



## Questionnaire for Board of Education candidates

General Election, November 4, 2008

### Candidate/Campaign Information:

Candidate name:	Barbara Lopez
Office sought:	School Board
Contact person:	Barbara Lopez
Mail address:	988 Valencia St., SF, CA 94110
Telephone:	516-0361
Email address:	barbarabethlopez@yahoo.com
Web address:	www.barbaralopez.org
Anticipated Budget:	\$20,000
Funds raised to date:	Filing Tmrw.
Percentage of donations under \$50:	

**General Questions:** Please write a brief response (less than 150 words) to each question. Please return this questionnaire electronically to [contactus@phdemclub.org](mailto:contactus@phdemclub.org) We will make these questionnaires available to our members before the endorsement meeting.

1. Why are you running? Why should we vote for you?

For six years, I have worked with SFUSD parents at various school sites throughout the city and firsthand see the problems on the ground that teachers, paraprofessionals, others

face. I represented youth in expulsion, special education, and safety transfer hearings for three years. I've worked to empower immigrant parents through trainings since 2001. Being aware of the conditions in the classroom coupled with my experience as an organizer and a parent advocate place me in an excellent position to negotiate the needs of parents, teachers, youth, community and administrators.

As Coordinator of La Voz Latina, a parent empowerment program in the Tenderloin, I work tirelessly to educate parents on school issues to increase their participation at school sites. I've supported working families in advocating for affordable housing (and assisted in the authorship of the Housing Charter), safe communities (foot patrols), and just schools (translation funding). I have legislative, policy, and advocacy experience and have successfully fought for some of the most successful programs and legislations around.

2. What sets you apart from your opponents?

I'm part of the labor movement (SEIU 1021), LGBT, and Latina/Middle-Eastern. I am one of the more progressive candidates and currently work on issues of youth violence and immigrant rights in our schools. I work with a base of immigrant parents whose children attends dozens of public schools throughout the City, and I also have direct experience working in policy and legislative advocacy. I constantly hear candidates talk about equity in our schools, but to understand "equity," I believe it is important to have representatives that work directly with impacted communities.

I also believe that many of the candidates I am running against hold very conservative view about education including limiting the school choice of students of the east side of San Francisco aka students of color and support JROTC in schools. Student Assignment will be a big topic this year and it is key to ensure the rights of low-income students choice in quality education.

3. What are the top three issues facing San Francisco's schools? What will you do about those issues?

1. A Budget process that fights lay-offs, prioritizes staff at school sites and cannot cut the classroom.
2. Equity in Educational Outcomes: Encourage increased participation of teachers and parents, offer additional professional development, smaller classroom size/small schools initiative, review school assignment policy.
3. Safe Schools: Convene community and school staff to coordinate responses to pockets of youth violence. Start anti-bully campaigns. Review of relationship with MUNI and transit corridors to ensure maximum safety for youth.

4. Would you describe yourself as fiscally responsible? Please give an example to support your answer.

I co-founded La Voz Latina in 2006. Everyday, I work to empower Latino immigrant parents from the Tenderloin to advocate for themselves at school sites, on the School Board and at City Hall. Thanks to their efforts we have foot patrols, rental subsidies, affordable housing charter, additional funds for school translation, a revised immigration protocol at the School District, and the awareness of re-shaping our transportation access

for poor middle and high school youth. Our base is 43 active families with attendance of over 200 for large-scale events.

5. Would you describe yourself as socially progressive? Please give an example to support your answer.

- I've continuously worked with bases of parents in communities of color for over seven years to ensure that parents have a voice in their children's education.
- I've worked on progressive campaigns alongside our parents including the affordable Housing Charter on the November ballot.
- As my predecessor and mentor, Mark Sanchez, President of the San Francisco School Board, has been the moral compass of that body, I plan to continue in those footsteps and be guided by principle.
- I've fundraised (in a year and a half) a budget of \$150,000, and plan to aggressively fundraise for my own campaign in the next three months. I used to put together fundraisers for progressive causes in the LGBT Middle-Eastern community (Arab language hotlines, asylum cases, etc.) and would raise \$3-5,000 in a night.

## **Issue Questions:**

1. Given the very real probability of reduced state funding for SF schools in the coming years, what combination of budget cuts and tax increases would you suggest to address budgetary shortfalls?

As an organizer, I will use my skills to push for state and city funding of SFUSD. I am also very comfortable working, writing, and advocating for legislation.

I would use my organizer and legal worker skills to continue to strengthen our relationship with the City to ensure access to the rainy day fund. As a Board member, I would consider pushing for future bonds and revenue measures (Props to Prop A!) and also find ways of applying more pressure to our legislators in the state capital.

However, if cuts take place, I say "chop from the top." My first step would be to freeze management and consultant positions and analyze what cuts could be made from there. The last cuts would be programs that show academic success as determined through a community process.

2. Absent radical changes, state and federal mandates (like 8<sup>th</sup> grade algebra and No Child Left Behind) have laid out difficult goals for our schools to meet. What steps do you think the SF schools should take to meet those achievement goals?

This is a slippery slope. It is incredibly dangerous and counter-productive for a district to use testing outcomes to determine success. No Child Left Behind is the sort of policy that further destroys public education by setting unreasonable mandates that penalize schools with socially disadvantages children and offer no additional resources to achieve the means set forth. However, given the demands of the state, and more importantly, the consequences of not meeting those ends, we must play the game to a degree until we can

replace this testing with something that quantifies child development in a more inclusive manner.

3. While SF's dropout rate of 21% is not as bad as the state average of 24%, it is far from ideal. How should the SF schools improve enrollment, recruitment, and retention?

This needs to be accomplished through stronger relationships with CBOS. The more our district is cut at the state level, the more we need to rely on existing networks and strengthening those networks. I also think, we need to review our policies on safe schools because often youth don't come to because they aren't safe at home or at school.

4. How should the SF schools address the achievement gaps correlated with race, class, and special needs students? How should we address the long-standing gaps between East side and West side schools?

This begins by putting additional and meaningful resources into our East side schools and encouraging the highest quality teachers to teach there. We need to support classroom instruction by giving more autonomy to teachers and also fund manipulatives and other teaching tools. We need to push for smaller class-size and programmatic school areas. We also must find ways be being more culturally appropriate and sensitive to the realities of youth in the city. In terms of special education, the district has a long-standing history of skipping on needed services during the I.E.P process. We need to create specific programs around autism and other special needs to avoid the costly request of parents seeking non-public school placement at the expense of district.

5. How should the SF school assignment process work, given our goals of race and class diversity (and our current shortcomings in that area), the difficulties parents have dealing with a complex system, and questions of constitutionality arising from the recent Supreme Court decision?

I strongly oppose cries for neighborhood schools. I think a review of the system is in order to ensure that a percentage of parents close to their school sites have priority, however we can't afford a new era of Segregation. We need to focus on developing our East side schools as to attract parents to stay in their neighborhoods and thus not overcrowding West side schools. The recently passed Prop A begins to do this by increasing the incentives for teachers to stay at East side schools, but we need to put additional resources there.

6. Do you support a voluntary system of Clean Elections – full public financing – of candidates for citywide offices? Would you participate in such a system if it were available?

**Yes! I believe strongly in an open and transparent government.**

7. Do you support or oppose the following propositions on the November ballot? Please explain why or why not.

- SF Declaration of Policy in support of SF public high school students participating in JROTC (Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps)

Support \_\_\_\_ Oppose X Reason:

As a Lesbian, I cannot accept a program that actively discriminates against the LGBT community. I can also not accept that we, a school district constantly cutting our budget

due to state budget cuts, subsidize a trillion dollar industry. I've also had youth who have been in the JROTC, and many of them have been referred for expulsion for violence. I believe we need to teach our youth responsibility through peace because they live and breathe violence enough as it is.

- CA Proposition 4: Amends California Constitution to prohibit abortion for a non-emancipated minor until 48 hours after physician notifies minor's parent, legal guardian or, if parental abuse reported, an adult family member

Support \_\_\_\_ Oppose x Reason:  
Complete right to privacy and choice.

- CA Proposition 5: Provides rehabilitation as an alternative to prison for nonviolent drug offenders

Support x Oppose \_\_\_\_ Reason: Harm reduction has been shown through medical studies as the way to promote a drug free environment. Drug users need treatment not incarceration.

- CA Proposition 6: Requires increased penalties for youths convicted of gang-related crimes, including the possibility that 14-year-olds will be tried as adults; increases spending for prison and parole operations, which would come from California's General Fund.

Support \_\_\_\_ Oppose x Reason: I work with adjudicated youth and see the problems of our prison everyday. What is gang affiliation? In 95% of the cases it involves 14 yr old boys trying to fit in and glorifying a life style that they are taught through media is cool. They may dress a certain way and listen to music, even hang out with older youth that are affiliated, but what if they haven't committed a violent crime? And if they have, most likely it was a fight at school, and that needs to be dealt with through mediation not prison time. Working in the Tenderloin, I see racial profiling every day, the police aren't savy enough to distinguish every day Latino and African-American youth from those that are truly involved in a violent life style. This will lead to increased wrongful incarceration and profiling.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.