

**August 1, 2023 Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting Written Comments
Received between Wednesday, July 26st and Wednesday, August 2nd
Submitted via Written Comments Form**

1	<p>Good Afternoon,</p> <p>I was very encouraged at the August 1st meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee. Thank you, BOE, for having the wisdom to establish this group. I think the members are impressive; experienced, compassionate, thoughtful, and diverse. And thank you Board Member, Mary Fahey-Hughes, for your leadership. Having served at Central Office for 10 years in OSS (Office of Specialized Services) and OSES (Office of Special Education Supports and Services), I was encouraged by the discussion regarding the name Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services. I never thought that was an appropriate name for the department. It felt like the focus on Special Education and the specialized instruction required was being watered down.</p> <p>As a Specialty School assistant principal and principal, for 11 years, it was heartbreaking to hear the parents speak about their experiences and lack of instructional practices to help their children with Specific Learning Disabilities and Dyslexia. I often fielded these types of stories from our incoming parents of Students with Developmental Disabilities who had to fight to have their child “placed” in our school and though they are equal members of the IEP team, they felt their voice was not heard nor respected.</p> <p>I am hopeful for the days ahead, and with the selection of a new Chief, that there will be a return to a focus on service, responsiveness, and effective professional development. Our teachers, both general education and special education, need and want to have the tools of specialized instruction and techniques to educate our students with disabilities. We know what works. We have the strategies and evidence based practices to help students with disabilities be successful learners so that they can take their place as contributing members of the community one day. Here’s to brighter days ahead!</p> <p>Respectfully,</p> <p>Karren Ray LSC member Northside Learning Center</p>
2	<p>Good Afternoon Everyone,</p> <p>Last week, I wanted to share my input at the Board of Ed Meeting. In regard to Austin High School, Alumni and the Community, I just want you all to know that I have always cared. I’ve displayed my love for the school and the community through my actions. Currently, I use a wheelchair most of the time. Therefore, I’ll need adaptive assistance using the ADA entrances. I’ll also need the metal detectors to be turned off to prevent complications with my medical devices. Your public hearing videos over the years, display my advocacy, activism and hard work in cleaning and preserving Austin. Therefore, it’s safer, cleaner and more welcoming. I want to be included as the historical bridge of the school. If you review the April 2007 board video, you will see my</p>

demonstration of advocacy for the new Greenhouse. Consequently, I want to be included with the wall and walk of fame, in the school. I want my volunteer advocacy to be known and respected moving forward as a vendor. I congratulate you all on your hard work. I'm looking forward to continue my service in improving the quality of lives in and out of the Austin Community.

Our Proposal – The Austin High School and Community Preservation Project

The Austin community preservation project has aimed to preserve the rich history of Austin High School and the Austin Community since 2005. Under the Austin High School Alumni Association name, we'd also empowered and engaged our youth in various Arts and culture as well as violence prevention and memorabilia conservation.

The project focuses on several key areas:

1. Violence prevention and intervention: The project includes programs and initiatives that work towards reducing violence in the community. This can involve workshops, mentorship programs, and outreach efforts to educate and support young individuals in making positive choices.
2. Pre-apprenticeship training: The project provides pre-apprenticeship training opportunities for young people interested in learning a trade or skill. This can include construction, carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, or other vocational skills. The aim is to equip youth with valuable skills that can lead to future employment opportunities.
3. Entrepreneurship: The project encourages entrepreneurship by providing resources and support to young individuals interested in starting their own businesses or ventures. This can include business development workshops, mentorship programs, access to funding or grants, and networking events.
4. Performance arts: Recognizing the importance of artistic expression, the project promotes involvement in performance arts such as music, dance, theater, and visual arts. This can include organizing local performances or exhibitions where youth can showcase their talents and creativity.
5. Service-learning credits: The project offers service-learning opportunities for youth where they can engage in community service activities while earning academic credits. This allows them to contribute positively to their community while also gaining valuable educational benefits.
6. Paid stipends: To incentivize participation and provide financial support for youth involved in the various aspects of the project, paid stipends are offered as compensation for their time and efforts. By combining these elements together, the Austin community preservation project aims to create a holistic approach that not only preserves the history of Austin but also empowers its youth through education, skillbuilding, artistic expression, entrepreneurship opportunities, civic engagement through service-learning credits and financial support through paid stipends.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

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Karren Ray
LSC member
Northside Learning Center

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