



ACPTA Advocacy Meeting 1.9.2021

Daphne Hoffacker (DH) – Frustration and anguish surrounding Public Education. Need to fight and advocate with our votes to solve education problems in our state.

- Advocacy is the ultimate teacher appreciation
 - Our children are influenced tremendously by their teachers
 - Encouraging participation for forming and transforming policy that affects children, families and schools
- ACPTA – non-partisan, non-profit
- Policy, not politics – partisanship is hindering our ability to address issues
- Issues this year are culmination of decades of under supporting public education
- Goals – common understanding of
 - What is happening in Public Education in TX
 - What is the impact on Children and teachers
 - Who has the power to change things
 - How can we work together to change things
- System is designed that most of us are powerless – even superintendents, certainly teachers and principals
 - Need to channel advocacy against those in power
- Agenda is not to close schools or keep them open
 - Meeting is to advocate for engagement and figure out how to work together
- Encourage a common understanding and framework to then work together
- Need to fight for sane policy that considers all sides, risks and the greater good with the wellbeing of children as the focus. All children and their teachers, not just our own.
- Public Education in TX – has been struggling for a long time
 - 43/50 in education investment
 - US average - \$12,536 per student vs \$8,485 in TX
 - \$40B per biennium short of the national average
 - HB3 did not improve ranking
 - Need additional \$20B per year to reach the average
 - 90% of the funds go towards salaries
 - 2011 budget was balanced on the back of public education
 - Increases in property taxes just allowed the state to reduce their share
 - CARES funding, for example, was used and then budgets were reduced in response
 - TX – 3x more funding per inmate than per student - \$22,012 per person – estimates in legislature are based on third grade STAAR scores
 - Recapture for Austin (Arati Singh and Choni Hajibashi) - #1 funder in the state – 40% of AISD budget – with 55% low SES students – formula set up a long time ago but does not consider current costs of education index, SPED, ELL, etc
 - Standardized testing – high stakes – STAAR
 - Most harmful to low-income students of color, ELL, SPED learners
 - 3rd Grade STAAR results are used for many calculations – prison budgets



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- Considered as indicators
 - A-F campus rating reflects white majority vs brown majority schools
 - Punishes schools that service low-income schools
 - Charter schools are the most segregated school system in the state/country
 - Charter schools with 6.8% of students receive 15.2% funding due to being funded as a small district
 - AISD lost more than \$100 million to charters in 2019-2020
 - Extra \$1182 per student to charters inside AISD capture area
- Who makes the decisions about public education
 - Federal Government – 8% of total education funds
 - State of TX – 92% of funding
 - Governor – appoints commissioner
 - TX Lege – determines funding and passes legislation
 - SBOE – writes curriculum, approves and denies charters
 - Local – Board of Trustees
- Elected demographic does obviously not reflect state demographics – Anglo men dominate the legislature – and only 10 are Democrats vs Republicans
- Teacher retention rates have been declining for years – nearly 1 in 3 quit before their sixth year
- Need extension of the hold harmless provision to have the same AISD budget
 - TEA needs to continue it – expired 1/1/2021
 - Granting few waivers for closures
 - STAAR testing still planned, will be 100% online by 2022
 - Diego Bernal – audio clip
 - Dr Escott – video – schools can't be funded unless they offer in person education
 - Some districts have been allowed to go remote – over 20% hospitalizations in El Paso area for eg., once under 20%, pushed to open
 - Most currently closed open on 1.11.2021
 - We are missing opportunity to make change by focusing on local representatives vs TEA mandates
- District – still dealing with cuts from 2011, teachers do not earn cost of living, not enough teachers or subs, inequitable to some students, charters siphoning students and contributing to inequities
- Dr Elizalde (SE) – stepped into AISD in August
 - Almost 12000 employees total
 - Equity – means we must differentiate that it means not everyone gets the same but see the impact on the entire organization
 - A-F rating system – should not be labeling in this manner, should be about supporting campuses, and identifying needs
 - How do we meet needs of such a diverse community and have overall cohesive goals
 - Need to provide more where students need more
 - (DH) TX has chosen STAAR, which is normed inside the state of TX vs a national assessment – narrow bell curve for comparison and identifies 'losers'
 - Initial results tend to persist – high scorers in 3rd grade vs low
 - Effects interaction between students



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- AISD students – varying challenges – some may benefit from a virtual setting, others are struggling a lot
- Some challenges are not able to be solved by the schools, are not equipped
 - Still impacts interactions with students however
- Would like to emphasize benefits seen too
- Big picture for teachers who feel unsafe and are leaving – would help if AISD could practice local control – switch to 100% remote based on local health situation, received violation letter for post-Thanksgiving remote time
 - On warning for not being in compliance with laws
 - Could remove SI and school board; appoint replacements
 - Has been done in other districts
- TEA metric for approval of 100% remote? Cannot provide one, ‘contextual’
- Continuing to lose funding
- Continue hold harmless through the school year
- (DH) What flexibilities do you have? How can teachers work from home for example?
 - Flexibility with individual classrooms – students not reporting in equal numbers
 - Individual campuses are coming up with flexibility plans for staff
- Q&A: Answers from SE
 - AISD Equity currently? Dr Hawley will have info from assessment for trustees 1.11.2021, utilizing staff member to reach out to families and connect with services, food services continue despite funding lost, still long way to go
 - Mental Health issues – how to make up grades and credit recovery? Working on how to reflect the whole child versus an academic grade, plus make sure the student has skills to proceed next year
 - How to attract PreK and K students? Working with United Way, St. David’s, Success by Six, expanding reach before kids are 3, Dr Ron Ferguson – reaching out to families at birth; kids are seen to be behind by two years old,
 - How is AISD addressing LD at an early stage? Need to start earlier, exacerbates issues by waiting for identification, dyslexia identification earlier makes a huge impact – will continue that
 - Formative assessments vs standardized test info from teachers. Student support teams, for example.
 - Denial of accommodations, no outreach? Email SE directly
 - Does AISD have the authority to allow teachers to teach remotely if we want to? Yes, on a case-by-case situation working directly with principals. Trying to encourage parents to keep kids home if they are able.
 - SPED in dire state; exodus started before pandemic, what is the plan? Working on needs for SPED; recognize multiple reasons people have left, revising staffing ratios and doing an audit to make sure kids have access in their neighborhoods (Elizabeth Casas contributes)
 - Are teachers with successful remote learning sharing their best practices? There is not a systemic way for sharing internally. Planning to host best practices on



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curriculum sites and start direct outreach between staff. Videos, contact info, etc. System did not exist.

- Why has calendar not been shifted a week or two into June in response to AP Health? Teacher contracts and fiscal year must be complete by June 30. Many students are also children of essential workers who have not planned for this. Cannot guarantee we can open in June – numbers could be worse then. There are consequences to each choice. Trying to meet the needs of as many people as possible. Funding of hold harmless; parents are saying that they will not send kids in June – currently AISD needs kids in seats at that time. Biggest challenge is that TEA ties funding to everything we do. If it is tied to attendance during a pandemic, then district is in a difficult situation. Trying to be flexible school by school.
- Info posted on getting involved
 - ACPTA Google Group
 - School PTA
 - Elected Reps
 - Share information you have
- Encourage student voices (Choni H) – wants to work directly with teachers on this to amplify
- Upcoming ACPTA Events, AISD Events relating to advocacy, upcoming legislative session
- Encouraging PTA Membership to increase influence in TX Legislation.
 - Examples of advocacy in recent history – tobacco purchasing age
- Noelita Lugo – social justice problems can seem overwhelming, representatives need to hear from you and know you have their back when they advocate for public education, channel aspirations for a better TX to force state to do right by children and teachers, long game of electing new teachers, please reach out
- Lynn Boswell – collective action matters, increase listening and understanding, appreciate Dr. Elizalde showing up, need to reach outside Austin to other parts of the state, increases power
- Betsy Markman – MMS teacher, situation where accommodations refused, contacting Dr. Elizalde was not helpful; students this week had no teacher and no sub. Most are still at home anyway – only 2 kids in the building (went to the library for asynchronous work that was not completed), kids at home still contacting her. Not willing to work for free. ESL kids are not getting inclusion now either. Feels they are willing to throw her away and get her to quit after 31 years in education and almost 20 in the district.
 - CH – those kids – many refugees - have a relationship with Betsy, hearing about similar situations over and over
- Yasmin Wagner – finding ourselves in a district with many longstanding issues that have developed over time. Herculean task of trying to fix things – some things will slip through the cracks, not OK. Hard to understand all individuals in a system this large. Lots of anger and outrage. SI and Trustees certainly own parts of it. Trustees are not in direct management roles – SI search ‘rushed’ in effort to have someone in leadership position during challenging time period.