

2019 SAISD School Board Questionnaire

Name: PATTI RADLE

SAISD Single-Member District #: 5

NOTE from Patti Radle to the Alliance Political Action Team:

I am glad to take this opportunity to respond to your questionnaire. While members of the Alliance Leadership has already expressed publicly that they will put candidates against those of us running for re-election, I am hopeful that you might share this questionnaire with my answers to the general membership. You do not have my permission to republish any part of my answer without the context of my complete response to any individual question and the complete responses you use should be used in relationship to the question asked. I have a fear that, taken out of context, “sound bites” could just add to misunderstandings that exist. Thank you for your patience with this concern.

The QUESTIONNAIRE FROM THE ALLIANCE

PLEASE NOTE: When the question is a multi-part question, please be sure to answer all parts of the question. If there is a question that asks about something with which you are not familiar, please research the issue as this is something you will need to be able to do as a school board member.

1. What do you feel are the most important qualities and skills you bring to the Board?

Love of children and a passion for outstanding education; patience and respect for others; 49 years of living in the economically poorest zip code in the County; 49 years of my life spent working WITH people of poverty to find ways to meet the needs of the community; 48 years directing a grassroots non-profit, working with families within the community I represent; over 20 years of teaching, including 9 years teaching 3rd grade at J.T. Brackenridge in my neighborhood; 4 years of serving on the City Council as a representative of CoSA District 5 and the 8 years of serving on the SAISD Board of Trustee representing SAISD District 5 give me a strong understanding of governance and the responsibility of serving in this public office. I have a history of over 53 years of working on issues of social justice.

2. What do you believe is the single most important issue the district faces right now?

It is a continuous issue about which we must be ever vigilant: hiring and maintaining campus leadership and teachers who truly believe in the capabilities of our children and have the talent to help the children reach their maximum potential while they are in our care and who can do it with love, respect and a joyful creativity.

3. How do your views align with or differ from the current SAISD superintendent's views?

In relevance to education, we are both focused on discovering and taking action on what is the best route to take to ensure outstanding learning for our children and to support our teachers and principals. I sometimes differ with him regarding the pace at which we move. While we really must move with a sense of urgency, my experience in the classroom gives me a reflex to call to consideration how many new things we are bringing to teacher, at what pace, and if we are doing all we can to create a smooth implementation of new initiatives, programs, etc..

4. Do you support or oppose the privatization (contracting out) of the district's custodians, food service employees, trades people, and other support personnel? Why or why not?

I am not in favor of the contracting out of support personnel. Many of our own District families are involved in these positions and I think it is healthy to support and strengthen our district community through employment of qualified residents. I also feel that NOT contracting out is a secure way to assure that we keep on the path of moving toward, and then maintaining, a livable wage for all employees.

5. Do you support or oppose the state law that provides a financial incentive for public school districts to partner with privately-run charters? Do you think that public school districts should partner with privately-run charter schools? Why or why not? As a school board member would you support a resolution declaring the board's opposition to charter partnerships, privatization of schools, and corporate grants intended for privately-managed schools?

I don't oppose things that can increase the possibilities of a stronger delivery of services to our children, but I am opposed to the privatization of our schools. I believe it is our mission to operate as a public school, responsible to the parents and tax payers and that the governance should be tied to the community within which it operates. I support public schools. But I am not willing to block out other education entities/institutions who sincerely want to do good for children and who demonstrate their capabilities in that area. I believe there is room to consider how different institutions can be of help to SAISD without SAISD losing its identity, mission, and core values. I feel it is my responsibility to be attentive to all opportunities that can help our students reach their potential. It is important to point out that all our partnership are held accountable to the board and the board will expect them all to live up to their contract in working toward the District goals we have given.

6. Do you support or oppose the district's contract with Democracy Prep, a privately-run charter from New York City, to operate Stewart ES? Do you support or oppose

the district's contract with Relay Lab Schools, a privately-run charter, to operate Storm and Ogden?

While I am not happy about being forced into the options presented to us by the State when a school is 5 years in IR, I supported contracting with Democracy Prep to save the school from closure, as long as it remained a neighborhood school, accepting all students who register from their geographic area. I support the partnership with Relay Lab. The teachers are ours and the partnership creates a great opportunity for those teachers as well as our students. The progress at this school last year, after being 5 years in IR, is tremendous. With any partnerships we have, I will be watching closely. To continue to have my support, SAISD must see the results expected in the contracts.

7. What are your views regarding “choice” schools? What are your views regarding neighborhood schools and their preservation? What do you think is the appropriate balance between “choice” schools and neighborhood schools and why?

I believe in working to provide and protect options to meet the needs of our families and students while keeping all schools strong, including, our neighborhood schools. A balance would be keeping our neighborhood schools enlivened, keeping up with the latest opportunities for students, while improving access to choice schools in all single-member districts. For example, having more Montessori schools, like Steele, in more neighborhoods would be a great option.

8. Over 90% of our SAISD students are economically disadvantaged. What is your view of the current administration's “diverse by design” initiative in which they aim to create schools, not tied to a neighborhood, in which half of the students come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and half of the students come from middle or upper-middle class backgrounds?

Our entire district lacks diversity. The families who left our district are families who could afford to leave our district or went to charter schools. I think encouraging diversity is an important element, not just to our district but to the City and the Nation.

9. What is your view of the “portfolio model,” embodied in SAISD as the “System of Great Schools?”

In my view of “portfolio model,” I see this as a way to be able to offer many different models of education to our families and children. It opens the door for creativity to meet the various needs of our students and their families. It helps us to turn away from the idea of “one size fits all.” I feel we must find new ways of teaching and learning styles, or ways of returning to those models we know worked in the past. For me it does not include options for privatization. As I mentioned, we must keep

governance of our schools within the view, influence, and authority of our parents and their communities, and certainly of the Board of Trustees.

10. Over the past three years, under the current superintendent, student enrollment in SAISD has dropped by approximately 5,000 students. How would you hold the superintendent accountable for this drop in student enrollment? What ideas do you have for retaining our students and for increasing student enrollment?

Your question seems to assume that the superintendent is responsible for the drop in enrollment. I feel that is not just. Enrollment has been dropping at an accelerated amount since 2010 and even more so most recently in a direct proportion to the number of charter seats that have opened. There are many elements that have contributed to enrollment decline-- charters schools with aggressive recruitment; a threatening federal anti-immigration environment; the insensitivity of the State that gives permission to operate to charters in geography proximity to our schools— sometimes even right across the street. I WENT TO AUSTIN in 2016 TO SPEAK TO THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO PROTEST THEIR LACK OF ATTENTION TO GEOGRAPHIC PLACEMENT OF CHARTERS WHEN I HEARD OF A CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL TRYING TO MOVE IN CLOSE TO LANIER TO OFFER MORE CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY AFTER SAISD HAD JUST FINISHED SPENDING \$34 MILLION ON ITS CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT AT LANIER.

Retaining students? Provide high expectations, and a deeply caring environment, innovation, creativity, more autonomy to the campus and community, true engagement of parents and provide parents what they want for their children. We also need to continue to work harder to let parents know what our offerings are! “Experience SAISD” has been a good start on helping parents see what we have and helping them to get questions answered.

11. Over the past two years, the district has not complied with the state law of no more than 22 students per classroom for K-4th grade due to the district’s District of Innovation status under which they have a waiver from this state law. Would you support removing the class size waiver from the District of Innovation plan so that our K-4th grade classes have no more than 22 students? Would you support a resolution directing the superintendent to work with our union to create reasonable class size limits for other grade levels?

I do feel the elements of this question are over-simplified when there is plenty of explanation for the difficulties of dealing with class size. I do want you to know that, as a former third grade teacher at J.T. Brackenridge Elem., I am a strong advocate for lower class size. I also can support a variance in class size moderately above or significantly below the 22 if it serves the purposes of the campus to better address academic and emotional challenges. I feel the cap-and-share method used in the past

presented a hardship to parents. I think parents would rather see a classroom with 23 children in it versus being told that their 4th grader could attend their neighborhood school because there is a classroom with only 21 students in it but their 2nd grader will have to go to another school because all the 2nd grade classrooms have hit 22.

12. Last Spring, the superintendent recommended, and the school board approved, a “reduction in force” (RIF) of teachers for the first time in SAISD history. 132 teachers were RIF’d purportedly because of the district’s financial situation. Would you support another RIF of teachers and/or support personnel this Spring? Why or why not? If not, what steps would you take to help avoid a RIF?

The strong disproportion between the number of students and the number of teachers we had in the District triggered last year’s RIF. What heartache! It is my expectancy that teacher/student ratios and needed positions will be in balance and that a RIF would not be necessary. A RIF is invasive to morale and a sense of security for teachers. I would not support an additional RIF this spring. To avoid a RIF, I would support seeking the funds to employ teachers and support personnel in creating/ supplementing/ or strengthening additional services for our students to make our campuses more effective, rather than cutting back on effective personnel. But the bottom line is: I am not in support of an additional RIF.

13. This school year, the district began the year with 35 teaching vacancies. In past years, the district has begun the year with no more than 0-5 vacancies. How will you hold the superintendent and the district’s Talent Management Department accountable for this? We have some classes this school year that had a sub all or most of the first semester due to the high number of unfilled teaching vacancies. How will you hold the superintendent and Talent Management accountable for this?

I think Talent Management learned something from this situation this year and has adjusted its attention to this shortfall. I would want to see a “step-up”/ more intensity in the early hiring of teachers for next year in positions that are more difficult to fill with top quality skills, such as, for just one example, teachers in advanced math.

14. Do you support high-stakes state testing of students? Do you support the concept of rewarding teachers based on student test scores? Why or why not? Do you support the concept of rewarding principals based on student test scores? Why or why not?

I am an advocate for less testing—especially the kind that gets labelled “high-stakes.” However, as a teacher, I do think it is important to have a measure of what the student is learning. It is not just a measure of what the student took in, but a measure of how well I was able to help the student learn and I always find that very helpful. Test scores in themselves do not create a clear picture of the student, the teacher or the principal. There must be other elements to evaluate all three. There are things that are difficult to measure, such as the positive effect a teacher has on a student’s

emotional well-being which, in some cases, may be the critical element that enables that student to even pay attention in class. Student progress is an important element in how we see the effectiveness of a teacher. I believe in awarding teachers who are proven to be very effective. What does that mean and how does that happen? What is the award? These are constant questions because we want to retain great teachers but not make teachers growing in experience and wisdom feel “lesser.” The challenges are great. So, we could continue this conversation. We would benefit from input on that from teachers. We want to retain our great teachers. We want to help develop more.

15. What measures do you believe need to be taken to attract teachers and support personnel to our district? What measures do you believe need to be taken to retain them? Do you view experienced teachers and support personnel as an asset or liability? Why or why not?

Retain personnel by giving them a healthy work environment where they can feel good about the work they do, that their ideas are important and considered, and provide decent pay—at least a livable wage, which is the District’s present goal. Make sure the atmosphere on our campuses is one of respect and contains a sense of a family working together to do the best for their children. Provide campus leadership that is sensitive to the needs of our teachers.

I can’t imagine thinking that having experienced teachers and support personnel could not be an asset? A person becomes a liability when they can’t do their job responsibly, respectfully and effectively.

16. Do you support and respect the current SAISD Consultation policy regarding input from employees, including the right of the employees to choose their exclusive representative organization in a secret ballot election? Why or why not?

Yes, I think input from the employees is very important and they should be able to choose who speaks for them at consultation. Input from all stakeholders makes us a better District.

17. For seventeen years, our union partnered with SAISD to provide high-quality, research-based professional development for new teachers that was facilitated by active SAISD teachers. For the 2018-19 school year, the district discontinued the partnership without explanation. New teachers, and those who provide them with support, consistently tell us that they need the support that the partnership provided them. Would you support the reinstatement of this partnership between our union and SAISD?

I think the input from teachers in their own professional development is a good thing and from seeing some of the feedback/evaluation from when this was done in the past,

that this was something that teachers appreciated. I think there should be room for both opportunities within the needs of PD. My first year of teaching in the public school could have been enhanced by having some training from experienced teachers. When it comes to new methods, new policies, new materials, new philosophy, we would benefit from close input from teachers. I support making room for any methods that can give our teachers, new or experienced, a better grasp of the job at hand.

18. From whom have you received support, or expect to receive support, for your campaign? What resources and support will you have to help you run a successful campaign?

My campaign reports will be on line. I do not take money from lobbyist or anyone with a contract to do work for our district. Neighbors and skilled friends and one campaign professional will be working with me.

19. If elected, from whom would you seek advice regarding issues that come before the Board?

Anyone who may have good advice/experience regarding the issues—most importantly, from those who would be affected by the decision on an issue.

20. Would you be willing to meet regularly with Alliance leaders and members to discuss issues and how the implementation of district initiatives play out in the field?

Yes, I have always benefitted by meeting with members of the Alliance. It has always been helpful to meet with groups of teachers and support personnel. The meetings formerly organized by the Alliance have not happened in a long time. Hope we can get back to that.

21. If faced with a decision to stand for what you believe in, for the good of our students, our teachers, our district, and it meant being the only board member for or against an issue, would you stand firm, or decide to follow the rest of the board and change your vote?

I have a solid public record of being the lone vote in many situations while serving in public office.

22. Do you have a personal or professional relationship with the district or its contracting agencies which involves compensation to you or your family members? If yes, please list those.

I have no relationship with the District or its contracting agencies which involves any kind of compensation to me.