



March 7, 2017

## **Frederick Douglass Academy High School**

We have an opportunity to right an injustice that is being done to the Austin community.

As talks of the transformation of Frederick Douglass Academy High School continue, let's do the right thing for the Austin community. As a representative of the Austin community, I envision Frederick Douglass Academy High School as a sustainable community school equipped with wrap-around supports, with an emphasis on blended learning and constructivist teaching models. We need to accomplish these things for our community:

- Immediately create an active and strong democratically elected Local School Council (LSC).
- Establish in the school an advanced placement (AP), international baccalaureate (IB), and college prep curriculum that is relevant, critical, action-based and child-centered that meets the needs of all learners.
- Upgrade the school with modern computer equipment for blended learning (in which a student learns at least in part through delivery of content and instruction via digital and online media with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace).
- Upgrade the art and music spaces, and ensure there is a well-functioning library with a certified librarian.
- Implement properly staffed, trained, and certified Restorative Justice and social emotional programs reaching into the students' homes to eliminate the school to prison and poverty pipeline.
- Modernize the athletic programs with the building of a multi-purpose track and football field.
- Create a free and universal pre-K program for local families and/or high school students with children, and assist students who need childcare for their children.
- Enhance and improve medical, behavioral and social services to students and their families at the existing in-school clinic - with better coordination with current CPS nursing staff - to better identify and overcome medical, mental health and social barriers faced by students and families to ensure the student's success in school.
- Add extra staff for Special Needs Services for all students who are three grade levels below grade level to ensure all students are college-ready.
- Limit class size so teachers can more effectively teach, especially when many students have serious learning problems not previously identified.

- Reinforce the work of teachers who are convinced that they can have an impact on their students in spite of any challenges that the students may face – social challenges must be addressed, but they cannot be used to write any student off.
- Ensure there is a cadre of substitute teachers who know the students and can teach a class during teacher absence.
- Emphasize: strong and stable leadership for the high school; high expectations for students; and an orderly pleasant atmosphere for students, staff and families.
- Ensure adequate security so consequences for infractions are not ignored because of a shortage of security.
- Make available programming space more easily available to local after-school programs and community organizations providing youth-centered activities, as well as adult GED options.

We have an incredible opportunity to create a new Frederick Douglass Academy High School by providing the community with a sustainable community school. In the interest of advancing justice, fairness and equity, when we enrich Frederick Douglass Academy High School with resources and invest in the school community, we will have a positive impact on the whole community. I look forward to working with all interested stakeholders to help to marshal the necessary support and resources for a great, successful community high school in Austin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LSK', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

La Shawn K. Ford  
State Representative-Eighth District