

May 8, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Brad Cravens, President of the Sunnyvale Independent School District's Board of Trustees. Thank you for allowing me the honor of sharing with you why the entire Sunnyvale community - trustees, faculty, students, parents and community members - feel that Doug Williams is an excellent choice for Superintendent of the Year. His work as a champion for all students in Texas public schools is evident in the work he does daily. We are thankful for his work as the recognized leader of our community, but even more honored by his work for the students of our state.

Dynamic Growth

We believe that our district's dramatic transformation and growth since 2007 best exemplifies Mr. Williams' qualities as a community and district leader. In 2007, upon Mr. Williams' hire, SISD was one of the state's only K-8 districts: 500 students housed on two campuses - one of them with aging infrastructure.

The district has grown dynamically - an average of 6-8% per year. Now, with just under 2,000 students in the district on four campuses, Mr. Williams has worked to maintain strong communication, transparency and support. Mr. Williams thus articulated a philosophy for our rapidly-growing district: "Four Campuses; One School."

Four Campuses, One School - Community Relations

Mr. Williams stays connected through the Superintendent's Roundtable and Strategic Plan Action Teams. For each of these teams, diverse representatives from faculty, the school board, parents, businesses, and community meet regularly to discuss school developments, brainstorm solutions to challenges, and even help design the district calendar. Thanks to Mr. Williams, information does not flow from the top and trickle down. Every diverse group has a voice.

Additionally, Mr. Williams has implemented a survey program for SISD. By engaging staff, parents, students and the community through these surveys annually, our superintendent stays well-informed about the success of our school initiatives, in yet another example of transparency and responsive leadership.

Perhaps one of the most successful ways Mr. Williams stays connected to students is through the “Supt Crew”, the diverse district student advisory team. Students from 2nd through 12th grade meet with Mr. Williams regularly to discuss issues around campuses and help discuss goals for the district.

However, there is one way to know that, without a doubt, our superintendent is connected to our community: *he is everywhere*. Mr. Williams is a vibrant part of our campuses. He visits classrooms, knows *everyone* by name and greets kids with hugs, high-fives and knuckle-bumps. He has nicknames for many of our students and teachers. He attends games, concerts, theatre productions, tournaments, cheer competitions and all sorts of other school activities. He announces football games and works the clock at baseball games. He works morning and afternoon traffic duty during the heat of summer and fall and on cold and rainy winter days. For teacher appreciation week, he cooks burgers on the grill for our teachers and delivers them to each campus personally. He has dressed up as Santa and the Grinch for our elementary students during the holidays. During the COVID-19 shelter-in-place order, he personally delivered caps and gowns to our senior class - a group of students he has known since they were kindergartners.

Innovative Academic Excellence

In 2012, Mr. Williams was selected to join the Region 10 Transformational Leader Collaborative. Through networking with this cohort of professionals, he began to envision a call for change due to the needs and learning styles of the generation arriving in our classrooms each day - a demand that was greater than those of the high-stakes testing culture currently in place.

As Mr. Williams brought this information back to our board, administrative team, staff, and community, he challenged stakeholders to think outside of the ways of traditional school and create learning environments that were rigorous, relevant, and engaging.

In light of prior accolades related to academic performance, Mr. Williams facilitated difficult conversations with parents as the focus shifted from teacher-centered classrooms and test performance to student-centered classrooms and relevant learning. Perhaps the most enlightening moments for parents and staff members came from an expert panel of local professionals, an experience designed by Mr. Williams. With this experience, our district vision was validated and effectively communicated, and our journey toward transformation continued.

Students now benefit from an aligned PK-12 STEM focus, frequent interaction with industry professionals and the ability to creatively develop multiple solutions when presented

with a relevant problem. The district culture of innovation permeates adult and student learning, and teachers exercise autonomy in lesson design in order to meet the needs of the learners they serve. Academic growth is monitored through a comprehensive growth measure, the NWEA Measure of Academic Progress. A review of state-reported data indicates little change in passing percentages, yet the percentage of students performing at the Masters level has grown significantly. Students graduate with an average of 19 dual-credit hours, and the average ACT/SAT score outpaces the state average. Mr. Williams' leadership allows us to achieve the mission of Sunnyvale ISD, to engage, equip, and empower all learners for life-long success.

Collaborative Approach

Mr. Williams networks extensively to make sure that Sunnyvale has access to the best in cutting-edge, effective educational practices. The result has been innovation that has come about through the intersection of committee service, networking with other school boards, and dynamic, transparent communication with trustees. He helped found the Community Schools Transformation Alliance (CSTA) for the purpose of networking small districts to share best practices and support one another in transformation.

The result of this alliance has led to excellent professional development, collaborative board training and a large, small-school conference called "Revolutionize Learning" in which member schools join together for two days of shared learning and best practices.

Financial Leadership

Doug Williams has, throughout his time at SISD, operated as the Superintendent and CFO of the district. This dual-role allows for greater oversight in the area of financial management. By keeping long-range goals in line with district needs, approaching innovative practices and community growth, Mr. Williams is a mindful steward of SISD's finances. The board receives extremely detailed reports from Mr. Williams and holds annual budget planning workshops to collaborate on district priorities. The district is open, transparent, and has consistently received the highest rating for business offices from the TEA - a superior FIRST rating.

Facility Planning

Mr. Williams' understanding of our needs as a community and district combined with his talent for careful, prudent and thoughtful fiscal and facility management has created a unique opportunity for our students to learn in cutting-edge, innovative learning spaces. After leading

the district to transformative learning, beginning in 2012, we realized our students - and teachers - needed the right kinds of spaces in which to learn in the ways 21st-century students learn.

Mr. Williams' use of the diverse long-range facility planning team (a team that has been in place since 2007 - even prior to his hiring!) has led to a collaborative approach to decision-making about SISD facilities. The team, made up of board members, teachers, administrators and community members has provided consistency and understanding to our long-range plan.

Strategic Planning and Tax Ratification Election

In 2017, SISD embarked upon a new journey: our Strategic Plan. For the first time in over 20 years, the district participated in several comprehensive strategic planning sessions which would lead the district on a path for the next 3-5 years. Under Mr. Williams' leadership, the planning team created a new mission and vision statement, goals and actionable objectives to carry out. These are:

Mission: The mission of Sunnyvale ISD is to engage, equip, and empower all learners for life-long success.

Vision: Sunnyvale Raiders Rise!

Goals:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| -Teaching and Learning | -Funding, Facilities and Finance |
| -Staff Quality and Recruitment | -Wellness |
| -Innovation and Future Readiness | -Community Partnerships |

Among the Funding, Facilities and Finance goals, the first action objective was to hold a Tax Ratification Election for Sunnyvale ISD in 2019, based on knowledge and research from the Long-Range Facility Planning Team. Mr. Williams' work to rally Sunnyvale voters to the cause of the Tax Ratification Election was unprecedented:

- The planning for the election began months before its final November date; however, because of complications due to the House Bill 3 School Finance Bill, the TRE was delayed several times. Mr. Williams patiently worked with Board Members, administrative team members, town officials and community members to communicate the legislative situation. This not only kept the community informed, but kept the TRE fresh on the minds of the voting community.

- When House Bill 3 was carried into late May, Mr. Williams and his staff used what would've been time used to educate the community about the TRE as time to provide education on the Strategic Plan, which included the TRE as an action item. This idea kept the possibility of a TRE in the forefront of voters' minds.
- Mr. Williams worked with district bond counsel to create a tax structure that would not increase taxes for Sunnyvale voters. When it came time for the November election, voters showed up to the polls ready to support the district without worry for a further tax burden, thanks to Mr. Williams' financial planning.
- Mr. Williams ensured that the concepts, plans and financial information about the TRE were well-explained and communicated to our community so that they understood it and were ready to commit their vote. In all, he met with the community 22 times to communicate the Strategic Plan and TRE.
- On election night in November of 2019, the SISD TRE overwhelmingly passed.

Legislative Advocacy and State Leadership

Mr. Williams is a trusted voice in Texas Public Education, specifically in the area of school finance. He is an advocate not only for the students of Sunnyvale, but for all Texas students. He has consulted on education-related bills in partnership with lawmakers who know he is the expert in this field. He has been invited to testify in support and opposition in both the Texas Senate and House of Representatives about Public School Finance, as the voice of reason and knowledge. Prior engagement with legislators led to the state-wide writing portfolio assessment pilot, which was based on the Sunnyvale ISD portfolio assessment system.

Such leadership on matters of importance to Texas Public Schools has led Mr. Williams to offices of state leadership in the Texas Association of School Administrators, first as the Legislative Chair, then as Vice President and now, as President-Elect. We are proud that our Superintendent represents *all students* at the state level.

On behalf of the Sunnyvale ISD Board of Trustees, I appreciate your consideration for Doug Williams for Superintendent of the Year.

Respectfully,



Brad Cravens

President, Sunnyvale ISD Board of Trustees