

# FAVIOLA CANTÚ, Ed.D

Education Executive

 Houston, Texas



Dear Santa Fe Public Schools Board of Education,

It is with great excitement that I present myself as a candidate for superintendent of Santa Fe Public Schools. As the chief academic officer of the Aldine Independent School District I have had the pleasure of leading highly effective teams, developing strategic plans to improve academic programs and working directly with our school board. I've had the pleasure of attending the La Cosecha Dual Language Conference three times when it was hosted in Santa Fe, which included the opportunity to visit your schools and observe your outstanding dual language programs. I believe public education positions children to lead choice-filled lives, and I have chosen to advance this work as a system level leader. As a former bilingual teacher, principal of a dual language campus, and district administrator overseeing dual language initiatives, I would be honored to lead a district that so boldly celebrates student diversity within a safe and nurturing learning environment.

After analyzing your district's state assessment data, I believe my skill set and experience can build upon your many strengths and further advance opportunities for students. Following my time as a teacher in two urban districts, I joined the suburban, 21,000 student district of Pearland Independent School District. I served as principal of Carlestone Elementary School where I oversaw the development and implementation of innovative programming, facility improvements, and dramatic student growth. I stepped into my first cabinet level position as director of Multilingual Programs in a district of 11,000 students in Sheldon Independent School District. I served as director of Multilingual Programs, driving reading and math achievement while also transitioning the existing bilingual instruction model to a 2-way dual language program. In 2019, I joined Aldine Independent School District as an assistant superintendent, before assuming the role of chief academic officer. Having led and worked in several Houston area districts, I possess a unique understanding of the evolving needs of communities and districts of different sizes. I would readily apply this understanding to my work as superintendent of Santa Fe Public Schools.

I understand you seek a superintendent who is well positioned to provide high quality instruction and learning opportunities in core areas, and opportunities for students to develop important skills through innovative instructional strategies that promote engagement, critical thinking, and transfer of content and skills. I possess extensive experience with developing and implementing curriculum, both as a principal supervisor and chief academic officer. I lead a 250 person Teaching and Learning team, who support over 4,000 teachers across Pre-K to 12th grade. Together, we work towards demonstrating what's possible for the 57,000 students in Aldine. Through leadership and teacher coaching, effective Tier 1 instruction and attention to student data, I have led the improvement of underperforming campuses and implemented action plans to address the instructional needs of students. As an assistant superintendent, my campuses performed in the top 10% in Aldine ISD on district and state assessments with thirteen of my campuses earning recognition from the Texas Education Agency of an A or B rating.

I have worked closely with teams to bring innovative programs and design new school models to boost academic achievement and enhance the learning experience of students. More importantly, I believe the district's goals closely match my moral imperative to ensure students are reading, writing and skilled in numeracy by 3rd grade.

I see great alignment between your collaborative approach to serving students and my own leadership philosophy. As an educator, school and system level leader, community engagement is at the core of my work. From leading extensive town halls, to meeting with district partners and the media, to enacting a multi-year plan to dramatically improve parent engagement, I believe reaching out to our key stakeholders is critical to a district's success. Beyond increasing enrollment in new programs, my efforts supported the passing of a \$1.8 billion dollar bond, the largest in Aldine's history. As Superintendent, I would heavily invest in relationship building with all stakeholders, including the Board, families, community partners, staff and more to ensure we have an excellent student experience.

Pursuing the role of superintendent of Santa Fe Public Schools is a decision I've made after much reflection. I value serving in a community where my husband and I can raise our sons. My oldest is starting high school in August and my youngest is in middle school. I can see them graduating from one of the many phenomenal high school options in Santa Fe Public Schools. I can see my family thriving in the Santa Fe community and its schools. While serving in Santa Fe would be a wonderful experience for my family, I'm also deeply impressed by the instructional programs you offer and intrigued by the complex problems we can solve together. The more I learn about your commitment to providing every student with a safe, high quality, and engaging education that values diversity, the more excited I become about the possibility of serving your community as the next superintendent.

I have a track record of success leading exceptional teams and academic programs, engaging strategically with education boards and key stakeholders, and managing multi-million dollars effectively. I would enjoy speaking with you on how we can continue to create opportunities for students together. As superintendent of Santa Fe Public Schools, I would be dedicated to working collaboratively to create an abundance of learning opportunities for the students we serve. If granted this honor, it would be my goal to build on the district's successes and continue to make a difference in the lives of the children and families of the Santa Fe community.

Regards,

Faviola Cantú

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## Summary of Qualifications

- Bilingual, passionate educator with more than two decades in public education, as a teacher, principal, district-level leader, and cabinet member within 4 Texas school districts.
- Current Chief Academic Officer overseeing instructional strategy for Aldine Independent School District, the nation's 59th largest school system, with more than 57,000 students across 81 campuses.
- Recognized school turnaround specialist that elevated 13 out of 15 campuses to a 'B' or higher state rating, including the transformation of 7 campuses from 'C' or 'D' to 'B' rating.
- Responsible steward of multi-million dollar budgets, who advised the Aldine Independent School District Board and community on the successful \$1.8 Billion Dollar bond in 2024.

## Experience

### **Aldine Independent School District**

**CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER, 2023-PRESENT**

**SCHOOL ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, 2019-2023**

*Serve on the superintendent's cabinet and oversee instructional strategy for the 59th largest school system in the country, supporting 81 campuses, 57,000 students, 4,000 teachers and supervising a Teaching and Learning Department of over 250+ employees who support the entire district.*

### **Strategic Leadership**

- Engage in board workshops to share academic updates, strategic plans, district optimization plans and bond information.
- Joined the Board at high-stakes professional events, such as Texas Association of School Boards and System of Great Schools, to represent and share district-specific insights.
- Oversaw and facilitated the 2-day, 2024 Texas Strategic Leadership Fall Convening to improvements in Career & Technical Education and instructional practices with over 70 state-wide leaders.
- Advised the board and executive cabinet on the development of the successful \$1.8 billion dollar bond which will provide multiple new facilities, building renovations, enhanced security and a new education and performing arts center.
- Informed the board on critical district optimization strategies which would enhance the student experience, provide greater support, and reduce the financial impact for the 2024-2025 school year; all strategies shared were ultimately adopted.
- Advised on the implementation of bold school actions as part of the System of Great Schools such as the development and launch of Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) model, and the Additional Days School Year model.
- Partnered with multiple departments to support bold secondary models of instruction such as Young Women's Leadership Academy, Impact Leadership Academy (K-8 all boys school), La Promesa Newcomer and Dual Language Experience and The Newtech Network model all of which have resulted in increased outcomes for students.

## Teaching and Learning Leadership

- Ensure a focus to delivering solid Tier 1 instruction through the effective implementation of high quality instructional materials in literacy resulting in an improvement of 16% in 3-5th grade and 8% in grades 6-8th on Reading STAAR Interim as compared to 2022.
- Provide instructional supports to high needs campuses resulting in an improvement of 15% in 3-5th grade and 10% in grades 6-8th on Math STAAR Interim as compared to 2022.
- Establish processes to increase student participation in advanced math courses in middle school demonstrating a growth of 18% in STAAR Interim Algebra as compared to 2022.
- Achieved kinder student growth of 17% from Beginning of the Year to Middle of the Year on mClass Reading and 5% growth for students in 1-5th grade.
- Maximize the use of educator training days by providing professional learning options for 4,000+ teachers and paraprofessionals as well as the implementation of a system to manage logistics and improve offerings for future sessions.
- Developed systems for the instruction and administration of 15 campuses with 7,708 students resulting in 13 of 15 campuses earning a B or higher rating in 2022 state accountability.
- Redesigned instructional programs for newcomers through the development La Promesa HS, which earned a B rating in its first year of opening and each year since.
- Utilized specific protocols for monitoring student progress on Carnegie Math, which led to scores on Algebra 1 EOC of 82% approaches, 56% Meets and 42% masters grade level in 2022.
- Collaborated with the Office of Transformation on the development of innovative instructional programs such as school redesign, blended learning and distributive leadership models.
- Partner closely with the College Career Military Readiness division to meet ambitious Texas Success Initiative Goals, and design and execute programming aligned with CTE standards.

## Operations and Human Capital Leadership

- Address staffing concerns in special education, ensuring system compliance and improved outcomes for 6,149 special education students.
- Part of the team which developed strategies for the use of a budget of \$723.7 million dollars, ensuring efficiency and alignment to the district's strategic plan.
- Develop, supervise and maintain an annual budget of local, federal and grant funding of more than \$18,000,000 million dollars.
- Served on the cabinet team developing a balanced budget for each school year that prioritized including salary increases for all employees, a critical step in recognizing staff.
- Implemented systems to identify budget inefficiencies which led to decreasing budgets by 10% with minimal impact to daily operations.
- Developed partnership with Southern Education Foundation to build systematic processes for implementing outcomes based contracting.
- Oversee leadership development for all instructional and campus leaders, facilitating a variety of capacity building programs, including the Association of Latinx Leaders in Aldine (celebrated 30+ promotions in 2023-2024 from this group alone).
- Advised in the recruitment of bilingual teachers through a partnership with El Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional de España and Region 13, which has resulted in over 45 new hires in 2023, and 48 in 2024 from this partnership alone.
- Served on the leadership team that successfully opened Aldine's first Health Industry-Focused High School, HEAL High School, in partnership with Memorial Hermann, funded by a \$31 million dollar Bloomberg Philanthropic grant.

## Community Engagement Leadership

- Held town halls and facilitated information in English and Spanish at all comprehensive high schools, district departments, and multiple community centers, directly contributing to the passing of a \$1.8 billion dollar bond (the largest in AISD history).
- Share district updates at events such as State of the District with community partners such as the University of Houston Downtown, Good Reason Houston and the Houston Endowment.

- Shared departmental evaluations and academic reports with the community and board members through monthly board meetings.
- Enacted a multi-year plan to invite and increase parent participation in district -level events
- Consistently promoted and projected a positive image of the district by maintaining positive working relationships with community members and parents.
- Increased communication among all stakeholders by providing feedback and content via district website, call-outs, newsletter, annual reports and social media.
- Conducted on air interviews reopening schools and pandemic protocols on Spanish language newscasts for Univision and Telemundo.
- Coordinated quarterly district level events, such as the HOPE (High School Opportunities Provide Empowerment) Summit for the community, with hundreds of attendees.

### **Sheldon Independent School District**

#### **DIRECTOR OF MULTILINGUAL PROGRAMS. 2016-2019**

*Served as a member of the superintendent's cabinet actively monitoring student data, providing input on academic policies, conducting department evaluations, academic reports and projects in service of nearly 11,000 K-12 students, 600+ teachers, across 13 schools.*

- Increased STAAR Math all levels by 10 percentage points from 2016 to 2018 through the implementation of specific language acquisition strategies (ESL Essentials).
- Increased STAAR Reading 3rd grade by 11 percentage points from 2017 to 2018 through the development and training of curriculum documents to support Spanish Reading Language Arts.
- Increased 5th grade STAAR Reading by 16 percentage points from 2017 to 2018 through the implementation of quarterly data meetings with the executive leadership team.
- Improved reading outcomes through the implementation of a one-way and two-way dual language program resulting in 79% of 2018 Kindergarten students on grade level in English DRA and 75% on grade level on Evaluación del Desarrollo de Lectura.
- Facilitated ongoing dialogue with stakeholders, culminating in all campuses moving from an early exit bilingual instructional model to a one-way or 2-way dual language model (so popular it had a waitlist).
- Conducted community outreach to recruit, promote and increase student participation in multilingual programs.

### **Pearland Independent School District**

#### **PRINCIPAL, Carlestone Elementary School, 2012-2016**

*Served as principal of Carlestone ES , with nearly 800 students and 64 staff members. Pearland ISD has more than 20,000 students, across 20 schools, and 1300 teachers.*

- Enhanced a majority inclusion model for special education services 1st - 4th grade resulting in an increase of special education students meeting the approaches level on STAAR Math 2016 .
- Consulted in the development of program and curriculum documents for one-way and two-way dual language instruction; ensured compliance with federal programs.
- Enhanced parent engagement through the development of innovative programs such as an Accordion and Keyboarding club.
- Managed ongoing renovations including student safety during construction, instructional vision for new classrooms, technology and procurement of resources.

### **ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**Assistant Principal, Franklin Elementary School,** Houston Independent School District, 2009-2012

**Teacher, DeZavala Elementary School,** Houston Independent School District 2007-2009

**Teacher, Jacinto City Elementary School,** Galena Park Independent School District 2004-2007

## EDUCATION

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UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON - 2013

**Doctor of Education, *Professional Leadership***

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY - 2008

**Master of Education, *Education Leadership***

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON - 2003

**Bachelor of Arts, *Psychology/Sociology***

## RELEVANT CERTIFICATIONS

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Superintendent EC - 12

Principal EC - 12

Bilingual Generalist EC - 4

## TRAINING

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**Future Chiefs, 2024 - Present**

CHIEFS FOR CHANGE

**Superintendent Insight Lab, 2024**

THE HOLDSWORTH CENTER

**Superintendents Leadership Academy, Cohort X**

THE ASSOCIATION OF LATINO ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERINTENDENTS, 2021

## SELECT RECOGNITIONS

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**SÍ SE PUEDE AWARD, 2020**

The Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents

**CAMPUS RATED A FOR OUTSTANDING STUDENT PERFORMANCE, 2014 & 2015**

Children at Risk

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND BOARD LEADERSHIP

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**Founder & Board Member, 2020 - Present**

THE ASSOCIATION OF LATINX LEADERS IN ALDINE

501 (c)(3)(b) non-profit providing leadership development to Aldine administrators