



Tyler Beeson
Candidate for HPISD Trustee, Place 4, 2022 Election

Some HPISD board members, educators, and parents have expressed concerns with the district's approach to literacy. What is your take on this issue?

I am very concerned with the District's approach to literacy as well, which is the primary reason I am running for HPISD School Board, seat 4. I am a concerned father, and not a politician. My grave concerns surrounding literacy in HPISD have also led me to enroll my own children in outside tutoring to help fill the gaps in their reading and writing that I have noted over the past few years of trying to help them with their schoolwork. Unfortunately, with the balanced literacy framework (Lucy Calkins) many parents are forced to supplement their children's education just to keep them at grade level, because as Ed Reports notes, the Lucy Calkins curriculum fails to meet grade level expectations for all grades K-8. This is extremely frustrating to me and other parents have also expressed similar concerns, at recent Board meetings, with the recent literacy trajectory. Our students deserve academic excellence and a curriculum that challenges them to the next level. Our schools should be about our students and their education, and should be geared towards allowing these young minds to develop and learn how to think and problem solve for themselves. The students' best interests should be central to every single decision made in the District. Period. I will work tirelessly to ensure student centered decision making is paramount in every decision the Board (and its committees) makes, with an extra focus and attention on the specific needs for those students with learning differences.

As many are aware, the education sub-committee of the Board recently recommended the removal of the Lucy Calkins balanced literacy curriculum, which has been widely scrutinized. Our job as a District and a community doesn't end here. It is imperative that the Board and the sub-committee commit to removing this curriculum as soon as practically possible, but at the same time ensuring we choose a replacement curriculum based on phonics and the science of reading. We need to make sure that the community has a voice in this process, and the Board should be the voice of the community. The removal of Lucy Calkins was a big win for our students, but the curriculum concerns in our District run much deeper than just Lucy Calkins' balanced literacy framework. Lucy Calkins is based on the workshop method of teaching students, and our District is moving away from "teacher led instruction to student centered learning" in all subjects including mathematics. This

means that teachers are teaching small 5 to 15 minute “mini lessons” in math and then the students are working in small groups teaching each other for the remainder of the hour-long session. This is unacceptable for our District. The removal of Lucy Calkins English/language arts curriculum does nothing to correct our math workshop framework. We need to correct that immediately. Teachers need to do what they do best: teach!

HB 3, passed in 2019, contains several reading elements (ie Texas Reading Academies investment in mandatory teacher training in the Science of Reading and the new requirement for districts to adopt a systematic phonics program). What do you believe the intent is behind the reading initiatives in this law?

I believe the intent of HB 3 is clearly to encourage school districts in the State of Texas to move away from balanced literacy (Lucy Calkins) English/language arts curriculums to traditional structured literacy frameworks that teach phonics and the science of reading. Many states have outright banned balanced literacy ELA programs such as Lucy Calkins, but Texas chose a different, more reserved approach. They chose to create reading academies that require mandatory teacher training, and immerse them in knowledge and teaching methods that revolve around the science of reading. The Texas Education Agency even took this a step further, and is requiring teachers in Texas to demonstrate proficiency in the science of reading and pass the Science of Teaching Reading Certification Examination. The intent is clearly obvious here, however, I believe the results will not be immediate. It will certainly take some time to implement this new program state-wide and gather data over a period of time, and it is yet to be seen if Texas chose the right approach to encourage districts to abandon the balanced literacy for the structured literacy/science of reading traditional approach.

How does HPISD's Balanced Literacy Framework, including instructional materials such as Lucy Calkins Units of Study and Fountas & Pinnell, align with the reading initiatives in House Bill 3 — and the significant body of research around the Science of Reading?

Unfortunately, the Balanced Literacy Framework HPISD has been using to teach children reading and writing is diametrically opposed to the reading initiatives outlined and required in House Bill 3 and the body of research surrounding the Science of Reading. Until recently, HPISD has used Lucy Calkins' balanced reading framework, which does not contain a systematic phonics program or component, which is vital to basic fluency in reading and writing. The State of Texas is sending a clear message to districts that the teachers need to be proficient in teaching the Science of Reading to the children in Texas classrooms. SMU, University of Houston, University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M have all committed to helping the Texas Education Agency achieve this new initiative of forming teacher reading academies,

and training teachers in the Science of Reading. Recently, the education sub-committee of the HPISD board recommended the removal of Lucy Calkins' balanced literacy framework, which was indeed a huge win for our community and our children. However, it is imperative that HPISD chooses a replacement curriculum immediately that is in line with the TEA initiative to promote educational excellence in the Science of Reading for all children in Texas. As a district, we do not have time to spare in replacing this failing curriculum.

Texas law says district Board of Trustees “shall provide oversight regarding student academic achievement and strategic leadership for maximizing student performance.” (TEC 11.1515) Can you describe what you think this should look like for a Trustee in the current conversation around literacy?

I believe the current conversation and pressure surrounding the literacy component of the HPISD curriculum illustrates the broader need for additional and systematic “oversight regarding academic achievement” by our School Board in all areas, not just literacy. The job of an HPISD school board trustee is fairly straightforward. The sworn oath is for a trustee to engage in “setting policy and promoting educational excellence” in their role. I plan to serve as a voice for the students, with a clear focus on our educational practices, to ensure they are learning the fundamentals in subjects such as reading, writing, math, science, and history using the most successful ways possible, through traditional learning methods and practices. Our schools are a place of education. They are not a political battleground, and divisive politics have no place here. To accomplish this, we must represent the best interests of the HPISD taxpayers, our students' loving families, while also supporting our wonderful teachers wholeheartedly. We must always strive to deliver the goal of achieving true academic excellence. Additionally, maintaining a commitment to sound fiscal practices is paramount as a School Board Trustee. With my strong financial background, I plan to ensure fiscally responsible management and transparent two- way communication from the Board, the staff, and the administration.