



Association of Brownsville Educators
Affiliated with
Texas State Teachers Association
National Education Association



Maria Alicia Loya – President • Veronica Borrego – Secretary • Micaela Escobar - Treasurer

Dr. Sylvia Perez Atkinson

BISD Board Candidate Questionnaire

SEP 07 2016

1. Please provide name and contact information together with a brief biographical information essay about yourself, your family, your educational background, employment, organizations you belong to (professional, community, social), etc.

Hi. My name is Dr. Sylvia Perez Atkinson. I am currently an Assistant Superintendent in Rio Hondo ISD. I have over 24 years of educational experience. From Classroom Teacher to Assistant Principal to Director to Executive Director to Assistant Superintendent to Superintendent, I have had the privilege of serving public school children and staff in two regions. I was born and raised in Brownsville, and I am one of eight children born to Carlos and Mary Frances Atkinson. I graduated from Homer Hanna High School, Southern Methodist University (Bachelors), University of Texas at Brownsville (Masters), and University of Houston (Doctorates). I am a proud member of TSTA, TSPRA, TASA, Rotary International, and St. Mary's Catholic Church.

2. Why are you running for school board? What are your goals for BISD?

I believe I have the knowledge, experience, and the passion to help move our School District forward. My goals will align with the goals of our campus staff and parents. More specifically, numerous staff members and parents have shared that they would like to keep our student to teacher, student to counselor, student to nurse, student to librarian, and student to office staff lower than current rates; i.e. specific ratios for our Bilingual, Autistic, Dyslexic, and our Special needs populations should also be addressed. They have also shared their need for additional resources, materials, training, and opportunities to expand our teaching capacity; i.e. specific support for our Bilingual, Autism, Dyslexia, and Special needs teachers should also be addressed. Working with our board and district administration, I pledge to ensure district staff are competitively and properly paid while avoiding RIFs, slashing campus budgets, and increasing property taxes.

3. One of the biggest issues confronting the district is the drop in student enrollment, what solutions do you have to help attract and retain students in BISD?

I believe the district needs to begin a grassroots campaign to highlight all the great new programs and all the good things happening in the district. I was instrumental in bringing in an iTunes and Android AP for our district, but did not have an opportunity to see our district launch Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages. We are in dire need of a social media presence to highlight our great staff and students doing what they do best in our community. Prior to leaving BISD, I pushed for a One to one Tablet Initiative, K-8 Open Enrollment, an increase in After school programs, and the expansion of Dual Enrollment and School to Career opportunities. If elected, I pledge to continue working with your organization and our district staff to make these types of initiatives a reality.

4. How do you plan to address the issues and concerns with the leadership and membership of our employee Union the Association of Brownsville Educators - AOE/TSTA/NEA?

If allowed, I would love to have monthly meetings with AOE leadership; i.e. first Monday of every month could be set aside for them and would help me be better prepared for our board meetings. I would also make myself available to their membership on a quarterly basis at minimum. However, as a TSTA member myself, I would be open to informal meetings, telephone conferences, etc. with AOE leadership.

5. Do you favor giving our classified employees an increase in pay to provide them a living wage? Do you also favor an increase in pay to certified personnel as well? Please elaborate.

I am definitely in favor of giving our classified employees an increase in pay to make them the best paid in the region. Likewise, I am in favor of paying our certified staff at a rate that will make them the highest paid in our region. With IDEA paying their teachers and bus drivers more than BISD, we can't afford to get further and further behind them next year.

6. What does site-based decision making mean to you? Are you willing to commit to having a true site-based decision making at the campus level for BISD school employees and parents?

I believe that site-based decision making at the campus level has not always been honored at the district level. Plain and simple, we have to trust our campuses to make the best decisions for themselves. No one wants to fail or look bad, so we have to trust them more. I definitely would support decisions being made by SBDM teams that include more teachers and parents.

7. Do you support vouchers for students who attend low-performance public schools? Explain.

I do not believe any public school board member should support vouchers for public school students. It should be our responsibility to provide the best quality education to all of our students. When a school fails, the board fails. I will commit to providing the campuses via district administration with all the necessary tools to be successful.

8. What is your position on teacher incentive pay based on student performance?

I am not in favor of teacher incentive pay based upon student performance unless the entire campus receives one amount and it is equally distributed; the only difference in the amount should be based upon whether you are a certified staff member or a classified staff member. I would also never consider an incentive pay system that was not properly supported and/or endorsed by TSTA. I have seen too many campuses divided and too many colleagues at odds because of incentive pay systems.

9. Do you support teacher evaluations in making decisions regarding reduction of force? Explain your position.

I do not support teacher evaluations being used in making decisions regarding Reduction in Force. Quite simply, RIFs should not include instructional staff on campuses. I will pledge to propose board policy that eliminates and/or bars instructional staff from being considered during RIFs.

10. Should student test scores be used to evaluate teacher's performance? Explain your position.

I do not believe test scores should be used to evaluate a teacher's performance because it is too subjective. Rather, I am in favor of basing evaluations on the progress and/or scores taken from project based learning opportunities and/or special projects that allows the student to truly connect what is being taught to what was learned.

11. Would you support an increase of the health insurance contribution rate for employees above the state minimum required by law?

I do not support and would recommend board policy against ever increasing the health insurance contribution rate for employees above the state minimum required by law.

Re: Candidate Questionnaire

sylvia@aol.com

Sent: Wednesday, September 07, 2016 5:20 PM

To: Paul Arredondo; TX-BOD-Mary Alice Loya_gmail; SYLVIEA@aol.com

Attachments: BISD Board Candidates Ques~1.pdf (746 KB)

Hi Sir. Here you go. Please let me know if you or Mrs. Loya need anything else. Have a great evening. Dr. A.

-----Original Message-----

From: Paul Arredondo <paulra@tsta.org>

To: Sylviea <Sylviea@aol.com>

Cc: Paul Arredondo <paulra@tsta.org>

Sent: Tue, Sep 6, 2016 12:30 pm

Subject: Candidate Questionnaire

Dr. Atkinson,

Attached you will find the two items that were included in the mail-out packet.

Thank you,

Paul Arredondo,

TSTA Organizational Development Specialist

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