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SAISD Trustees Hunt For Hard-Charging Fixer To Save Struggling Schools

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San Antonio Independent School District trustees spent a weekend in workshop mode, mapping out the skills and priorities they want in a new superintendent as outgoing chief Jaime Aquino heads toward retirement in January 2027. They say they are looking for a hands-on operator who can lift academic performance at the district's weakest campuses, steady a tight budget and send students out the door ready for life after graduation. The clock is ticking, with enrollment sliding and limited time to turn around low performing schools.

Trustees met with AJ Crabill, the governance director for a national urban district group, and began drafting a job profile that centers on rigorous curriculum, aggressive turnaround plans and post graduation readiness, as reported by the San Antonio Express-News. Board members said they want someone who will stay long enough to see reforms through instead of a short term caretaker. They also signaled that the next superintendent needs to help the board "exercise meaningful oversight" of district progress, not just keep trustees in the loop.

The pressure is not theoretical. District projections show that roughly 25 of SAISD's 86 campuses could receive a D or F on this year's A F ratings, putting many schools, and the district's autonomy, at risk, according to the Houston Chronicle. Under state law, a campus that racks up five consecutive failing ratings can trigger a state intervention that replaces elected trustees and the superintendent, a mechanism explained by The Dallas Morning News.

Board Set To Pick Search Firm This Week

The board has placed a recommendation to hire a superintendent search firm on a special meeting agenda that would authorize the board president to execute a contract if it is approved. The item appears on the SAISD board agenda for April 13 and would hand a professional firm the job of gathering community input and vetting candidates on a compressed timeline, per the SAISD board agenda.

Trustees Want Leader In Sync With Community Values

Trustees and Crabill stressed that technical chops alone will not cut it. The board wants a leader whose values line up with the community's, to avoid "frictions day one," the trustees

were told in the workshop, per the San Antonio Express-News. Crabill, who leads governance programming at the Council of the Great City Schools, urged trustees to prioritize student outcomes over "adult comfort" and to insist on high quality professional development for teachers. Those expectations are shaping the early profile trustees plan to send to the search firm.

What Comes Next For SAISD

Next steps are procedural but fast, starting with approval of the search firm contract, then launching community listening sessions and moving quickly into candidate vetting ahead of Aquino's scheduled January 2027 departure. Trustees have also moved to partner with outside operators in an attempt to blunt consecutive failing ratings, a controversial decision that drew protests from parents and staff, as documented by Texas Public Radio and other local coverage. The result will likely be a short, intense search that will test whether trustees can land an executive with both the will and the toolbox to reverse the district's slide.