



**Austin Kids First Action Voter Packet  
District 9 November 6, 2018 Elections**

**Who is Austin Kids First Action?** The purpose of Austin Kids First Action is to find, support and elect great school board leaders. We believe that great school board leaders possess the skills necessary to make informed decisions with every Austin ISD kid in mind. We exist to engage voters about the importance of school board elections and provide actionable information about public school governance. In an attempt to increase voter turnout and engagement, Austin Kids First Action wants to reach out to every Austin ISD stakeholder and clearly outline candidate strengths and weaknesses in actionable information cards.

**What's a Candidate Information Card?** Austin Kids First Action has given each candidate a score from "Exceptional" to "Weak" based on:

1. Written responses to Candidate Questionnaires
2. Personal meetings with candidates
3. Voting Records (if applicable) and other publicly available data

**Are Austin Kids First information cards transparent?** Careful documentation has gone into our information cards, and voters can easily understand scores by reviewing the candidate rubric and the candidate questionnaires, which are all posted on [www.akfaction.org](http://www.akfaction.org)

**What qualities define great school board candidates?**

We believe that great school board leaders are those who have experience practicing good governance and who will be advocates for all kids in Austin ISD. Great school board leaders are aware of the challenges and opportunities that exist within the district and with their constituents. We want to empower leaders who seek collaboration and dialogue with a broad coalition of stakeholders, instead of creating divisions or pursuing personal agendas. The candidates that we endorse are strong advocates of public schools. We look for those who will prioritize kids and their schools. Finally, these candidates possess the experience and desire to be effective in improving educational outcomes for all kids in Austin. We believe that our rubric below describes the ideal candidate.

District	Location	Voting Date
9	At-large	November 6, 2018

Candidate Name	Arati Singh	Carmen Tilton	Sam Russo
<b>Election Status</b>	Challenger	Challenger	Challenger
<b>Experience</b>	4.0	3.0	2.0
<b>Issues Awareness</b>	3.5	3.5	1.5
<b>Vision and Priorities</b>	3.5	3.0	1.5
<b>Efficacy</b>	3.5	2.5	1.5
<b>Overall</b>	3.6	3.0	1.6

<b>Arati Singh</b>		
<b>Trait</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Former bilingual teacher and current AISD parent</li> <li>) Served in various volunteer leadership roles at the campus and district level</li> <li>) Professional background in designing and evaluating K-12 &amp; University programs as well as starting and managing her own company</li> <li>) Demonstrated success in setting and reaching organizational goals when integrating Oak Hill PTA</li> </ul>	4.0
<b>Issues Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Articulated understanding of the historical and nuanced challenges and opportunities facing Austin ISD</li> <li>) Firm grasp on root causes and key stakeholders of significant issues</li> <li>) Commitment to building relationships throughout the district</li> </ul>	3.5
<b>Vision and Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Outlines a vision of student success to include postsecondary success and addressing the needs of the whole child</li> <li>) Articulates long-term vision as well as short-term goals</li> <li>) Prioritizes improving equity in opportunity and outcomes</li> </ul>	3.5
<b>Efficacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Focused on building consensus for difficult decisions</li> <li>) Has plans to lay out criteria for evaluating budget decision holistically and objectively</li> <li>) Understands the role of the board and articulates specific ways to hold the superintendent accountable</li> </ul>	3.5
<b>Overall</b>	<p><b>Ms. Singh's experience as a teacher, parent, and leader on various AISD committees makes her a strong candidate for the at-large position. She has a vision for helping the board make tough decisions while maintaining focus on student outcomes. She takes a thoughtful and attentive approach to governance that demonstrates awareness of divergent viewpoints and a willingness to build consensus.</b></p>	3.6

<b>Carmen Tilton</b>		
<b>Trait</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Experience in a state agency as well as state-level government</li> <li>) Demonstrated success in analyzing information and understands the role of policy within a system</li> <li>) Limited leadership in governance, task forces, and work within AISD</li> </ul>	3.0
<b>Issues Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Deep understanding of budget issues but lacks a clear understanding of other academic and programmatic concerns within AISD</li> <li>) Limited knowledge of various perspectives and interests that underlie disagreements on the AISD board</li> </ul>	3.5
<b>Vision and Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Commitment to going beyond "good enough" ensuring all schools have the attention and resources to succeed</li> <li>) Clear priority of addressing the district's budget shortfalls and implementing a comprehensive budget strategy, however, vision for addressing other priorities - including those of inequity - lack the same level of specificity</li> </ul>	3.0
<b>Efficacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Understands of the roles of the board and executive</li> <li>) Prior evidence of success, however, primarily at the programmatic, not organizational level</li> <li>) Gravitates to utilization of political pressure as a lever over building consensus</li> <li>) She has such expertise in budgetary issues that she may be singularly focused on that as a lever for addressing AISD's vast array of issues</li> </ul>	2.5
<b>Overall</b>	<p><b>Ms. Tilton would bring a command of policy and strong ability to analyze data. Her experience and commitment to serving kids as well as her willingness to push for innovative solutions are solid. While willing to learn, she lacks specific knowledge about AISD and the nuance of the local educational landscape.</b></p>	3.0

Sam Russo		
Trait	Description	Score
<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Experience and leadership on district committees</li> <li>) Demonstrated commitment to Austin kids evidenced by years of volunteer service</li> <li>) Limited policy and board governance experience</li> </ul>	2.0
<b>Issues Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Focus on "customer service" between district and community</li> <li>) Knowledge of school-specific challenges but significant gaps in district-wide struggles including inequities</li> <li>) Lacks demonstrated understanding of trade-offs when addressing some issues over others</li> </ul>	1.5
<b>Vision and Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Vision and priorities didn't address key issues faced by the district, focused on discrete operational issues</li> <li>) Advocates for improvements based on the District's current priorities and provides a general commitment to ensuring all students receive a quality education</li> </ul>	1.5
<b>Efficacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Demonstrated success in leading community-based organizations and program</li> <li>) Interactions show a capacity for speaking and incorporating multiple perspectives to build consensus</li> <li>) Lack of specific knowledge about the entire district could propose challenges to enact change effectively</li> </ul>	1.5
<b>Overall</b>	<p><b>Mr. Russo has a commitment to students and improving Austin ISD. His passion for integrating community feedback as a tool for continuous improvement is inspiring. His knowledge of governance as a tool to improve student outcomes is limited.</b></p>	1.6



## 2018 Austin Kids First PAC Endorsement Rubric

<i>Trait</i>	<i>Description of Scoring</i>		
	<b>Strong (4.0)</b>	<b>Moderate (2.0)</b>	<b>Weak (0)</b>
<b>Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>)] Valuable and relevant experience to the board</li> <li>)] Prior service as a board member or in other leadership roles</li> <li>)] Demonstrated history of problem-solving in governance</li> <li>)] Demonstrated successes in setting and reaching organizational goals</li> <li>)] Demonstrated commitment to Austin kids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>)] Some previous tangible successes that demonstrate problem-solving skills</li> <li>)] Some relevant experience to the board</li> <li>)] Demonstrated commitment to service, but not in direct service of kids</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>)] Lack of demonstrated successes in similar environments</li> <li>)] Limited relevant experience to the board</li> </ul>
<b>Issues Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>)] Demonstrates an understanding of the various perspectives and interests that underlie disagreements within Austin ISD's board</li> <li>)] Demonstrates an understanding of the root causes underpinning key issues as well as the policies and practices that influence these issues</li> <li>)] Knowledgeable of unique challenges facing individual districts versus district as a whole and can articulate tradeoffs that might occur when addressing some issues over others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>)] Has a general familiarity with Austin ISD's challenges, but lacks command of data</li> <li>)] Conversant with some key areas of division within Austin ISD's board, but not able to articulate the varying perspectives clearly</li> <li>)] Has limited knowledgeable of unique challenges facing individual district versus district as a whole and lacks a thorough understanding of tradeoffs that might occur when addressing some issues over others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>)] Is unaware of key issues facing Austin ISD, or defines them one-dimensionally</li> <li>)] Lacks understanding of different perspectives and interests on the AISD school board.</li> <li>)] Unaware of unique challenges facing individual district versus district as a whole and does not understand the tradeoffs that might occur when addressing some issues over others OR shows a clear preference for own individual district priorities over that of the whole</li> </ul>



<p><b>Vision &amp; Priorities -</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Able to articulate and defend a set of priorities for Austin ISD’s short-term and long-term future</li> <li>) Advocates for tangible improvements and clear plans of action in Austin ISD’s areas of need</li> <li>) Unequivocal commitment to policies that promote achievement and opportunity for all students</li> <li>) Effectively articulates how to balance needs of individual district vs. district as a whole</li> <li>) Sense of personal accountability for student achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Has priorities for service as Austin ISD trustee, but they are general ones, or lack a clear justification</li> <li>) Appreciates the importance of improving student achievement and opportunity, but does not clearly prioritize them over other goals or concerns</li> <li>) Commitment to policies that promote opportunity for all students, but lacks commitment to equitable outcomes</li> <li>) Articulates willingness to balance needs of individual district vs. district as a whole without specific tactics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Lacks priorities, or relies on unsupported and/or anecdotal reasons in selecting priorities</li> <li>) Shows willingness to subordinate student achievement and opportunity to political considerations</li> <li>) Lacks commitment to serving all students in Austin</li> </ul>
<p><b>Efficacy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Student success is top priority in policy-setting, budget goals and superintendent accountability</li> <li>) Shows capacity to seek and build support for changes</li> <li>) Student success drives decision making</li> <li>) Conversant with key data (academic, fiscal, demographic, growth trends, etc.) and community priorities, utilizing both to make decisions in the interest of all students.</li> <li>) Works with a sense of urgency</li> <li>) Understands the relationship between the board and executive, and how their roles are distinct and articulate specific examples on how to use board role to support students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Student success one of many factors but not top priority</li> <li>) Limited capacity to build support for change</li> <li>) General awareness of the board’s function but unable to articulate specific actions board members can take to influence change</li> <li>) Aware that current policy and practices impact key data, but unable to articulate specifics contributing to the impact. (root cause)</li> <li>) Lacks a sense of urgency for improvement</li> <li>) Instances of success in fostering change are personal rather than organizational, or otherwise, do not demonstrate efficacy in guiding an organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>) Non-student factors play disproportionate role in decision making</li> <li>) May promote inaction or status quo by creating impediments or discord, or by pursuing own agenda</li> <li>) Unclear about the board’s role, or defines objectives in a way suggesting micromanagement of staff</li> <li>) Unaware of root causes underlying key issues and the policies and practices that influence them</li> </ul>