2019, I've interned and worked throughout state government, with experience as a:
- Digital Media Specialist at the Comptroller of Public Accounts,
- Public Education and Federal Funds Analyst at the Legislative Budget Board,

I'm running for Austin ISD Board of Trustees because I believe every student deserves the opportunity to thrive, and every family and educator deserves a voice in the decisions that shape their schools.

I've spent more than 19 years raising my children in South Austin, with all three attending AISD schools. For the past four years, I've visited nearly every campus in the district each year, building a perspective that goes beyond my own neighborhood and seeing firsthand the unique strengths, challenges, and needs across AISD. I've been a PTA leader, advocate, volunteer, mentor, substitute teacher, and partner to campuses and families across the district.

Today, I'm also in the classroom, primarily teaching 8th-grade math at Marshall Middle School. That gives me a current, firsthand understanding of what students and educators are navigating every day.

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- Childcare & Early Learning Policy Specialist at the Texas Workforce Commission, - Communications & Policy Manager of the Energy & Climate Caucus, and - Policy Communications Director for State Rep. Donna Howard. Having graduated from AISD in 2018 and being a university student during COVID, I understand the challenges our students face firsthand. When AISD declared financial exigency in 2011, my 5th-grade teacher was laid off. When our schools faced the threat of gun violence, I did lockdown drills. I started at AISD with computer labs and ended with 1:1 devices. My college experience included dual-enrollment, online courses, and transfer credits. I look forward to leveraging my lived experience as a recent student and my professional experience in state policy to do right by students and help our community navigate state intervention. I hope to earn your vote and, if afforded the opportunity, to make our community proud.	I'm running because I'm ready to bring that experience, district-wide perspective, and practical approach to the board. I'll show up, listen, ask hard questions, and work collaboratively to put stakeholders at the table and students at the center.
What is the biggest challenge facing the district, and how would you address it?	
The biggest challenge facing AISD is state policy that forces unfunded mandates, restricted revenue, and draconian interventions on our campuses and communities. As a legislative staffer in the Texas House that works on public education policy, I know first hand how these bills are made, their statutory and constitutional authority, and their impacts. I would work hand-in-hand with our city and state lawmakers to ensure we're in lockstep in our advocacy efforts. That looks like regular legislative briefings, tracking bills during the legislative session, and collaborative policymaking with all levels of government. I would also pursue the creation of two new committees dedicated to public education policy. The first being an AISD specific education policy work group comprised of trustees, district staff, parents representatives of the various district committees, and representatives from the Austin City Council and the Travis County delegation. This would work group would be tasked with crafting local recommendations and collaborative solutions to challenges like transportation, school safety, student health, and more. The second committee would be a coalition of Trustees representing the various ISDs in Central Texas and focused on addressing regional challenges to education funding, promote cooperation among ISDs, and opportunities for cost sharing and additional partnerships. Together, these working groups would bolster our advocacy efforts, create community informed policy solutions, conduct invaluable research, and provide	While the threat of a TEA takeover is very real, I believe the biggest challenge facing Austin ISD is the recruitment, retention, and development of great teachers and leaders of promise. The people closest to our students have the greatest impact on their success. We cannot continue to start school with vacancies. Our teachers and campus leaders already have enough to manage every day without also figuring out how to get the work done with fewer people. We need to make AISD a place where talented educators want to come, grow, and stay. Our district's reputation has suffered in recent years, and rebuilding trust and confidence is essential to attracting and retaining great people. I would start by making sure we are measuring vacancies, retention, turnover, leadership pipelines, and campus-level staffing needs so we understand where we are losing people and why. We also need to focus on competitive compensation, working conditions, strong campus leadership, meaningful professional development, and pathways for educators to grow. As a trustee, I would set clear expectations, monitor the data, ask hard questions, and hold the district accountable for results. Investing in our teachers and leaders—and rebuilding confidence in AISD—is one of the most important investments we can make in our students.

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actionable recommendations we can implement directly or take to the state legislature in pursuit of policy reforms.	
What are the top priorities that AISD needs to focus on for the future?	
Looking forward, AISD must prioritize restoring community trust, long-term stability, and improving academic achievement. With 30 D- and F-rated campuses, AISD has the most academically unacceptable campuses of any school district in Texas. As a Trustee, I'll be laser-focused on improving academic outcomes on failing campuses through instructional support and expanded partnerships with groups like Austin Voices for Education and Youth and Communities in Schools. In addition, I'll work with our PTA's, CAC's, and various district committees to ensure the business of the district is community-informed and culturally responsive to the diverse needs of our communities. Personal priorities of mine are to protect special education, disability services, learning accommodations, and mental health services. As a student, I grew up in an inclusion classrooms and received 504 accommodations for dysgraphia. The Vida Clinic at Bowie, which no longer exists, saved my cousin's life and put them back on a path towards success. Disability, neurodiversity, and mental health challenges are natural parts of the student experience. Protecting these services is essential to ensuring all students receive the support they need for success.	● Strong teachers and campus leaders ● Responsible stewardship & accountability ● Family voice & teacher partnership ● Student success & strong academics ● Rebuilding trust in AISD ● Community partnerships & leveraging resources
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?	
AISD has closed eleven campuses, had a $181 million deficit in the last fiscal year, received a downgraded Financial Integrity Rating, and the district's fund balance is at 8.8%, well below the previously established Board minimum of 15.2%, forcing the district to borrow $140 million to make payroll. The financial constraints facing AISD are dire, but not impossible to overcome. First, we need to eliminate inefficiencies at district headquarters, and second, we need to establish new revenue streams. I remember a time when you could call the district headquarters and talk to an associate superintendent, even with 80,000 students enrolled. Despite declining enrollment, administrative positions have increased. Working with the district, I'd like an internal audit performed detailing all of the administrative staff positions, descriptions of their work, and salaries. With community input, I	First and foremost, our schools are carrying the burden of a Legislature that has not adequately funded public education. At the same time, we must be responsible stewards of the resources we have. I don’t believe balancing the budget means simply cutting our way to the finish line. In AISD, I would focus on three things: grow revenue, align spending, and measure outcomes. We need an aggressive enrollment strategy—beginning outreach to prospective families in October, hosting February enrollment clinics, simplifying enrollment, and rebuilding confidence in AISD. We should regularly review vacancies, staffing and spending against enrollment, and identify operational and contracting efficiencies before cutting student-facing programs.

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would pursue substantial reductions to eliminate duplicative staff and inefficiencies. In terms of creating new revenue streams, I would like the district to retain ownership of closed campuses and repurpose them to house community-approved partners, like an ACC satellite campus or child care providers. Finally, I'd pursue expanded partnerships with institutions like UT Athletics and Austin FC to create a physical education fund for sporting equipment; Integral Care to provide on-campus mental health services; the Austin Public Library to cost-share books and technology; and a joint investment with the City of Austin to restore funding for Communities in Schools.	Most importantly, every major expenditure should answer three questions: What are we spending? What outcome are we getting? Can we achieve it more effectively? If enrollment declines, our organization has to scale down with it. And as we make difficult choices, we must protect the investments that matter most: great teachers and leaders, academic success, and opportunities for every student.
To what do you attribute the decline in enrollment in AISD? What ideas do you have for increasing enrollment?	
AISD faces numerous challenges, many of which are interconnected. Declining enrollment, however, is a critical challenge and root cause for several others. As funding is tied to enrollment and daily attendance, fewer students means fewer dollars to support our schools. Enrollment decline has led to campus closures, program and service reductions, and staff layoffs. All of these contribute to erosion in community trust, institutional instability, and weakening academic performance. We cannot solve these challenges in isolation from one another, nor can we solve them without stabilizing enrollment. In my senior year, AISD had nearly 80,000 students, but now has closer to 60,000 students. This trend is happening for several reasons, including demographic shifts, increasing enrollment in charters, private schools, and homeschooling, immigration enforcement, and more. While many of these are out of AISD's control, the district can still improve in key ways. As a Trustee, I will prioritize strategic investments in campuses, programs, and communities to rebuild trust, improve academics, and make our campuses more attractive to prospective families. I will also work with the district to establish a comprehensive enrollment strategy to increase student retention and new enrollments. This effort would be multi-pronged and include community forums, streamlined enrollment processes, robust enrollment campaigns, partnerships with the Austin Board of Realtors and other organizations involved in housing, restoring investments in Communities in Schools, exploring the creation of new magnet programs, and more.	In helping PTAs across the district, I've developed a unique lens into the many ways AISD struggles to recruit and retain students and families. We cannot ignore the broader political and economic pressures affecting Austin families, including concerns that have made some families hesitant to send their children to school or even come onto a campus to enroll. We also have to recognize that, in a district as large as Austin ISD, one size does not fit all. Some students need a more individualized setting, and the expansion of school choice and the voucher program has given families additional options. We need to acknowledge these realities while focusing on what we can control: restoring confidence in AISD after several difficult years. That starts with improving transparency, communication, and follow-through while removing unnecessary barriers to enrollment. We need to make AISD a district families are proud to choose and educators want to work in. We also need a much more intentional enrollment strategy. I would prioritize: • Start early: Begin recruiting prospective families in October for spring enrollment and the following school year rather than waiting until registration season. • Make enrollment easy: Create a simple, mobile-friendly enrollment process with clear information, fewer handoffs, and dedicated staff who can help families navigate the process. • Proactive outreach: Use enrollment and withdrawal data to identify neighborhoods and grade levels where we are losing students, then have campuses directly reach out to families in those communities.

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	• Showcase our schools: Give families opportunities to visit campuses, meet teachers and principals, see programs in action, and hear directly from current families and students. • Build transition pipelines: Strengthen relationships between elementary, middle, and high schools so families have a clear pathway within AISD and are actively supported through those transitions. • Invest in neighborhood schools: Students want to go to school with their friends. Strong neighborhood schools, engaging programming, and active school communities can create the sense of belonging that keeps families in the district. • Make spring enrollment count: Hold intentional enrollment clinics in February and use Spring Break as a checkpoint to understand where enrollment stands and where additional outreach is needed. When families feel welcomed, connected, and invested in their campus, they develop a sense of loyalty and ownership. We cannot simply wait for enrollment to happen. We need to earn families' trust, make our schools compelling choices, remove barriers, and actively invite families into our schools and communities.
How will you address the needs of all students while still delivering a consistent academic framework at all schools?	
I believe we can maintain a high academic bar for every student in Austin ISD without forcing every student through the exact same path to meet the challenge. Every campus should have clear expectations in literacy, math, science, and college and career readiness, supported by strong curriculum, effective teaching, and transparent measures of student progress. Consistency in what we expect should be non-negotiable. At the same time, students need different kinds of support to meet those expectations. A student struggling with reading may need intensive intervention, an English learner may need additional language support, while an advanced student deserves opportunities to move ahead. In a district facing significant budget constraints, we have to focus our resources on what most directly improves learning. I want to make the most of Austin's highly engaged parent community. Parents bring tremendous energy, expertise and resources to our schools. As a Trustee, work to establish one rigorous academic framework with clear accountability metrics for results, and the targeted support each student needs to succeed.	We need a clear, consistent academic framework across AISD while giving strong campus leadership and educators the flexibility to meet the needs of their students. Strong leadership at every level—campus and district—is essential to making that balance work. AISD has invested significantly in robust curricula that provide greater consistency in instruction while offering tools and supports for learners across achievement levels. Families should be able to expect high-quality instruction, appropriate challenge, and meaningful academic progress regardless of campus. We also need to protect and expand whole-child opportunities—including CTE, athletics, fine arts, early college, and college-credit programs—and ensure equitable access across campuses. Finally, we must protect time for teachers, administrators, families, and students to collaborate. **Consistency should not mean one-size-fits-all.** A strong framework, paired with local leadership and meaningful collaboration, gives us the best opportunity to meet every student where they are and help them thrive.

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How has history shaped the public education landscape for communities of color here in Austin, and how can AISD better support those communities today?	
AISD did not start from a level playing field. Austin maintained segregated schools long after Brown v. Board of Education, and the eventual desegregation process included closing L.C. Anderson High School, Austin's historic Black high school, and busing Black students to predominantly white schools. Those decisions disrupted established communities and institutions, while residential segregation continued to shape where students went to school. That history still matters because today's gaps in opportunity didn't appear overnight. Today, I think AISD needs to focus on high expectations, strong instruction, and targeted support where the need is greatest. We are facing a $181 million budget challenge and significant academic needs, so we cannot afford programs that don't produce results. We should protect early literacy and math, effective teachers, tutoring, special education, and other interventions that have measurable impact. For parents involved in PTAs, I want to affirm that your engagement is one of our district's greatest strengths, and we should use it to build bridges rather than islands. Our most connected school communities can share volunteers, expertise, enrichment opportunities and advocacy with schools that have fewer resources. However, that partnership should complement, not replace, the district's responsibility. We can honor Austin's history by making sure a student's zip code, race or family circumstances don't determine the quality of education they receive.	Austin's public education system has been shaped by a long history of segregation and unequal investment that disproportionately affected Black and Latino communities. That history still shapes trust, access, and opportunity today. We cannot change the past, but we can use it to make better decisions. AISD must listen to historically underserved communities and measure whether we are actually closing opportunity gaps. For me, that means tracking access, outcomes, and trust by campus and student group: academic growth, graduation and attendance rates, teacher vacancies and retention, access to advanced academics, CTE, fine arts, athletics and college-credit programs, as well as family engagement and discipline disparities. I would also reinstate a short, annual family survey focused on whether families feel heard, understand how to participate, and have meaningful opportunities to be at the table. We should be transparent about where gaps remain and measure whether our interventions are working. Equity means a student's ZIP code, campus, or background should not determine their opportunity to thrive. We have more work to do to make that promise a reality for every AISD student, and I believe we can.
What is your view on social studies instruction in AISD?	
As a student of government and social work, I believe social studies to be one of the most important subjects taught in our schools. I believe social studies should give students a strong understanding of our history and the skills to think critically. That means teaching Texas, U.S., and world history with academic rigor, primary sources, and multiple perspectives. Students should learn the facts and chronology, but also learn how to evaluate evidence, recognize bias, understand cause and effect, and respectfully engage with ideas they may disagree with. We should never be afraid of teaching complicated parts of our history; students are capable of handling complexity when we give them the tools to do so.	I believe social studies should do more than teach students what happened in the past—it should teach them how to think about history, evaluate evidence, understand different perspectives, and participate thoughtfully in civic life. With Texas currently reviewing and implementing changes to the Social Studies TEKS, I would focus on ensuring AISD provides strong, consistent implementation without adding unnecessary layers of curriculum. Teachers need high-quality materials, training, and planning time to help students engage deeply with the standards. As a trustee, I would look for measurable evidence that students are developing historical knowledge, critical-thinking skills, media and information literacy, and civic readiness. Students should be able to ask good questions,

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I also think we need a consistent academic framework across AISD, particularly when it comes to core knowledge and grade-level expectations. At the same time, teachers need enough flexibility to bring local history and their classrooms' experiences into that framework. For parents, my promise would be that AISD social studies should be rigorous, age-appropriate, and intellectually honest—not political indoctrination or sanitized history. Our job is to prepare students to be informed citizens who can understand where Austin and our country have come from, engage thoughtfully with where we are today, and participate constructively in our democracy.	distinguish evidence from opinion, understand how government works, and respectfully engage with perspectives different from their own. AISD students should leave our schools not only knowing their history, but prepared to participate in their communities, understand their responsibilities as citizens, and contribute thoughtfully to our democracy.
What can AISD do to retain high-qualified teachers?	
I believe the best investment AISD can make is keeping great teachers in the classroom. In a district facing serious budget constraints, we need to be strategic about protecting teacher compensation and working conditions. That means advocating for competitive pay, but also reducing unnecessary administrative burdens, providing strong instructional support, and giving teachers the time and resources they need to do their jobs well. Teachers shouldn't have to choose between staying in Austin and being able to afford a career in education. We should also make AISD a place where talented teachers can grow without having to leave the classroom. Strong mentoring for new teachers, meaningful professional development, and opportunities for experienced educators to take on leadership roles can help build a long-term career path. We should also use data to understand why teachers leave particular campuses and target retention resources where turnover is highest, rather than applying the same solution everywhere. For parents who care deeply about their schools, I would emphasize that teacher retention is a student achievement policy. Constant turnover disrupts relationships, instruction, and school culture. We may not have the resources to fund everything we'd like right now, but we can prioritize what matters most: retaining excellent teachers and supporting them well.	Retaining great teachers starts with making AISD a place where educators want to build a career—not simply find a job. Compensation matters, but so do working conditions. We cannot continue starting the school year with vacancies and expect teachers to absorb the work of unfilled positions. I would track retention and turnover by campus and position, understand why educators leave, and set measurable retention goals. We should protect planning time, reduce unnecessary administrative burdens, strengthen campus leadership, and provide meaningful professional development and leadership pathways. Campus leaders set the tone, and experienced teachers should have opportunities to mentor and develop future educators while having a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their classrooms. Strong student outcomes depend on creating the conditions where great teachers can stay, grow, and thrive.
What role should the community play in supporting the education of children?	
I believe educating our children is a shared responsibility, and Austin has an extraordinary opportunity to bring families, educators, businesses, and community organizations together around our schools. For parents involved in PTAs, that means continuing to volunteer, mentor, advocate, and build strong school communities. Our most connected communities can be partners in	Our community has an important role to play in educating and supporting our children. AISD is part of a rich ecosystem that includes families, nonprofits, businesses, higher education, local government, and community organizations. Strong partnerships can bring resources, expertise,

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making sure more students have access to enrichment, tutoring, internships, and other opportunities. At the same time, community involvement cannot become a substitute for AISD doing its job. Hearing reports that PTAs across the district are funding basic facility maintenance, like waxing floors over the summer, and purchasing new athletic equipment after a roof leak or rodent infestation destroys existing equipment are deeply disheartening and, quite frankly, unacceptable. Community partnerships should extend AISD's capacity, not pick up the slack or determine which schools receive a quality education. My vision is for AISD to make it easier for families and community members to contribute their time, expertise, and resources while setting clear expectations for how those partnerships support student learning. We should build schools where every family feels welcome, every community has a voice, and every student benefits from the incredible civic engagement Austin has to offer.	opportunities, and connections to students that a school district cannot provide alone. But partnership should never become outsourcing. AISD must remain accountable for core outcomes—academic achievement, student well-being, strong teaching and leadership, and equitable access to opportunity. Community partners should expand what's possible, not relieve the district of its responsibility. Strong community relationships are especially important in challenging times. The more people understand what AISD is facing and feel connected to our schools, the more likely they are to step up with resources, expertise, volunteerism, and advocacy. We should build those relationships now so our community is ready to show up when our students need us most.