



Houston ISD School Board Candidates Share Their Positions on Arts Education

*HISD Board of Education seats for District I, V, VI, VII and XI are up for election this year.
Be sure to vote November 2nd, 2021 or vote early from October 18th through October 29th, 2021.*

As part of Art Connect Houston's mission to ensure that every student in Houston has access to the benefits of an arts-rich education, we recently invited Houston ISD School Board candidates to express their views on the role of arts education in the district.

We would like to sincerely thank each and every candidate who took the time to share their views and opinions on this important issue, and commend them for their service.

The candidates in this year's School Board election include:

District I:

Elizabeth Santos
Janette Garza Linder
Matias Kopinsky

District V:

Sue Deigaard
Maria Benzon
Caroline Walter

District VI:

Holly Maria Flynn Vilaseca
Kendall Baker
Gregory Degeyter

District VII:

Anne Sung
Dwight Jefferson
Bridget Wade
Lee Macerlaen Walker

District XI:

Myrna Guidry
Gerry Monroe
Joshua Rosales

Each candidate was provided the same survey and their responses are presented below (in their entirety and unedited.) They are presented by district.

District I

Elizabeth Santos, District I

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

Public schools afforded me the many benefits of an arts education. Burbank MS and Sam Houston HS both had great band programs, where I not only learned to play the clarinet (among other instruments) but also formed long-lasting friendships. The arts were a refuge for me, a way to find meaning and identity. And while band was my artistic outlet, I have seen so many of my students thrive when our schools offered them opportunities from singing solos in the choir to building art cars.



What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

Students are not interchangeable parts in a machine. They are individuals with individual needs and paths. Arts education from an early age through more specialized programs in high school is valuable in itself, no matter how it affects other "outcomes" measured by test scores, attendance or anything else. It is essential to our democracy because it provides a shared cultural language. I have no doubt that having an enriching experience in the arts improves academic performance, and we should remember that when funding for the arts is threatened. More importantly, we need to recognize that schools must offer students and communities opportunities that they find meaningful. Our job as educators is to serve students for their own benefit and the benefit of their communities.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

Equitable access to arts education should be an absolute minimum requirement in our schools. The arts are not a luxury; they are an indispensable part of all students' progress towards growth and maturity. The arts open doors to the world for students who start life with far fewer opportunities than others.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

Our district--like many throughout the state--has structural barriers in its policy that prevent the stable development of arts programs in schools. We put test scores before everything else, including the arts. A school that is struggling to bring test scores up to passing levels is likely to cut a fine arts teacher to hire a STAAR tutor. Part of my role as a policy leader, as I see it, is to show education stakeholders the harm caused by the obsession with "outcomes" in the form of test scores alone. We cannot honestly say that arts education is important on one hand while defending rating systems that reduce schools to a single letter-grade based on their test scores.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

Arts education is a right, not a privilege! We cannot leave a child's access to the arts to school principals under enormous pressure to raise test scores. At the bare minimum, arts programs should be centrally funded for all schools.

Janette Garza Lindner, District I

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

The arts, and especially music, are a thread that weaves throughout my life. I was essentially an only child and spent much of my time singing along to the radio and recording songs on my little tape player. I joined the choir in elementary and continued singing through high school where I made friends that still hold firm today. My obsession with the Beatles took me to the far corners of street markets during my study abroad trip to Bangkok to collect bootleg album copies and my love of 70's music earned me the chance to sing with our favorite singer at the local pub. I met my future husband on a road trip to Dallas where we spent 4-5 hours talking about our favorite musicians, albums, and songs, and when we arrived I knew I met my match. Now our lives are full of silly songs from the kids' radio



station we listen to, even when the kids are not in the car. Houston Cecilia Chamber Choir has been a constant in my life for the last 10 years. It carried me through our children's births, my mother's death, and all the other major life events in between. The feeling of singing with a group of talented singers is like no other experience I've had and I wish everyone could know the restorative and healing power of music. The arts are a constant in my life - it helps me see life through the eyes of others and is a reminder we are all connected by a human bond. Even if we disagree on policies or politics, we may find common ground through a favorite song, painting, dance troupe, movie, musical, or play.

What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

The arts are essential to a complete education. Thanks to the work of ACH and others, researchers continue to find more evidence that shows how arts education increases attendance, has significant positive SEL benefits and is directly linked to improved academic success from elementary through college and career. Many seem to inherently know this or "feel" this is true, but we now benefit from the work of many institutions that have gathered data to prove this fact. I saw it when our children were doing virtual learning, our daughter crying through a reading class, but happy and dancing around during creative movement class. I heard it from the choir teacher I met who said his virtual choir class was full of students who were not even registered to be in his class - they wanted to sing with their classmates and do something they enjoyed. The more we can integrate arts into our children's education beyond arts classes, the more pathways to learning we can create. We can reach more children's minds through their hearts and develop more ways to help them learn and excel.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

I see a huge value in our ability to accelerate the improvement of student outcomes for our Houston children by leveraging the arts. We have huge pandemic-related learning losses. This is compounded by the already existing inequities in our school system that the pandemic made all too apparent. Expanding arts education provides our students with proven teaching methods that will help re-engage them in school and make learning FUN! Integrated arts education will support the whole child with positive SEL benefits and will result in improved student outcomes, which must be our goal as school board trustees.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

I will continue to advocate for fine arts education to be integrated into our students' curriculum. I will continue to learn from the studies and data available that show how arts education is helping students learn and supporting our students' social, emotional, and academic needs. I will share this information with my school board colleagues, students, parents, teachers, administrators, and staff. I will actively engage with cultural organizations and other local groups working to improve education and students' overall well-being to create and strengthen collaborative efforts with HISD to help accelerate student learning with a focus on engagement and healing. All this and more will inform my decisions as we shape a vision for HISD that makes us a leader in improving student outcomes and solutions to support our children's academic, physical, social, and emotional needs and truly support the whole child so each student can focus on learning when they are in their classroom with their effective teacher in their high-quality school.

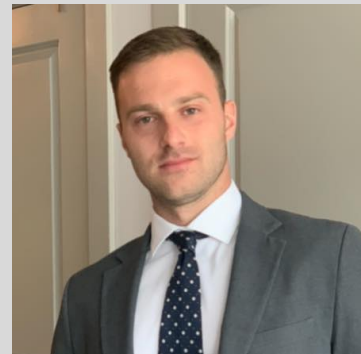
Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

I am a passionate arts advocate. My work with Arts Connect Houston has helped me see the evidence-based approaches our arts partners aim to share with our HISD students, and the great progress we have made to help HISD see why the arts must be integrated into our children's education. We are helping parents, teachers, administrators, and staff see the powerful positive learning outcomes possible when we make the arts available to students and integrate them into their curriculum.

Matias Kopinsky, District I

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

The arts are a distinct way to approach life. I have played piano from the ages of 4-14, and I played trombone at Meyerland PVA Middle School. Currently as an engineer, I see life from a certain point of view. Having created music during my formative years, I am able to view and solve problems with a different perspective than most people in my line of work. Essentially, the arts make me a more well rounded person, able to analyze situations from different points of views.



What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

Arts education yields a positive impact to student success. Arts enable students to express themselves in a safe and healthy manner. This expression molds students into young adults who are able to understand their emotions while also creating a discipline that is required in adult life.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

Participating in the arts increases discipline and has SEL benefits. Students in the arts are required to practice day in and day out to perfect their craft. Equitable arts education access is an issue in HISD at the moment and expanding the arts to underperforming schools will help the students in these schools succeed.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

I want discussion of the arts to play a role in PTO/PTA meetings, open houses, and town halls. More equitable distribution of funds will enable the students of all backgrounds to get access to the arts.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

I am a staunch believer in all students experiencing at least one form of arts education. As a city that is teeming with artistic talent evident from murals in EaDo by locals to worldwide renowned artists, this city should have equitable arts education for all. We need to do more for our students. The status quo is not going to solve our inequity problem in the arts. To truly change the trajectory of HISD and be able to give an arts education to all students, we need to come together and vote for change.

District V

Sue Deigaard, District V

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

The world would be a dull place without art in all its forms. It not only offers creative solutions to the challenges in our world, it is necessary to be able to truly share our humanity with each other across cultures and time, and sets us apart from every other known species on the planet. The creativity behind the arts influences every aspect of our life. The impact of the arts in my life has been immeasurable, but teaching me about perseverance, teamwork, cultural diversity, shared human experiences, and creative problem solving are just a few of the ways. Arts have also helped give my life meaning and purpose. Fine arts were foundational to creating the person I am today. I started playing flute in elementary school and my whole existence in middle and high school revolved around band, orchestra, and choir. Being from a family with limited resources, the enrichment experiences music offered to me at school would have otherwise been inaccessible to me. Most significantly, the opportunities I had as a public school music student laid the ground work for me to attend the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University and graduate with a Bachelor of Music degree in flute performance. Music allowed not only experiences and educational opportunities, but also relationships with a diversity of people and also different ways of seeing the world. Beyond music, one of the classes I continue to draw on from my education at Rice was architecture for non-architects. It taught me a different dimension of the creative process than I received through music alone. I probably draw on that class more than any other, and even apply the thought processes I learned in that class to my work on the board.



What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

It is without question that the arts not only enhance HISD students' artistic capabilities, but also afford benefits to students far beyond that. Research shows that students who receive high-quality arts instruction have higher attendance levels, better grades and social-emotional learning, and feel better about school. The arts play an important role in improving mental health and the processing of trauma. Participation in the arts also improves oral language skills among English Language Learners. Research is already showing the importance of the arts on student engagement during the pandemic. Arts Connect Houston has been a valuable partner in providing data on the impact of the arts for students in our district, which in turn has helped us prioritize fine arts opportunities for our students as an essential feature of HISD educating the Whole Child. It's why I have supported increased funding for our schools to expand fine arts opportunities for all students.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

The data is clear on the value of arts education. I firmly believe that every child in HISD needs high-quality arts instruction at school, and that fine arts resources should be equitably distributed across our campuses. HISD has partnered up with Rice University's Houston Education Research Consortium (HERC) to investigate whether resources, including arts programming, are allocated equitably among different student groups within HISD. We will use these findings to modify budget decisions and resource allocations to ensure that all of our kids are getting what they need. Furthermore, we need to ensure fine arts opportunities are provided equitably in schools because such opportunities should not be limited by the ability of a student's family to provide such opportunities outside of school. We need to ensure that our fine arts magnet opportunities provide high-quality and supportive feeder structures so that students from all communities have the foundations needed in elementary and middle school to access our high school fine arts programs like Kinder HSPVA. Finally, the types of fine arts opportunities should be expanded to equitably reflect the diversity of cultures in our city.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

I served as the chair of the communications committee for Arts Access Initiative before serving on the HISD board. If re-elected, I will continue my work of arts advocacy both on the board and in the community to ensure that our students have equitable access to fine arts programs in our schools. I served as the chair of the communications committee for Arts Access Initiative before serving on the HISD board. If re-elected, I will continue my work of arts advocacy both on the board and in the community to ensure that our students have equitable access to fine arts programs in our schools.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

Fine Arts should include not only performing arts where a student plays an instrument or sings in a choir, but also other creative arts that allow students to develop their own unique creative expression. Once while visiting with a prominent Houston muralist I asked about his experience in art class in HISD. He responded that he was always being told he was doing things wrong. We need to ensure that our arts programs foster creative thinking and creative expression. Most importantly, we need to make sure that in the process of expanding access and measuring the quality and impact of the arts that we do not leave out, or worse suppress, fostering that creative process and expression of our students that is as unique as each individual student. Furthermore, we should not limit the arts to electives. The arts should be integrated into learning everyday as students learn about things such as history and literature, and even sciences like math and physics. We should be integrating the arts into all of our subjects, not just traditional fine arts classes. For example, art in all its forms is fundamental to understanding history, and can provide connection to the content in a way that words alone can't, making the content more accessible and understandable for our students.

Maria Benzon, District V

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

The arts are an important part of my life. I am a math and science person by background, but I love how fine arts adds so much color to my experiences. I participated in choir and played piano as a teen. As an adult, I have been a subscriber to the Houston Symphony and Chorus and the Houston Grand Opera. As a leader of Bellaire Young Mothers, we have sponsored events for children to attend plays and other arts activities. Also through BYM, I have sponsored our monthly book club for the past 3 years as we read and discussed different types of literature. My family and I feel so strongly about the arts that we applied for two years into Parker Elementary's music program before we were finally accepted.



What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

I believe that arts education can be a profound influence on students. Through the arts students are part a larger community that can impact future college and career options as well as avocation opportunities. I believe the arts allows students an outlet for creativity and self-expression that is often not found in core classes that are focused on standardized tests. As communities are developed and students' sense of self develops, the arts should be acknowledged for the opportunities to improve attendance and provide social-emotional learning to and for students.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

HISD needs to expand equitable arts education for all students to experience and appreciate. I have said

that kids are required to attend school, but it is through the electives of fine arts classes (and sports and other extra-curricular activities) that students stay. So many students look forward to attending their band or art class because that is where they are in their element. We need to provide more of these opportunities especially in schools where administrators may think that students need more test-prep classes or a remedial classes. We need for all students, not just those who have the opportunity to take private lessons or pay for summer programs can grow in the arts. The arts is just as important to learning... to growing... to developing as the core subjects.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

If I am elected, I would welcome the opportunity to create a task force or committee consisting of teachers, parents, students, and organizations to create plans to inform educational leaders about the benefits of arts education and to develop good policies to support that at the district level.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

There are so many areas that can be considered "the arts" and I think that it would be good to consider places that are considered sciences, and discuss how even the sciences has art embedded. Teaching is a science, but it is also an art. In the overlap... in the gray areas is where innovation lies.... We need to stop seeing arts education as something separate, but integrated into our sense of self and our humanity.

Caroline Walter, District V

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

I come from a family of artists, my mom worked as an artist for many years. I myself am an artist. I was not a traditional learner and the areas and tasks I excelled at in school were those with an artistic component. I think that some aspect of art can and should be a part of every student's education. There are ways to incorporate art in reading, math, science, etc. Art is not just drawing and painting. Art can be used as a very productive way to engage those students who do not fall into the category of 'traditional' learning as it did for me.



What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

I believe in the basics of education, reading in particular. These basic skills do need to be learned by all students. For younger students using art as part of teaching these basic skills can help engage those students who are more creative minded. Arts in education does not have to be restricted to 'art class'. Instead it should be part of ever day learning. As students move on to high school and especially college they should be given the opportunity to choose elective courses specific to the arts whether it be art history, theatre, drawing, and even graffiti arts. Students should be exposed to art as a profession. Students who show a love for art should be encouraged to apply to art schools. They need to believe that their particular talent and love for art can absolutely become a career and they can achieve life success through this amazing thing called art.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

There is a strong value in expanding equitable arts education access. When it comes to kids one size does not fit all. School does not come easy to every student and depending on their life circumstances some may feel like giving up. Their art class or their theatre class may be their motivation to come to school each day. Every student deserves this exposure and opportunity to find success in their own way.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

I would really love to spearhead an arts initiative program. This is an area I am passionate about and knowledgeable about. Not only do we need to allocate budget funds to the arts but there are so many opportunities in our community to partner with amazing organizations that can really make the arts part of every students like. Teachers should be provided with the training and the tools to incorporate art into everyday learning. Traditional subject that all students must excel at should include more creative projects. Art is everywhere. It should always be appreciated and never under minded. Not only students but teachers, parents, district leaders must welcome and endorse art not only as a hobby but a career option.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

My mom was a fashion illustrator for Vogue Magazine, my late cousin was an illustrator and photographer, and my other cousin is a freelance artist. They all went to art school and had successful careers. I do graffiti art in my free time, I paint on canvas, and I'd be lost without these outlets. Every child with artistic interest and talent deserves the opportunity and encouragement to channel this drive and energy and create their own successes through the arts.

District VI

Holly Maria Flynn Vilaseca, District VI

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

As a child, I was exposed to the arts through music and theater, both of which broadened my horizons, helped me build confidence, and explore different ways to express myself. I believe all students should have similar opportunities, and am in full support of arts education.

What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

As previously stated, I believe the arts are a very important part of students' education. At HISD we need to continue to strive for arts education to be equitably offered across all campuses.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

Again, I see great value in expanding equitable access to arts education. Research clearly shows arts education benefits students in multiple ways, and every HISD student should have those opportunities.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

As the current District VI Trustee, my colleagues and I have begun discussions around expanding access to arts education, including ensuring all dedicated funds are used for that purpose. More needs to be done. Supt. House is listening to the feedback from the community on this during his Listen and Learn sessions now.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

I know the benefits arts education gave me as a student. Now, as the parent of an HISD student, I see the similar positive impact arts education has on my son. Again, I am a strong supporter of these programs and they need to be funded adequately and equitably across the District.



Kendall Baker, District VI

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

Arts mean the world to me. The reason I love to write, sing and be involved in stage plays is because of the arts. It's the reason I found my niche at being a voice over talent. The reason I play the drums and guitar is because of having access to the education of Arts since childhood. Arts draw out the raw talent that's embedded in all of us and often helps us realize our reasons for existence.

What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

I believe it plays a huge impact on all of the above. Statistics have proven time and again it is the primary reason that brings success because it naturally draws people into developing their natural gifts thereby making them more productive because of their passion for what they like to do versus what someone else wants you to be.



What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

Such value is infinite to me and the earlier a student is exposed to the Arts is certainly the better.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

By the mere fact of how the Arts helped to shape me as an individual, if elected I am committed to developing a platform in my district to strengthen the conversation. I believe the person and the entire family benefits when people are actively engaged with the Arts. Not to mention that I will be representing one of the most culturally diverse populations of the district. I'm sure my colleagues will agree. I have no doubts whatsoever.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

Arts education is an essential component for human and skill set development. Under my watch I would most definitely make arts education a top priority.

Gregory Allen Degeyter, District VI

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

I played bassoon in band during my time in school, and fondly remember those days and pieces like Pachelbel's Canon, Chester, and Magestia. Those memories are a testament to the long lasting impression band left on my life.



What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

Having a robust arts program helps a "whole person" education. The discipline required to successfully engage in the arts helps in all aspects of student development.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

Having equal opportunity to the arts is important. No student should be denied the opportunity from a simple want of availability.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

A school pride initiative needs to occur to bring pride back to the schools. Right now students can transfer, and that tends to create pockets of excellence and pockets of need. Focusing on school pride at the campuses will help to make neighborhood school more enticing lower the transfer rate.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

To the extent possible the arts should be an area of collaboration between HISD and community organizations. HISD should actively seek to reach out to and partner with community organizations to provide extra access to the arts..

District VII

Dwight Jefferson, District VII

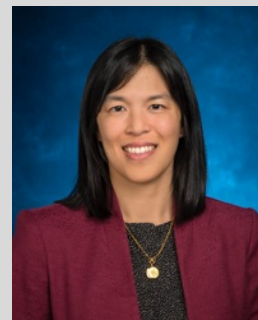
Candidate did not respond to survey request.



Anne Sung, District VII

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

I have played piano since I was in 2nd grade and as a student I had the opportunity to be in the TH Rogers orchestra, where I learned violin, and in the Bellaire HS choir, where I played accompanied the choir on piano. In college, I volunteered to give piano lessons to students in Boston's Chinatown. Later as a high school teacher, I accompanied Edcouch-Elsa band students in UIL competitions and played piano for the school production of Godspell; I also brought music and art into the physics classroom, where we analyzed musical instruments and color. The arts have enriched my life in countless ways, allowing me to find common purpose with people in many communities and to engage students in creative, cross-curricular projects.



What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

I meet with student groups frequently, and over and over I hear from HISD students how important arts education is to them. Participation in arts programs like band and choir may be the motivating reason for some students to stay in school, and teach them the discipline they need to excel academically. After Katrina, when nonprofits were organizing the George R Brown convention center to serve families, they looked for people who had participated in band in high school to organize the efforts, because they knew that band taught students lifelong leadership skills. Research shows that arts have strong SEL benefits, with art therapy being a helpful way to reach all students, especially those who may be English learners, and that early exposure to musical training helps students develop mathematical intuition. The arts are a non-intuitive but research-based answer to many of the challenges our students face in HISD.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

When asked whether they value arts education in their children's schools, parents unanimously answer affirmatively. Students similarly value having the full range of the arts in their schools to choose among. Ensuring equitable arts education in every HISD school will help recruit and keep students in HISD schools, will enrich the joy they feel as learners in the school, and will benefit them not only in terms of their ability to enjoy and participate in the arts through their lives but also help improve attendance, their social and emotional well being, and their success in core academics in school.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

I strongly support the efforts of the Arts Connect and other organizations to strengthen arts education in HISD. I have sat down with community members to review district policy for alignment with state standards for arts education, and I have also been an advocate on the board for the arts being included in the district's top 10 priorities, so it becomes an element for the board and superintendent to regularly review and discuss progress. I will continue to advocate for equitable arts education in HISD, and will ask for an audit of HISD's arts education practices to ensure they conform with state standards.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

As Chief Strategy Officer at Project GRAD Houston, I previously led programs to provide arts access in Houston ISD's Northside feeder pattern, placing art and music teachers at elementary schools and working with arts and cultural organizations to give students rich arts experiences. Our data clearly showed the benefits of expanded arts programs on students' academic achievement, especially in the area of mathematics.

Bridget Wade, District VII

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

I earned my BA in Design, so the arts is fundamental to who I am. I am involved in various arts organizations in Texas, and serve on advisory boards for the MFAH, Blaffer Museum Univ. of Houston and the Blanton Museum Univ. of Texas -Austin. My husband and I are avid collectors, and our artist relationships are irreplaceable. I am a true believer in what the arts can do to elevate our lives. The arts are full of history, science, math, free expression and joy.



What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

Arts Education is a must in HISD. All students should have the access and ability to participate in a robust arts curriculum. Houston is blessed with world class arts organizations, museums, theater, opera, music and dance. The impact of these important civic and cultural institutions, make for a thriving city. The arts have the ability to expose all to the gifts and rich rewards that make us better.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

Arts access is critical to a healthy and well rounded education, so expanding where needed is appropriate and encouraged. Schools must find ways to create rich and meaningful arts curriculum in all schools.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

Through my knowledge and appreciation of the arts community in Houston, I would love to add art partners to schools. The focus needs to be finding the right fit, encouraging the schools to have a responsive and responsible school coordinator/teacher that can open the avenues for outside groups, parents and community to engage.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

Art education can open doors, and can inspire! That should be the part of the goal for our youth.

Mac Walker, District VII

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

The arts to me mean life long learning. The arts are always evolving while we grow as people and create the opportunity to see things from a different perspective. I have always been creative. I began by teaching myself to draw animals and figures. Then in my teens I decided to learn the guitar. Later in my 40's, I turned to piano, an instrument that I always loved but had never learned. Now I pass on my love for the arts to my children. It opens the mind and enriches the soul.



What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

My simple thought is we need more of it from PK to 12th grade. Through art, kids can build creativity, find connection, improve critical thinking and problem solving skill and more. My children's elementary school lost funding for music a few years ago. This was in part a motivation for me to run for the school board.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

Talent is distributed equally across our society, but opportunity is not. We must allow equal access to arts education to allow every child to reach their full potential and for society to benefit from their special gifts.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

Houston is blessed with a tremendous arts community. We must make the arts a priority by ensuring

funding is available and that schools are held to a high standard in the arts opportunities they provide. Our community organizations can provide input into best practices to inform these standards.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

If I wasn't doing what I'm doing now, I would have wanted to play lead guitar in a rock and roll band!

District IX

Myrna Guidry, District IX

Candidate did not respond to survey request.



Gerry Monroe, District IX

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

The Arts means the world to Me. I'm actually a music recording artist. I've been a active artist for 36 years. The Arts led me to Create an Entertainment Academy at my old high school, Jack Yates Senior High School

What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

Every child should experience Arts education. The arts can prepare you for a very lucrative life. It can actually enhance your everyday living.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

Arts in HISD is the forgotten subject. Most art programs lack funding. The Arts have to be expanded to give our children a balanced high school life. Just by experiencing the arts could be life saving for a student

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

I will be very active in all schools as it relates to the arts. We want every child in the choir th have a choir robe. We need to make sure all arts classes have the supplies that they need. Every band member has a band uniform and a instrument. This can only be done by allowing the community, kids, and parents to have a true voice in shaping the arts for the district as a whole.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

The only weapon capable of transforming the world is education. And The Arts has to be included in that conversation.

Joshua Rosales, District IX

What do the arts mean to you? How have they impacted your life, your experiences, your education, etc.?

The arts has played a vital role in my development. From my early age



with music, cultural experiences, my travels throughout Texas, the USA and globally, I have been able to leverage those experiences in my personal development. I am a big believer in the importance of the arts for our students.



What are your thoughts on the impact of arts education on Houston ISD students (e.g. attendance, SEL benefits, academic success, college, career, life, etc.)?

As students have more cultural, artistic development in their lives, this will impact their academic success, interest in ensuring their educational development and nourish the passion for doing so. I am an advocate of arts in public schools.

What value, if any, do you see in expanding equitable arts education access?

This is vital part of the equity and development of all students in the arts. HISD is not funding enough arts in our schools and this should improve. We must ensure all students have access to a full range of the arts experiences and education for their personal development.

If elected, how will you help lead or contribute to the engagement of the Houston community (teachers, parents, students, arts and cultural organizations, etc.) to help inform education conversations and shape art education policy for the district?

Houston has a rich arts community that should be tapped into to help drive the arts experience for our schools. From theater, opera, symphony, art and cultural museums, dance, ballet, we need to leverage these resources in our schools and make the arts experiences for our kids more rich and exciting.

Is there anything else we should know about you, your ideas, or positions on arts education?

As I mentioned before, I have been blessed with a strong arts experience in my life and it has been vital to my holistic development and exploration of various parts of my person and senses. I am a strong believer in the arts and would ensure we have a strong arts education and experience for our HISD students at all levels. Thank you.

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