

Equity White Paper

A report from the FABPAC Equity Subcommittee

November 2017
Amended October 2018

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This product is the result of months of deliberation on how equity fit into the development of the Austin Independent School District Facility Master Plan.

The 18-member Facility and Bond Planning Advisory Committee had dozens of deep and often painful discussions about the role of equity in the facility planning process, as well as discussions on the history of Austin and AISD and the future of our city.

This report includes the reflections of the equity subcommittee of Roxanne Evans, Scott Marks, Dusty Harshman, Gabriel Estrada, Jodi Leach, Michael Bocanegra, Tali Wildman and Rich de Palma. FABPAC members Barbara Spears-Corbett and Mark Grayson also contributed to this report.

This report includes possible policy recommendations the Board of Trustees might want to consider before the next FMP update.

Executive Summary

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) Board of Trustees adopted seven guiding principles for the 2014 Facility Master Plan (FMP) and its updates. Of these principles, Equity in Facilities is one that deserves greater elaboration in light of the experience of the Facilities and Bond Planning Advisory Committee (FABPAC). What

conditions in order to treat similar schools similarly? Or does equity require redressing deeply-rooted consequences of historic inequitable decision-making on the part of AISD and the city over the past 150 years? Is equity best characterized by measures such as how AISD compares with other school districts on the achievement gap between white students and students of color? Adopting themes offered by the National Equity Project in 2018, AISD defined equity as interrupting practices that negatively impact struggling students of color, and cultivating the unique gifts and talents of every student. For these many points of view about equity, which ones can be appropriately addressed in facilities planning and improvements, and how?

While this white paper does not answer all of those very important questions, the approach here is to provide a record of the research and debate that one group of volunteers, the FABPAC, wrangled with as we worked on a 2017 update to the FMP and on the \$1.05 billion 2017 bond proposal that voters recentf

formed in 1954.

By that time, the City of Austin 1928 master plan was well-established. That plan was the result of the Austin City Council decision based on a desire for a comprehensive city plan and zoning map in 1927. One of the main objectives of the all-white City Council was to find a way to entrench residential segregation and compel African American families, who at that time were living throughout the city, to move to East Austin. In fact, the plan also states a desire to limit segregation to one part of town.

The city used techniques such as eliminating utility services in certain areas where African American citizens lived in order to force them from their homes. Private developers then purchased these newly vacated areas in West Austin and elsewhere at very low prices and built new roads, homes, and commercial buildings. When these same neighborhoods "re-opened," higher rents, sales costs and newly created restrictive covenants prevented African American families from returning to their roots. Thus, the displaced African American families had few choices but to find housing in areas the city reserved for non-whites, not unlike the reservation tactics used against Native Americans.

By the mid-1930s, nearly every African American family lived in East Austin which the city labeled "The Negro District." This also allowed the city to close African American schools in other parts of the city, placing added pressure on African American families to move to East Austin so that their children could attend a neighborhood school.

This plan was did not apply to Hispanics, although there was much discrimination aimed at Latinos. Mexican-Americans were not deemed a separate racial group, but non- whites from occupying certain neighborhoods and because of the general lack of affordable housing in the city, East Austin became home to the majority of the city's African American and Mexican American residents.

In 1955, the Austin Independent School District adopted a resolution to integrate the school district beginning with senior high schools. The first stage of the plan allowed

Academy (SA) program on the LBJ High School campus in 1985. A few years later, the Liberal Arts Academy (LAA) was created on the Johnston High School (now Eastside Memorial) campus in 1988.

The original intent was that these programs would also address desegregation by bringing students from other non-minority parts of the city into these predominantly minority campuses, which were both experiencing declines in enrollment. In addition, the presence of advanced academics on each campus was intended to create opportunities for neighborhood students who often came from disadvantaged backgrounds, even if they were not in the magnet program.

Within a decade, it became clear that such an approach had unintended negative consequences. Among the first issues to arise was that many in the LBJ and Johnston school communities felt that the programs and their placements were decided with little input or involvement from the neighborhood school communities. All subsequent decisions made by the district studt f thw

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Spring 2013 - Talent Development Secondary is chosen by AISD and approved by TEA as the new partnering entity for Eastside.

June 2013 - Texas Education Commissioner Michael Williams announces that Eastside will remain open and be given three years to improve.

2015 - Eastside meets all state standards including three distinctions.

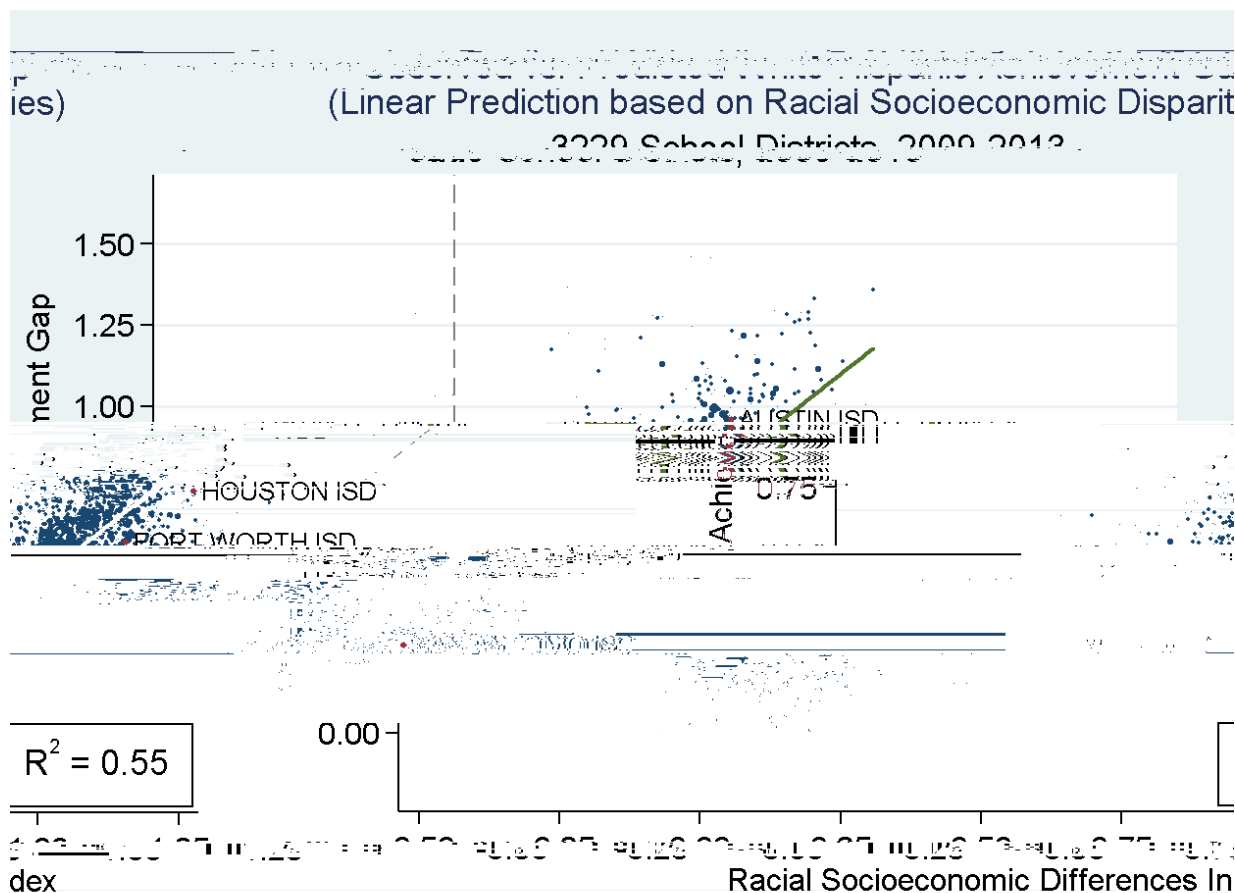
2016 - Eastside wins the inaugural Rather Prize, graduation rates are above 90%

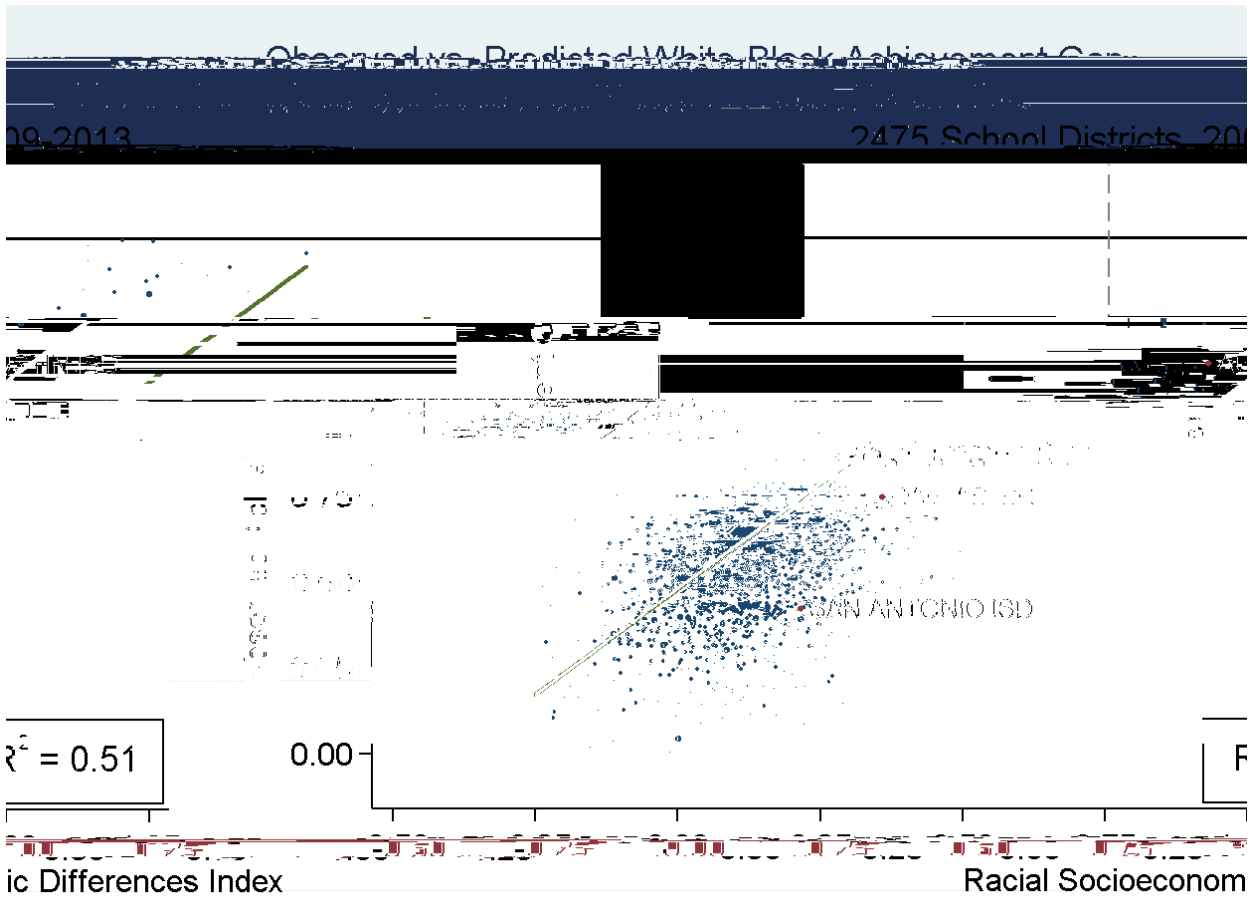
**The PEIMS number was not changed when Johnston was re-opened as Eastside in the Fall of 2008.*

With this history

chart represents the predicted achievement gap based on socioeconomic differences. You can see that Houston ISD is below the predictor line, meaning it is doing better than predicted at narrowing the achievement gap. Austin ISD, on the other hand, is above the line, which means the achievement gap between Latino students and white students, and similarly between African American students and white students, is even worse than would be predicted by differences in parental education and other socioeconomic factors.

While it is difficult to translate this academic research to facilities planning, there are some potential strategies that could work. The first is that if minority parents in Austin have to work two jobs to make ends meet, anything the school district can do to defray costs associated with child care will help reduce the achievement gap. Similarly, because exposure to low-income classmates is a predictor of the achievement gap, racial and income integration is a strategy that is also likely to reduce the achievement gap. So takeaways for AISD should be to promote free after-school care for families who cannot otherwise afford to pay, and to do whatever we can to promote racial and income integration in schools, which may include more innovative academic programming in Title I schools and more of an opportunity for low-income students to attend schools outside their neighborhoods.





NORTHEAST MIDDLE SCHOOL AT MUELLER

The City of Austin master development agreement with the developer of the 711-acre former Robert Mueller Municipal Airport provides for a school to be located on the redeveloped land. FABPAC weighed many options, and there were diverse viewpoints on whether a new school should be constructed at Mueller. While some members (b)-3 a1o4og0 Tr

RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the recommendations discussed in this paper are memorialized in the Facility

Additional recommendations from the group as a whole:

- (\$) Look at transportation options/combining routes to enhance transfer options.
- Provide clarification on how majority/minority transfers are classified and coded, i.e. diversity choice.
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Other districts

<http://www.denverpost.com/2017/06/19/segregation-denver-colorado-schools/>

<http://www.denverpost.com/2017/06/19/segregation-denver-colorado-schools/>

<https://tcf.org/content/report/dallas-independent-school-district/>

Other resources, information

https://www.austinisd.org/sites/default/files/dept/ina/Northeast_Austin_Plan_v20.pdf

<http://lakewood.advocatemag.com/2011/07/22/a-gray-matter/>

<http://www.epi.org/publication/unfinished-march-public-school-segregation/>

<http://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1278&context=elj>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/10/23/forced-busing-didnt-fail-desegregation-is-the-best-way-to-improve-our-schools/?u>

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2004/brown-v-board-timeline-of-school-integration-in-the-us>

This white paper was the result of the hard work and discussion of the Facilities and Bond Planning Advisory Committee members:

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