

2019 SAISD School Board Questionnaire

Name: Christina Martinez SAISD Single-Member District #: 6

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?

I am a parent of 3 children, who all attend SAISD schools. For the last 20 years I have worked to bring in resources through the various nonprofits I have worked for. It is through this work that I have had the opportunity to step foot in every single SAISD school. I have demonstrated a commitment to excellence and equity as is evident through my contributions to the San Antonio community in both my professional and personal lives.. I am extremely collaborative and able to bring lots of partners and ideas to the table. I am approachable and easy to work with. I care deeply about empowering parents and helping them actualize the power they have to demand that their schools serve each and every child with rigorous instruction and in a caring environment that nurtures their social emotional learning.

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

Declining enrollment due to perception by families that our schools are not producing college and career ready students. The state's failure to fully and equitably fund high-poverty schools is a big part of the problem. Our district is a leading voice in the fight for fair funding in Austin. I am hopeful that our schools will finally get the resources they need. In the meantime, we must do the hard work of making difficult choices that put students first.

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

The Superintendent carries out the vision and policies the board establishes. My view, as well as those of my colleagues on the board and the superintendent, remains focused on doing right by the students we serve. Our children deserve schools that put them on a path toward college and career readiness, and thus lives full of opportunity. Unfortunately, the neglect of past administrations and woefully inadequate funding from the state mean that we have to make hard decisions in the interest of students. That said, we must do more to fully engage parents, educators, and community members in our work. I have been working closely with COPS Metro in an effort to set a strong example and was pleased that the administration has begun working with COPS as well. We have to work to do in terms of stakeholder engagement but I believe we are now on a good path.

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?

The district already contracts out many services, including landscaping during peak rain seasons, specialized trades, etc. I “generally” oppose, unless there is a direct benefit to student academic achievement...meaning if in the future funding lacks and money can be saved to preserve teachers in the classroom then I would review cost/benefit of such.

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?
 - a. Charters are going to exist in our community and the governor’s office is quick to incentivize them. It’s better to work with those that share our values rather than sit by and watch student enrollment decline at even faster rate.
 - b. I think that public school districts should be innovative. These partnerships are bringing millions of dollars into our neighborhood and choice schools. Our kids deserve those extra dollars that are allowing us to bring in the resources that they need.
 - c. I would oppose that resolution. As a school board member, performance contracts actually allow us to have greater control over a school’s action as they are held more accountable than school’s we directly manage. In SAISD boundaries alone, some 13,000 families send their children to external charter schools because they felt their neighborhood schools were not meeting their expectations. If innovative partnerships bring these and other families back to SAISD, and are held accountable for academic performance, then I’d be open to the merits of the proposal on a case-by-case basis. I am against SAISD giving away schools to private control.

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?

I support keeping neighborhood schools open for our neighborhood kids. The schools are carefully monitored through performance contracts and I will support them as long as they are meeting the metrics we set. I have personally visited these schools and met with parents. I will continue to monitor these schools, but at this point the evidence shows that the needs of these families are being met. We owe it to our students to make decisions based on evidence rather than rumor or rigid ideology about school structures.

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?

As a parent who has chosen to keep her kids in SAISD schools I fully understand that all families have “choice” when it comes to picking a school that’s right for them. I fully believe that keeping neighborhood schools open is a priority and I have demonstrated my commitment to this by working with the families of Beacon Hill Academy. Over the last two years we have organized, block walked and brought in 100 new families. Whether it be the rigorous data driven instruction at Gates or the dual language program at Beacon Hill, our neighborhood

schools can become choice options for their communities, the district, and frankly the city as a whole. Therefore, I don't view this situation as either or. Every campus regardless if they have an attendance zone, needs to become a "Choice School" for their subset of families.

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 neighborhoods are segregated. Our city is segregated. Our country is segregated. Segregation goes well beyond the realm of education and is a fundamental societal problem. The research is very clear: When we intentionally integrate schools, the students do better academically and socially. As a parent I have chosen to place my children in schools that are economically diverse. I have chosen to live in a neighborhood that is economically diverse. SAISD neighborhoods are increasingly become more economically diverse. SAISD schools must adapt to remain competitive with other offerings. SAISD's approach to moving away from high poverty segregated schools is a parallel to the neighborhood economic transformation happening across the district in neighborhoods such as Dignowity Hill, Tobin Hill, Beacon Hill, Lone Star, Lavaca, Los Angeles Heights, Monticello Park, Highlands Park, to name a few.

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

The ideology behind "System of Great Schools" is to manage school performance, expand great options, and improve access to those options. Those ideas are in line with my view that we should have as many students as possible attending A and B schools. That being said we need to customize our approach so that it makes sense for all families. I commit to including all stakeholders in this discussion as it takes place.

9. 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?

SAISD enrollment has been declining since the "white flight" of the 1970's. In the last 3 years over 8,000 new TEA-authorized (non-district) charter seats have opened in Bexar County. SB 4 was passed by the Texas legislature, Donald Trump became president, and the birth rate in Bexar County has dropped (thanks SA2020 and your teen-pregnancy prevention work). These issues combined are driving much of SAISD's decline in enrollment. We are not the only district experiencing this.

That being said, we do need to do more to reach every family and assure them that there are options for their children. We had luck canvassing the Beacon Hill community and calling

parents waiting for a choice seat at Twain. Once we got them to the campus and they met the principal and teachers, those families made a choice to join that school.

10. 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?

Over 90% of current SAISD classrooms are under 22 students and 99% of them are under 24 to 1. However the district should issue a clarification statement on current practices to lower class size rather than the disjointed approach it took in 2016. I am happy to bring up a board item to revise the current policy with Alliance input to reach a mutually beneficial understanding.

11. 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?

Ideally the district would never have to RIF teachers. However last year's budget situation made it impossible to avoid. Hopefully additional funds from the legislature would allow the district to provide raises to all school staff and avoid a RIF. If we are unsuccessful in obtaining additional funds from Austin I would order a true zero-based budget before a RIF to ensure that there are no other cost savings that the district can find before enacting a RIF.

12. 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?

This situation occurred this past year with a rocky transition between HR and Talent Management and it should not be repeated again. I would asking for monthly updates to check on staffing numbers to make sure that we are filling vacancies with excellent teachers.

13. 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?

Having a way to measure student growth is incredibly important. Preparing our students for postsecondary success is critical and we need a way to understand and monitor how well we are doing that. Currently high stakes testing is out my hands but I do support reducing the amount of internal assessments (like STARR simulations) when possible. With Master Teachers we have reached a good compromise with allowing high past performance in

combination with a schedule that enables more learning time to be compensated with higher pay. I support that type of increased pay for teachers and principals over a straight merit pay system. That said, we should always be looking for opportunities to improve our system for the benefit of all students and educators

14. 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?

Improving school climate and culture along with creating leadership opportunities for all staff is essential for keeping our teachers in front of the students who need their support, leadership, and guidance. All teachers and support staff should be valued in this district regardless of background or experience.

15. 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 support this. I believe that for the most part this has worked well for the district and its employees.

16. 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?

Before moving forward with reinstating this partnership I would like to see data from this year's new teacher evaluation versus past years. Again, we should always be open to improvement and we may need to make adjustments. Any changes, however, should be based on evidence.

17. 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?

I have received support from SA Kids First PAC as well as other concerned and involved stakeholders. I am doing as much door knocking, visits with neighborhood organizations, and other grassroot engagement as possible.

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

I have and will continue to check in with Alliance Leader Shelly Potter and other leaders who are interested in having a relationship. I have consistently worked to hear all sides. I also make it a point to check in with principals to see what concerns they may face at a campus level. And lastly I work really hard to connect with busy parents.

19. 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?

Absolutely

20. 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 am who I am in this work. When faced with a hard decision I strive to put kids first no matter what. If I felt that voting against the rest of the board was in the best interest of kids then I would have no problem standing alone.

21. 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.

No