

# Austin ISD school board selects Anthony Mays for interim superintendent

by BECKY FOGEL | KUT

(AUSTIN, TX) - The Austin ISD Board of Trustees has chosen Anthony Mays, the district's chief of schools since October 2020, to be interim superintendent. He makes history as the first Black man to serve as AISD superintendent.

With more than two decades of experience working in education throughout Texas, Mays started his career as a special education teacher in Pflugerville ISD, later working in Dallas ISD and Fort Worth ISD as a principal and school administrator.

More recently, Mays was the senior director of schools for the Harris County Department of Education before joining Austin ISD. He is a graduate of Huston-Tillotson University, Texas State University, and received his doctorate in education from Tarleton State University.

After the decision was announced, Mays thanked the board for having faith in him and said hard work is ahead.

"There's lots of great things to celebrate here in Austin ISD and so I look forward to doing that work with you all," he said. "High expectations for all children, high outcomes for all students, is something that is near and dear to my heart."

After hours of deliberation, the school

board voted 7-0 early Tuesday to select Mays for the interim position. While trustees Lynn Boswell and Arati Singh both abstained from the vote, they expressed hope and optimism that Mays will work collaboratively to address challenges in the district, including low morale.

The board also released a statement after the vote noting it reviewed all applications for interim superintendent but interviewed only one candidate. The total number of applicants has not been released.

The trustees heard input from nearly 90 members of the public during a special board meeting before the vote. Eighty-two people left phone messages offering feedback, while four testified in person.

More than half of those who testified expressed support for Mays, asserting he would offer stability to the district over the next 12 months. They said continuity was important since students, families and educators have faced significant change and disruption during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Over a dozen people expressed support for another applicant, David Kauffman, who confirmed last week on social media that he had applied.

Kauffman, the executive director of multilingual education for Austin ISD from 2016 to 2021, said in another statement posted on Twitter that he represents those calling for "community input into a transparent selection process."

That concern was echoed by a number of people who testified during the board meeting. They said the selection process was not transparent and called on the school board to make its criteria for selecting the district's new leader available to the public.

School board President Geronimo Rodriguez Jr. addressed that concern directly during the board meeting.

"We want to assure the public that this is not about secrecy but about respecting a process to protect individuals who may apply and expect some level of confidentiality for themselves, their families, their reputation and their career," he said.

Mays will replace Stephanie Elizalde, who is leaving to become the next superintendent of Dallas ISD, where she previously served as the chief of school leadership. Elizalde was formally named to the role last week, after announcing she was the sole finalist for the position in mid-May.

Elizalde led Austin



Austin ISD. Austin ISD interim Superintendent Anthony Mays is coming up on two years of working for the district.

ISD through much of the pandemic, joining the district in August 2020. She defied Gov. Greg Abbott's ban on mask mandates in schools. Her tenure was also marked by an ongoing decline in enrollment.

Some who offered feedback during the meeting criticized Elizalde's leadership and said that a member of her executive team should not take over as superintendent. Among them was Erin Barbier, an Austin ISD parent and former school administrator, who said she was sad to see talented teachers leave the district because of the "practices of the current executive leadership team, including top-down decision-making and disrespect."

Elizalde's departure comes as the school board prepares to approve next year's budget, which includes a nearly \$800 million payment into Texas' "recapture" program. In that system, the state requires wealthy school districts to share property tax revenues with districts that do not receive as much money from property taxes.

A study released earlier this year by the Texas School Coalition found Austin ISD pays more in recapture than any other school district in the state. During the 2020-21 school year, Austin ISD paid more than \$710 million.

The largest district in the state, Houston ISD, paid less than a third of what Austin did. Aus-

tin ISD is proposing to cut hundreds of jobs, primarily from its central office, to give teachers raises and make the district's massive recapture payment while balancing the budget.

Elizalde's last day is June 30, and Mays is set to begin July 1.

The Austin ISD board also reiterated the timeline for selecting the district's next permanent superintendent. The trustees said "informal community engagement" begins now. The plan is to then post a request for proposals for a superintendent search firm in January 2023 with the goal of hiring someone that summer.

This story was produced as part of the Austin Monitor's reporting partnership with KUT.

## 2022 Juneteenth Celebration June 18th

10:am - 10:pm

## 2022 Historical Juneteenth Parade

Event Date/Time:

June 18th

10:am - 12:noon

## Juneteenth Park Festival Event Date/Time: June 18th, 2022 - 12:noon - 10:pm

Rosewood & Boggy Creek Park -  
2300 Rosewood Avenue, ATX 78702

Fireworks Show  
@ 9:30pm



Photo credits: Angela Wyatt