



Dear Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and Council,

Austin's youngest and most vulnerable have endured countless obstacles in their educational journey over the last year and a half. This is especially true for those in traditionally marginalized school districts where the COVID-19 pandemic continues to exacerbate systemic inequities resulting from a lack of attention, resources and funding from our city and state governments. As you consider how best to allocate American Rescue Plan (ARP) monies, I ask that you capitalize on this transformational opportunity to rectify this imbalance through supporting the Success by 6 Austin/Travis County Coalition (Success by 6) recommendation to invest \$1.5 million to expand access to dual-language full-day Pre-K for 4-year-old students who attend Del Valle Independent School District (DVISD) schools.

The Success by 6 recommendations recognized that the DVISD area has been identified as a childcare desert and lacks access to high quality childcare within the district boundaries with the exception of the DVISD Child Development Center. The two-way dual-language program this funding would benefit is one step toward addressing this issue, as it promotes biliteracy which enables students to outperform their same-age peers by the time they reach middle school. With this funding, 188 children - whose families fall into the "gap" between qualifying for state-funded Pre-K based on socioeconomic levels and being able to afford the tuition-based Pre-K program - would now have access to this life-changing opportunity.

The City of Austin has previously provided funding for Austin Independent School District (AISD) dual-language programs to serve City resident students. Therefore, there is precedent to support this funding. Please note that at least 50 percent of DVISD's student population are City residents and 8 of the 9 elementary schools are located within City limits. What the families and students of DVISD ask for is simple, yet transformational: to have the same opportunities as their fellow students across the City to access high-quality early childhood education.

Returning to the pre-pandemic status quo will continue to leave DVISD children and families behind. Through supporting this ARP funding called for in the Success by 6 recommendation, you will be executing the vision set out in the Austin Strategic Direction 2023 plan which calls for the creation of equitable access to quality early childhood education by supporting families who do not qualify for existing free programs and cannot afford quality programs on their own.

Furthermore, adoption of this Success by 6 ARP funding recommendation would be consistent with Council's direction developed over the last several years. Building off the 2017 Resolution No. 20170928-057 which produced an Austin Public Health (APH) report highlighting the lack of DVISD full-day Pre-K programs, Council unanimously approved an interlocal agreement with DVISD in 2019 for the provision of startup costs for four new Pre-K classrooms to expand affordable high-quality early childcare options for Austin/Travis County residents, for a five-month term in an amount not to exceed \$64,000. An amendment to this agreement was approved later that year which allowed DVISD to add up to three additional Pre-K classrooms.

It is clear that ARP funding that expands access to dual-language full-day Pre-K for DVISD students would support the goals that have both been established by community working groups and APH, and that have been supported by Council.

The "Resilient ATX" resolution you all supported identified early childhood care and education as areas in need of transformational investments. Six members of Council have already expressed support for the entire Success by 6 Proposal. In your continued advocacy, I ask that you ensure this much needed \$1.5 million in funding for DVISD is included in any final ARP spending framework.

This is a matter of equity. I am confident our elected officials will not miss this opportunity to level the playing field and support this Success by 6 recommendation.

Thank you,

Annette Tielle, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Del Valle I.S.D.