

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH...

Dr. Brian T. Woods, Northside ISD Superintendent



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ACCOUNTABILITY

Q. As the Superintendent of Northside ISD in San Antonio, not only do you advocate for your local students, you also find time to advocate for all students in Texas. Why is advocating for public education so important to you?

A. *I believe that all of us should advocate for institutions that make a positive impact on society. Public schools have provided unlimited opportunities for me and for so many. There simply is no institution in our society that is better suited or more successful in positively altering the trajectories of young people. It is my firm belief that without public schools the future of our democracy is in jeopardy.*

Q. Accountability is important. How can local communities hold their local schools accountable for the education of all children?

A. *Accountability is important and has a place in any successful organization. Local communities should be given the opportunity to decide together what is important enough to be measured. Learning to read and perform math will always be a priority.*

I believe many communities would also value things like strong character, problem solving, empathy, job skills, working together and other important attributes. Simply because it can be measured cheaply via a standardized test does not mean that these other attributes that public schools contribute to are less valuable or should be ignored.

Q. Let's reverse the question. What accountable assurances can schools share with their communities that their local school district is an effective and efficient organization in educating their children?

A. *I think there will always be base-line measures around items such as proficiency in math and reading as well as a district's financial performance. Beyond that, I believe*

that each community should decide locally what they value most and want to see measured and reported.

Most superintendents and school boards have annual and longer-range goals. Reporting on progress toward these goals is a way to help community members have faith that the district is effective and efficient.

Q. Let's talk about the state's accountability system and how they hold school districts accountable. Your thoughts on the A-F system?

A. *To the public, I will say to be cautious of any system of labels that reduces a complex organization like a school to one word or letter. Like all organizations, every school has things that it does quite well and has others that need improvement. A single letter grade assigned to a school district or campus will mask both its strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, because the system is predominately based on standardized testing outcomes, school letter grades will likely be correlated to the overall income level of the families served by local schools – a result of the system that is morally repugnant.*

Public schools have long been a source of pride in communities across this nation. For those of us who work in or have children in public schools, a sense of pride is shared. However, there are some in leadership positions who prefer to privatize public schools in an effort to access public dollars for private use. Regardless of what these individuals may say about our schools, public schools are for the public good and worthy of our support. In fact, our democracy depends on that support.

Q. History provides us with well-known quotes about education. What is your legacy quote that we might find inspiring future generations?

A. *"Public education and the notion of an educated public is at the core of democracy. Supporting our public schools today expands tomorrow's opportunities for a brighter future." ~Brian T. Woods, Ed. D.*