



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission

Recommendation Number: 20200527-3a: Support of Community Letter Regarding Austin Independent School District's Superintendent Search and the District's Commitment to Equity

WHEREAS, the Austin Independent School board made a bold and courageous decision to create the district's equity office, yet the equity office is often missing from the table during the most important public board discussions; and

WHEREAS, there continues to be disparate access to academics, a lack of vertical alignment of the dual language programs, and lack of investment in the special education services; and

WHEREAS, Austin ISD has previously closed historically Black and Hispanic/Latino schools and continue to close schools although AISD Chief Equity Officer, Dr. Stephanie Hawley, stated, "... the map that you have of the [school] closures, is a map of what 21st Century racism looks like...;" and

WHEREAS, actions by the AISD Board of Trustees and the administration have left many feeling shut out and marginalized; and

WHEREAS, previous AISD superintendent searches took nine months during a non-pandemic situation and allowed for an interim superintendent; and

WHEREAS, the pandemic underscores Austin's digital divide and greatly limits the public's ability to participate in important decisions and the district has decided to undertake the superintendent search in a drastically shortened time frame during an unprecedented pandemic; and

WHEREAS, regarding the superintendent search, two weeks for Zoom meetings with community groups is insufficient and limits input to those with access to technology; and

WHEREAS, the website superintendent survey is misleading and employs a confusing scale 1-5 scale, with 1 counterintuitively meaning the highest score; the questions were not approved by the full board; and the survey is only available in English and Spanish, rendering it inaccessible to those speaking the other nearly 90 languages represented in AISD; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission supports the AISD Community Request Letter, and recommends that the members of


Austin City Council submit a request for the Austin Independent School District Board of Trustees and/or the Superintendent to:

1. Increase transparency in all activities and decision-making by opening all meetings to the public, including those of the executive board and board committees, and ensuring all meetings are broadcast;
2. Lead with an equity lens in decision-making and resource distribution by:
 - a. Commissioning a third-party equity audit immediately and using these findings to drive the district's strategic plan;
 - b. Hiring a superintendent committed to implementing the strategic plan based on equity;
 - c. Placing more experienced teachers in Title 1 schools and increasing funding for advanced academic programming in historically under-resourced campuses;
 - d. Addressing the disparate access to advanced academic programming, special education, dual language, magnet programs, etc;
 - e. Ensuring all populations such as special education, dual language and communities of color are included at the start of decision-making processes, not as an afterthought;
 - f. Committing to robust yearly equity and anti-racism training for administration and trustees;
 - g. Ensuring the equity office is deeply involved in the superintendent selection process by allowing them to participate in selection and interview panels; draft and ask questions during the candidate interviews; and release a memo to the board regarding their recommendations on superintendent candidates; and
3. Engage the community in authentic communication by:
 - a. Reaching out to every campus community, including those that will close in 2020, for input on the superintendent search;
 - b. Replacing or correcting the website survey to gather meaningful input and clarifying the scale; as well as ensuring that this and all future surveys capture race and demographic data;
 - c. Reinstating campus and district wide advisory boards meetings via Zoom (DAC , CACs, SPAC, etc.);
 - d. Using varied platforms to engage the AISD community such as the AISD phone system, AISD TV, paper surveys, etc.;

- e. Holding widespread community meetings for genuine public input before picking a superintendent as soon as public gatherings are permitted;
- f. Reinstating two-minute public communication at board meetings;
- g. Allowing public testimony on all agenda items at board meetings, not just action items; and
- h. Limiting the influence of the Austin Chamber of Commerce in district decisions as its priorities have not historically aligned with the needs and interests of many in the community.

Date of Approval: May 29, 2020

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 8-0 vote

Attest:  _____

(Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Chair)



Attest: _____

(Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Staff Liaison)