

Coalition for Bilingual Education (CBEE) and Austin Area Association for Bilingual Education (AAABE) Austin ISD Trustee Candidate Forum

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

2020 Written Response Questions:

1. What do you believe is the role of the Dual Language program in Austin ISD? What do you think are the benefits and challenges?

Texas has always been a multilingual state, primarily a dual-language state of Spanish and English speakers. Almost a third of AISD's students are classified as "ELs" --nearly 9 in 10 of those students have Spanish as their home language. We need to move beyond the recognition that our cultural history and present are bilingual & bicultural.

I believe that 50-50 DL programming, that are faithfully implemented, should be available across AISD to all students.

The benefits of DL programming include high-levels of academic achievement for all students including students with exceptionalities, cross-cultural competence, competitive skills in the modern workforce --and DL programming helps Hispanic students maintain the cultural pride and ties of which past generations have been robbed.

2. The role of principals and associate superintendents and their commitment to DL is critical. What is the role of the board in regards to oversight and accountability of dual language program administration?

In addition to holding the superintendent accountable for DL program fidelity, the board can also ensure that our district's budget, hiring and retention practices support an effective and robust DL curriculum at all campuses. The board must also ensure that DL opportunities track along vertical teams so that elementary students accessing DL can continue their dual language studies through middle and high school.

I think the board should also commit to meeting with dual-language coalitions/advocacy groups to remain informed of what's happening on the ground and in the classroom.

3. Some AISD schools do not offer a dual language program to emergent bilinguals, also called English learners ("ELs"), at their school, though **state law requires** that ELs be provided with Spanish-language instruction. What are your thoughts around revising transportation solutions for ELs whose home school does not offer a dual language program?

I would like to see AISD move towards providing DL across our district. Until such time that can be implemented effectively, I do think the board should consider how best to prioritize transportation costs. Currently about 3% of the district's budget is for student transportation --this includes transporting students to magnet programs. Families with students in magnet programs have noted that some buses only take a few students across town and that there must be a more cost effective way to transport these students. I wholeheartedly agree, and my hope would be to identify partnerships we can leverage that will offer additional transportation options for students to access the academic programming that will help them be successful. This includes helping students access DL instruction.

4. As a School Board Trustee, you must not overstep administrative functions that belong to the Superintendent, but having a general understanding of how the district works and what the district offers to our students is essential. Please share what your understanding is about the different bilingual programs being offered to our students in AISD. What is your opinion about these programs? Please explain.

There are roughly over 40 campuses in AISD that use some form of DL (one-way dual language, two-way dual language, wall-to-wall 2-way DL, late exit DL, ESL and Mandarin immersion). Only 13 campuses have committed to the Multilingual Education Department's core elements. There are 18 schools listed as "late exit DL" but in practice students are exited as early as possible, some as early as 1st grade. This is unacceptable and unconscionable.

Unless you are intimately tracking DL programming, AISD's DL programs *on paper* appears to be what we would hope for, but the reality for many students --more than we might realize-- is that DL programming in *practice* varies greatly campus to campus.

Until our district genuinely commits and *delivers* dual language programming, using program model fidelity, naysayers will be able to point to low test scores as a reason to stop offering DL programming. We must not move backwards.

2020 Commitment Questions: If no, please explain.

1. Will you commit to supporting the implementation of DL programs at all AISD elementary schools (with sufficient numbers of ELs) to the 5th grade, and wherever possible, through high school?

YES

2. Are you committed as a trustee to look at long-term testing results and other indicators of student success and not just annual state testing results during the elementary years as a measure of academic success of EL students in DL?

YES

3. Will you commit to the support of the strong and successful implementation of dual language programs even if that means: (1) having to prioritize DL programs in budgeting, (2) having tough conversations and (3) being creative around any challenges that may come up?

YES

4. Will you commit to ensuring monitoring of the fidelity of implementation of bilingual programs in AISD, including prior to expansion or cancellation?

YES

5. Will you commit to meet with our Austin ISD EL constituency, attend Multilingual Education Advisory Committee Meetings at times, and/or make efforts to educate yourself further at conferences (such as TABE, NABE, or Adelante) to better understand and advocate for Dual Language and bilingual education?

YES