



STEVE ADLER FOR AUSTIN MAYOR

BUILDING A STUDENT-CENTERED AUSTIN

September 16, 2014

“Education is the key to Austin’s continued success. We have a moral imperative to give our children the tools they need to succeed. Helping Austin to have the best schools is a critical part of the Mayor’s job – especially when those in charge at the State Capitol have failed to make it a priority. Other Texas mayors have shown us that a focused city can enhance the quality of its children’s education. Kids of all families deserve the same, great opportunities in our schools!” -- Steve Adler

As Mayor, I will focus on these critical areas for education:

- **Create an Education Outreach Coordinator Position in the Mayor’s Office**
- **Foster Partnerships to Address Dropout Rates and Job Training**
- **Maximize High Quality Pre-Kindergarten for Austin Children**
- **Seek Fair and Adequate State Funding Within the State School Finance System**
- **Leverage the Philanthropic Community for Funding and Educational Innovation**
- **Empower the Non-Profit Sector to Advance Education and Social Services**
- **Focus on City Wrap-Around Services to Leverage School Dollars**

Addressing our significant challenges in education will involve some of the same underlying ideas of governance ([SEE HERE](#)) that I have advocated in other policy initiatives. They include:

1. **Help coordinate and leverage the resources** of the City of Austin in public-private collaboration with businesses, nonprofits and philanthropy to support the school districts in their goal of achieving better educational outcomes for all of our learners.
2. **Lead the charge to reform** inadequate and inequitable state tax school finance system measures that unfairly drain financial resources from the Austin community.
3. **Improve efforts** to address poverty and affordability in Austin and the growing disparity of wealth, which are essential components of a successful educational experience.
4. **Improve support and community resources** for community college, particularly as related to workforce training.
5. **Implement** new ways to use public facilities in support of community efforts to address educational challenges.

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The Challenges:

Public education is fundamental to maintaining the good quality of life we enjoy today and building the great city we all want to become. It must be a top priority for the Mayor, working closely with the City Council, school districts and communities within the city's boundaries.¹ Through education, our children obtain critical skills for personal success. As individuals, they will enjoy more productive lives due to the increased opportunities that come from a good education. Moreover, our city benefits from the economic development and stability that results from an educated and able workforce.

When it comes to how public education is administered and financed in Texas, I recognize that Austin's Mayor has little authority. It is not my intention to impose policies and curricula on our public schools. However, in this time of limited resources, I am committed to developing new sources of funding and to bringing the sharpest minds in our community to address the challenges we face in education.

Put simply, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) lacks the financial resources to do the job it wants to do. AISD faces a \$125 million budget shortfall in 2015 that only worsens in future years.¹ This dire situation is due largely to the Texas Legislature's cuts in public education funding in 2011, which resulted in a permanent \$50 million loss in revenue, and the recapture ("Robin Hood") requirement that uses inequitable, inadequate and unfair weighting system that sends much of our local tax dollars to the state.^{2,3,4,5} While I generally support Robin Hood as a constitutionally mandated program, it has to be applied fairly. We should aggressively seek greater state funding and a change in the weights that are used to distribute those monies under recapture. Fairer weights in the school finance system would give AISD another \$90 million this year alone. Overall, Austin students rank high in levels of poverty and bilingualism, and AISD needs extra funding to educate this significantly higher cost student population. This is not just my opinion: On August 28, 2014, the State District Court found that the State was insufficiently funding public education and that the weights used in the funding formula to be improperly "arbitrary, inadequate and unsuitable."⁶

This is not the time to accept the status quo or to underfund critical programs that support the education of our youth. We must all be concerned that the poverty rate for our children ages 0-17 has increased by 121 percent since 2000 throughout the Greater Austin region.⁷ More than 15 percent of Austin's children are living in poverty, and 61.3 percent of AISD students are considered economically disadvantaged.^{8,9} This stark economic reality impacts the ability of our youth to learn, and it is getting worse, despite the best intentions of our school systems and our social safety net. I must emphasize that improving the educational experience of our children also requires us, as a community, to address poverty and affordability in Austin and the growing disparity of wealth. [These topics are addressed in my [affordability agenda](#).]

I recognize that the City of Austin and our school districts have worked together for years, but generally it has been at arm's length, in limited areas, in limited ways, with limited staffing for joint efforts, or with limited time. The next Mayor and new City Council must change this. There are many areas of education, such as curriculum and school policy, where direction is rightly entrusted to the responsible school boards. However, a good working partnership with the Mayor and City Council on

¹ While there will be a large focus on the Austin Independent Schools District (AISD) in this paper as it contains the overwhelming majority of students in the City of Austin. There are still many school districts (Lake Travis, Hays, Eanes, Del Valle, Round Rock, Manor, Pflugerville, and Leander) in the City of Austin. We need to see what support we can give to these districts, too.

supporting matters is increasingly essential because the issues of education, poverty, education financing, workforce and economic development, community success, and quality of life are highly interrelated. We need to improve our lines of communication and strengthen the strategic alignment between the City of Austin and the school districts so we can make the best use of our limited resources. We need to ask more from the business, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors so we can face these many challenges as a unified team. The Mayor, as the only at-large elected member on the City Council, has the vital responsibility to use the considerable powers of the bully pulpit and the ability to convene to help set important community-wide agendas and priorities. And the education of our youth is as important as it gets.

If we are to make a difference for our schools, we need to bring together all these sectors of our diverse community -- business, nonprofits, churches, philanthropists, parents, elected officials throughout the region and dedicated individuals who understand the power of education. I believe there are lots of people who are ready – even eager -- to focus their talents on the task of improving the quality of our schools. With the right leadership we can tap into this resource of energy, ideas, and funding to build a more effective relationship with Austin’s school districts, the County Commissioners Court, the University of Texas, and Austin Community College. The Mayor’s office is the place to gather this resource and start community-wide conversations about quality education, and how to make sure it reaches all of our children and all others who have a desire to learn.

Solutions:

As Mayor, I will be a very vigorous and public advocate for education. I will use the office of Mayor and the resources of the City of Austin to support our school districts in their goal of achieving wonderful educational outcomes for all of our learners.

The office of Mayor is a position of influence, and if I am privileged to occupy that office, I do not intend to waste any opportunity to build consensus – a sense of shared responsibility – on actions can that directly and indirectly contribute to the success of children’s education in our public schools. We will find ways within the office’s existing authority to support great outcomes in education, recognizing that those outcomes are inextricably linked to issues of poverty, opportunity and workforce development. Education will be a top priority for me as Mayor, but not through any involvement with teaching policies or curriculum decisions – that’s the job of the school districts. My goal is to be known as the districts’ staunchest supporter in the public arena.

The City of Austin, Central Texas school districts, generous foundations, and nonprofits already invest heavily in improving educational outcomes and providing social services to our children. However, there is room for significant and material improvement to ensure that public and private efforts are coordinated appropriately and that our collective dollars are being spent wisely.

As Mayor, working together with the Mayor’s Education Outreach Coordinator and the school districts, I will provide leadership that focuses on several critical areas. My administration will:

- **Create an Education Outreach Coordinator Position in the Mayor’s Office**
- **Foster Partnerships to Address Dropout Rates and Job Training**
- **Maximize High Quality Pre-Kindergarten for Austin Children**
- **Seek Fair and Adequate State Funding Within the State School Finance System**
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CREATE AN EDUCATION OUTREACH COORDINATOR IN THE MAYOR'S OFFICE

As an initial step in addressing our educational challenges, I will create the position of Education Outreach Coordinator in the Mayor's Office. The Coordinator will facilitate community focus on critical shared policies as well as programs such as those described below. To improve the effectiveness of the City's participation in these and other efforts, the Coordinator will be on the Mayor's staff and report directly to the Mayor. He or she will coordinate directly with stakeholders and the independent school districts and will have primary responsibility to:

Promote communication and collaboration among the City, business community, foundations, nonprofits, and school districts on issues relating to students and young people.

- Join with the districts and other strategic and funding partners to set overall priorities, and then work to mobilize public and private resources to achieve those goals.
- Examine current city and philanthropic spending on children's issues to clarify the current status of our efforts and then propose strategic priorities, by focusing on programs having quantifiable and proven results.
- Assist help service providers in designing performance metrics focusing their efforts and best leverage their good works.
- Engage Austin's families directly in meaningful conversations to gather information and then regularly seek their input and feedback on programs addressing child-related needs.

We live in a generous city with many people who want to engage in supporting our schools. The Mayor's office can do a lot to facilitate that activity. There is much work to be done in Austin to ensure that we also follow a results-oriented and children-first approach in our programmatic spending.

FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS DROPOUT RATES AND JOB TRAINING

While we have recently seen a positive trend in high school attendance and graduation rates, we all know there is much room for improvement. Central Texas traditionally has had poorer student attendance than the state average in every grade, especially among lower-income students.¹⁰ AISD, which covers over 80 percent of Austin, has done well to introduce an early warning system, which tracks students who fall behind, miss class or otherwise show signs that their long-term success may be in jeopardy. AISD has reported having an all-time high graduation rate of 84.1 percent and it's getting better each year.¹¹ However, this still leaves 9.1 percent of students who quit school, the overwhelming majority of whom are low-income African American and Hispanic residents.² It is a sad fact that roughly one out of every five African American and Hispanic students will drop out.^{12,13}

Dropping out of school usually leads to a severe economic disadvantage, and not just for the individual. Every dropout costs the taxpayers money, both directly in lost state revenues to the school districts (where school finance is based in large part on student attendance) and indirectly from an increased likelihood of dependence on government assistance or incarceration. The economic loss, let alone the lost human potential, is staggering:

² The remaining 6.8 percent accounts for GED graduates and students who require more than four years to graduate high school.

- Every day a student is absent from school costs the school district \$45 in revenue.¹⁴ In total, Central Texas loses \$91 million in revenue every year from student absences.¹⁵
- If AISD alone had 100 percent attendance, this would generate roughly \$30 million in additional funds that would support educational programs.¹⁶
- Over the course of their lives, dropouts from the 2012 graduating class are projected to cost the Central Texas region \$450 million in lost income, reduced tax revenue, and increased social expenditures.^{17,18}
- Roughly 75 percent of state prison inmates nationwide are dropouts.¹⁹
- Over 75 percent of dropouts later said if they could relive the experience, they would have stayed in school.²⁰

To address the dropout problem, we must recognize that the students who typically drop out come from predominantly low-income households, which further exacerbates the extent of economic segregation in our city. Most major challenges that we face as a City can be tied directly or indirectly to the success of our educational programs.

We need to empower champions of dropout prevention and dropout recovery and we need to ensure that their efforts are connected to our workforce training and placement programs at the local, county and state levels.²¹ For example, the Joint AISD / City of Austin / Travis County Commissioners Committee has taken steps to address dropout recovery, including finding ways to bring students, up to age 25, back to school through evening programs.²² This Joint Committee has also made an effort to identify social services, juvenile justice and employment issues affecting a student's ability to stay in school and graduate. We should continue these efforts and look to supporting programs that provide multiple paths to graduation, such as night schools and non-traditional settings that ensure every student has access.

It is critical that when we talk about increasing graduation rates and getting those at-risk students the skills they need to join the workforce, we creatively bring all the resources of the city and the entire Central Texas region in a coordinated effort.

As Mayor, my appointment of a new Education Outreach Coordinator will provide a specific person within my office who is tasked to work collaboratively with the Joint Committee and other key partners toward achieving a central goal: to give all our students a high school education. Relevant and interested parties, by way of example, might include other regional school districts, Austin Police Department, the United Way of Greater Austin, E3 Alliance, Austin Community College, Texas Workforce Commission, Goodwill of Central Texas, Austin Area Urban League, Austin Chamber of Commerce, Greater Austin Black Chamber, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Austin Regional Manufacturers Association and others.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION FOR AUSTIN CHILDREN

Austin must expand and improve access to pre-kindergarten education for three and four year old children. Few other policy initiatives have the proven ability to boost graduation rates, increase future earnings, bolster our local workforce, and reduce future costs to the City than high quality pre-kindergarten education. Every public dollar spent on high quality early education yields \$7 in savings on public assistance and criminal justice programs, according to estimates from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.²³

Other cities in Texas and across the United States, including San Antonio, are expanding both access to and the quality of pre-kindergarten services. Notwithstanding existing limitations in local and state funding, it is imperative that we ensure that every child gains access to a high quality pre-kindergarten education. Recent research on brain development underscores the importance of the earliest years, so it is essential that we support children before they turn four years old.

Pre-K efforts are underway in the Austin community. For example, AISD has done a great job in offering free full-day pre-kindergarten education for economically eligible four year old children and their families. Even though the district only receives funding from the State for a half-day program, AISD is able to offer full-day pre-kindergarten education by coordinating efforts with the local Head Start program, Child Inc., as well as providing fee-based education to the remaining four year-olds in the district.²⁴ However, there are several school districts within the city limits where Austin, where children do not receive this same opportunity. Even within AISD there are still hundreds of four-year-olds who qualify for but do not attend free pre-kindergarten education and we must do more to locate eligible families and help them with enrollment in order for their children to have access to pre-kindergarten education.

Many states across the country are seeing early success with pre-kindergarten initiatives, but regardless of the approach, any successful initiative must address both access and quality. Merely increasing the number of available pre-kindergarten seats will not guarantee improved developmental outcomes or the educational success of our city's youngest children. In addition to access, a focus on the quality of both personnel and the curriculum is vital. Studies have shown clearly that a combination of full-day instruction and a low student-teacher ratio quality will result in dramatically improved quality.^{25,26,27,28}

As Mayor, I will launch a pre-kindergarten initiative aimed at helping to institutionalize pre-K for three and four year olds in our city as one of Mayor's Education Outreach Coordinator's highest priority projects. Ultimately, our goal is to work toward ensuring that every child has the opportunity to attend high quality full-day pre-kindergarten. Given our funding constraints, it is clear that there are many obstacles to ultimately achieving this. However, it will be one of my highest priorities to find and utilize all existing opportunities and fight to open the door for new opportunities.

The Mayor of Austin should join forces with local school districts and others to create a vision for pre-kindergarten education and then collaborate with business, philanthropic, nonprofit and educational communities to bring that vision to reality. Given ongoing state budget cuts, it becomes all the more important to engage with external participants in developing public-private partnerships. I shall use every tool at my disposal, though it is not anticipated the City government would fund this program directly. The Mayor's office will use its resources to recruit and convene partners, both government and nongovernmental, in order to achieve quality early education for Austin children.

Many outside partners have already expressed great interest in supporting pre-kindergarten expansion in our region. The United Way for Greater Austin's strategic program of "Success by 6" and E3 Alliance's "Ready, Set, K" are great examples of key strategic partnerships that the City should vigorously support and seek to expand.^{29,30}

It is also my intention as Mayor of Austin to secure more extensive funding and strategic resources, through public and private sector collaboration in order to strengthen, expand, and increase access. Such efforts may include opportunities to identify, modify and utilize City or private facilities for the use of pre-kindergarten programs for three year olds to be incorporated into AISD's program. I am

supportive of Manor ISD's pre-kindergarten program for three-year-olds as well as the AISD's pilot programs and the local Head Start program, currently in place.

I will seek to expand these efforts through public/private partnerships. For example, available facilities are a limiting factor in providing pre-K for three year olds and we need to see if there are opportunities to identify, modify and utilize City or private facilities for such use. Also, I will pursue every federal and foundation dollar available for full-time pre-kindergarten for our children. For example, we need to revisit whether and how there might be opportunities to pull down the available State money for three year olds. Working together, we should be able to find ways to bridge challenges like finding available facilities that could be made ready and funding qualified instructors and teachers.

The Education Outreach Coordinator will help coordinate pre-kindergarten programs and collaborative efforts with the private sector. He or she will work with the City's Early Childhood Council, which is made up of very talented professionals in the field of early childhood education.³¹ This Council should be encouraged and empowered to expand their work with the school districts of Austin, non-profit organizations, private early education providers, and philanthropic organizations to ensure that all three and four-year-olds in our City have access to high quality pre-kindergarten education.

SEEK FAIR AND ADEQUATE STATE FUNDING WITHIN THE STATE SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEM

School funding is primarily dependant on the state school finance system. Under this system's broad parameters, property tax revenue raised locally is shared across the state so as to generally (but certainly not perfectly) equalize available funds for all schools, giving students in poorer regions of the state a relatively equal opportunity. This system is referred to as the "Robin Hood" plan.

Under this system, AISD raised \$827.9 million for FY2014 with its property tax levy. \$128.3 million of that total will end up going to the State for redistribution elsewhere.^{32,33} By FY2015 that recapture amount will increase to \$175.5 million and by FY2018 a third of every M&O tax dollar will be sent back to the State.^{34,35} We do not keep in Austin as much of the money raised locally as we should. But that is not because of the Robin Hood concept. That concept is constitutionally mandated and required for equity and will not change in the foreseeable future.

Austin is short-changed in school funding because the State generally underfunds education. Another reason is the unfairness of the weights employed in the school finance system. These weights have not been updated since at least the early 1990s, specifically for economically challenged and bilingual students.³⁶ A great deal has changed since then. Updating these weights would enable AISD to keep much of the money it is currently sending away.

The state system of school finance recognizes that some students are more expensive to educate than others. Specifically, the system uses factors to account for the increased cost of educating students, two of which are: (1) students from financially challenged homes are weighted 20% higher than otherwise average student, and (2) the state accounts for the increased cost of educating a bilingual student at 10% more than the average student. AISD keeps some portion amount more of its locally raised property tax to account for these differences.

But these weights are not fair, just or appropriate. As has been raised by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) in the current school finance lawsuit in Travis

County district court, the cost to educate students in these two weight classes is greater than indicated by the weights used. Specifically, based on the expert testimony admitted in that lawsuit, the weight for financially challenged students should be 40% (twice the existing weight) and also should be 40% for bilingual students (four times the existing weight).^{37,38} [Recent development: On August 28, 2014 the State District Court found that the State was insufficiently funding public education and that the weights used in the funding formula to be improperly “arbitrary, inadequate and unsuitable.”]

The financially challenged student number in AISD is growing and the number of bilingual students in AISD is one and a half to twice the state average. We need to ensure that the State is accurately and fairly allowing Austin to keep the local funds necessary to equitably educate our students.

In numbers confirmed with David Hinojosa, Southwest Regional Counsel for MALDEF and attorney in the district court lawsuit, if those weights were changed to reflect the true additional cost of educating these Austin students, then this year AISD would be keeping about \$90 million that it is sending away. This is a problem that particularly impacts the quality of life for teachers in AISD whose salaries are not only the lowest among the largest Texas cities, but in the bottom tier of all other school districts in the Greater Austin area.³⁹ As Austin is now the most expensive city in the state, we have to do better to fight for our educators by improving the fairness in our education funding system.^{40,41}

It is unfair to expect our legislative delegation to make this fight by themselves. I would seek to institutionalize further coalitions of Mayors to intensify and focus a bi-partisan political force that could have additional impact at the legislature. We should be prepared to litigate this issue to seek just, fair and equitable measures should the question not be decided with the final resolution of the present lawsuit.

LEVERAGE PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY FOR FUNDING AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

City government must establish a closer relationship with its philanthropists who too often have been seen only as a source of money and are not recognized fully as thought leaders, strategic partners and investors. The staff and trustees of many foundations have a deep knowledge of challenges and potential solutions for education, both locally and nationally. And I know that they are keenly interested in helping Austin develop the best strategies for our educational system to achieve the best results. We need to engage the philanthropic community for its thought leadership, innovative ideas, public outreach and proven results to find creative approaches to tough problems in education.

For example, Austin can enhance its relationship with the Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium, which manages state-level policy development and advocacy for foundations involved with public education. The Consortium is the largest group of Texas foundations ever to collaborate on any policy issue. Similar outreach should be made to the Central Texas Education Funders.

Philanthropists’ own grant portfolios serve as a testing ground for good ideas. We need input from Austin-area foundations about what they know is working in Austin public schools and what can be enhanced. We should use their experience and focused investments as one aspect of the City of Austin’s programmatic research and development functions. City and school district programs should have the opportunity to tap into these lessons learned about the allocation of scarce resources to tackle education challenges.

There are local school enhancement activities going on across the city and it would be no surprise that those activities in more affluent communities are able to generate more resources for their schools than can be generated for schools in less affluent communities. The Mayor can and should be using the power of the bully pulpit to encourage and drive the more affluent communities to contribute to the enhancement of all the city's schools generally not only because it is fair, but also because expanding and supporting opportunities in all our schools helps everyone and improves our collective quality of life and future potential.

Working to develop strong public-private partnerships with area philanthropists is a smart way to leverage resources in order to have a larger impact in improving public education in our city. As Mayor, I would work with leading philanthropists, foundations and civic investors, municipal and school district advisory boards and committees, as well as with school boards and district administrators, to integrate philanthropic expertise and financial support, collectively providing a depth of experience and breadth of ideas that may be critical for the Austin education movement.

EMPOWER THE NONPROFIT EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR

Austin can and must do much more to facilitate and encourage the work of nonprofits that support our schools and at-risk students. The City should partner with its many notable nonprofits, many of which are working on some of our city's toughest education and health and human services issues. Austin's nonprofits provide a wide variety of vital services to public schools and their students, ranging from crisis counseling, nutrition, arts education, and college application assistance. Because of their commitment and resources, the City of Austin must take a more coordinated approach to working with and supporting the needs of our region's nonprofit educational, workforce training and social services sectors. Other large cities have succeeded in this area through the creation of strategic partnership offices at the City and County level to share innovations and best practices between local government and the nonprofit sector.⁴² The more involved these Austin nonprofits are, the stronger Austin's education system will be.

In order to ensure we are best utilizing non-profits, the Mayor's Education Outreach Coordinator will be tasked as liaison to work directly with Austin's nonprofit organizations. These tasks include:

- Lower barriers for nonprofits to cooperate with city and other governmental entities.
- Emphasize best practices to ensure efficiency and collective impact based on proven results.
- Promote partnerships and support grant/contracting applications that would increase state and federal investments in Austin.
- Develop policies to promote growth of social enterprise organizations and micro-credit funds to help nonprofits or their constituents open businesses.
- Promote volunteerism and service learning opportunities that have measurable social and economic impact in the community.
- Coordinate and facilitate support for community non-profits that support children and students (as discussed in greater detail in the following section).

FOCUS ON CITY "WRAP-AROUND" SERVICES TO LEVERAGE SCHOOL DOLLARS

When we look at those children who struggle academically (or socially or have behavior issues) at school, we see that they often live in low-income families, struggle with language barriers, or have difficult family dynamics, health issues or other special needs. It is essential that the City of Austin participate in bringing all available organizations together to ensure these children and their families

receive the resources and support they need to be successful in school and in life. As Mayor, I will seek opportunities for the City to deliver its social services in the schools and treat them as community centers. I will also encourage the work of other organizations to promote the adoption of localized operating models in an expanded community collaborative.

For example, Austin Voices for Education and Youth has shown considerable leadership in mobilizing communities to improve the most underserved schools in Austin. Their model of engaging with students, parents, teachers, staff and local non-profits has shown great success at several Austin schools.^{43,44} Additionally, the work of Austin Voices, the Austin Project and the United Way for Greater Austin to build Family Resource Centers are great examples of the type of community outreach that can provide critical support to the most vulnerable students and their families.

In instances of extreme poverty and abuse or neglect, Austin should take measures to expand home visiting programs for children. In this area, our city could greatly benefit from stronger relationships with great organizations like Avance-Austin, the Home Visiting Campaign of the Pew Charitable Trusts and Raising Texas, as well as the Children's Partnership with Travis County Health and Human Services.⁴⁵

As Mayor, I also will encourage community mobilization by seeking greater use of school buildings as venues for providing social service functions to enhance schools as community centers. This focus should be augmented with City maintained facilities located in communities such as parks, libraries, community centers, and other public facilities that can serve as out-of-school venues for fun, learning, delivery of social services and community building for both children and parents. Additional ways to encourage the use of these facilities will be explored by the nonprofit liaison staff member to achieve the highest collective impact.

We need to examine ways to maximize the local tax base in driving educational programs by looking at the City's tax efforts in conjunction with that of the school districts. Property tax revenue raised by the city for the delivery of social services can be spent entirely on such social services. But property tax revenue raised by AISD for providing social services does not all go to those services because the Robin Hood finance plan requires that a significant part of that revenue be returned to the State. If the City were to step in and assume responsibility for providing certain social services that were otherwise provided by AISD, two things would happen. All of the City money raised locally raised for those social services would go to providing local services. Additionally, AISD would then be able to redirect its revenues away from services now being provided by the City and towards increased funding for the direct delivery of education. We should explore the City and the school districts adjusting their respective tax rates in a cooperative way (the "Austin Two-Step") that would result in a neutral tax effect for Austin citizens (no change in net taxes), no decrease in social services provided in our schools, but with the result being increased spending on education.

CONCLUSION

It is critical for the future of Austin that we focus now on improving the education of our youth. To be successful, we must enlist the ideas, experience and financial resources of the business, philanthropic and nonprofits sectors. And we must recognize that improving the educational experience of our children also requires us, as a community, to address poverty and affordability in Austin and the growing disparity of wealth. A solution grounded in a broad-based community approach must be an urgent priority of the next Mayor and new City Council. As Mayor, it is my goal to unite the efforts of all relevant parties to be a unified force in education for all of Austin.

CITATIONS

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- ³⁹ Austin Independent School District, FY 2015 Preliminary Budget (austinisd.org)
- ⁴⁰ Austin Business Journal, Policy Group Finds Austin Most Expensive City in Texas (bizjournals.com/Austin)
- ⁴¹ Housing Works (housingworks.org)
- ⁴² Denver Office of Strategic Partnerships (<http://www.denvergov.org/>)
- ⁴³ Austin Voices for Education and Youth (austinvoices.org)
- ⁴⁴ Interview, Austin Voices for Education and Youth
- ⁴⁵ Interview, Travis County Health and Human Services, Office of Children Services