

Austin, Texas to close 13 schools, sell corporate sponsorships to close funding gap

Dan Conway
5 October 2025

Austin Independent School District (AISD) released a proposal Friday to close 13 schools, causing panic and anger among parents and school teachers. The plan includes 11 elementary schools and two middle schools. The final vote on the school closure plan is set to take place on November 20.

The announcement is part of a wave of school closures across both Texas and the United States. Virtually every major school district in America is operating with significant deficits, with a major factor being the ending of federal funding both under Trump and under Biden, who ended supplemental COVID funding for schools.

In Texas itself, closures are either being planned or are already underway in Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston and a number of smaller districts in addition to Austin. On a national level, recent school closures have taken place in both large and small districts, including Philadelphia and Chicago. New closures are also being planned in the latter city, with similar closures under discussion in St. Louis, Los Angeles, Boston, Seattle, San Francisco, Norfolk, Virginia and numerous smaller districts throughout the country.

The same week that the Austin closure was announced, the school district in nearby Leander made national and international headlines for its cancellation of 40 books used in high school English classes. The list includes classics such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, *Les Misérables*, and *The Devil's Arithmetic*, a 1988 novel about the Holocaust. The district used AI software to ban so-called DEI-related school materials in compliance with Texas Senate Bill 12, passed in September.

The Austin closures are expected to save a mere \$20 million a year for the district, which will be almost

entirely comprised of teacher layoffs. Thus, the closures not only have the effect of slashing expenditures, but serve to intimidate remaining teachers to toe the line and keep silent about low salaries and benefits, or ongoing attacks on civil rights by the Trump administration, supported by Texas Governor Greg Abbott.

The district is also seeking to increase revenues through a new name-sponsoring program in which private enterprises may purchase naming rights for district facilities.

Schools in Texas have faced chronic underfunding by the state government. The basic funding allotment for schools in Texas has not been increased since 2019.

In May of this year, the basic funding allotment was increased by only a mere \$55 per student per year. To put this miserly funding amount into perspective, utilizing the wealth of the richest person in the state and the world, Elon Musk, Texas schools could quadruple their annual funding from \$8.5 billion to \$34 billion for the next 15 years.

AISD parents, particularly those affected by the closures, have been shocked and angered by the proposed closures. Interviewed by CBS Austin, Patrick Perez, a parent at Widen Elementary, said, "This isn't just taking apart a school, dismantling and saying, oh you're going to go to this campus. It's going to disrupt the patterns, it's going to disrupt the teachers who come in." Perez continued, "We need the people to fight [the closures]."

Another parent, at Bryker Woods Elementary, Bo Mangels, said that the news of the school closures was "soul-crushing."

Speaking to local NBC news affiliate KXAN, Becker Elementary School parent Tanner VanEssen said: "Watching something we have built over the years that

we love, that my kids love, that is a home to them, go away and us be told that it doesn't matter how much our kids love the school, it is heartbreaking."

Becker Elementary, like several others included in the list of closures, has a school-wide Spanish dual language program, which is widely popular with parents and students. This is likely not a coincidence, given the Trump and Abbott administrations' racist attacks on immigrants. Many of those parents still wishing to provide their students with dual language education would be forced to pay for private schooling, assuming they're able to afford the expensive tuition.

In response to the closure announcement, Education Austin, the district's teachers union, released a statement which stated, "We are sad that many communities will be impacted," and urged "the district to work with us, and with employees and families to make a plan that works for everyone in Austin."

The union has made no efforts to mobilize teachers to stop the closures or the Abbott administration's plans to eviscerate public education more generally. Education Austin president Ken Zarifis shrugged off the ongoing coup by the Trump administration when he declared, "It's all about local. That's all that matters to me. I can't do a damn thing about national stuff."

This sums up the trade union bureaucracy's refusal to do anything to mobilize their members against Trump.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA) together have more than 4.8 million members. But the union heads fear that a mass movement of workers, which could break free of the Democratic Party, would put at risk their comfortable upper-middle-class lifestyles gained from decades of suppressing workers' struggles.

This perspective is exemplified by AFT president Randi Weingarten. In a recent tour promoting her new book, she proclaimed that fascism would never arrive in the United States. The best way, according to the AFT head, for teachers to oppose the attack on their livelihoods was to stay in their classrooms and for concerned parents and community members to simply attend school board meetings.

The situation urgently requires that teachers organize to defend public education from being starved of funding and converted to centers of propaganda. This is a critical element in a broader movement of the working class against Trump and the corporate

oligarchs he serves.

Teachers, parents and workers must form their own rank-and-file committees to organize such a struggle outside of the trade union bureaucracy. These committees will link up struggles against school closures in Austin with those in Dallas, Houston, Philadelphia, Boston and around the rest of the country and the rest of the world.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact