



Questionnaire for Board of Education candidates

General Election, November 4, 2008

Candidate/Campaign Information:

Candidate name:	Norman Yee
Office sought:	Board of Education
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Anticipated Budget:	\$60,000
Funds raised to date:	\$30,000
Percentage of donations under \$50:	About 25%

General Questions: Please write a brief response (less than 150 words) to each question. Please return this questionnaire electronically to 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?
We recently introduced new leadership to our staffing with the hiring of a new Superintendent of our schools. We agreed on a strategic plan to "Balance the Scorecard" and

provide our District with meaningful direction. The voters in San Francisco have approved resources necessary to support the District, support that the State has not provided for decades. We have developed collaborative partnerships with our teachers union, parent groups, the communities and City government.

We have laid the groundwork for change and the District now stands poised to continue the progress we've made in the last four years, towards the world class education system that we all envision for our City's students. I am running for re-election to bring our District past the tipping point toward positive results. I have a proven track record and I will continue to provide the strong leadership that is necessary to stay the course.

2. What sets you apart from your opponents?

I am the only candidate who is a graduate of SFUSD, a former San Francisco public school teacher, and a parent of two daughters who graduated from SFUSD.

Over the last 35 years, my life's work has been in our communities, advocating for children, youth, and families. Since 2005, I have had the honor to serve on the San Francisco Board of Education as President and as Vice President. As a native San Franciscan, a parent and a former teacher, there is nothing more important to me than ensuring our children receive a quality education.

I approach this work from a unique position, drawing from my experiences :

*** Experienced Educator-I am a former San Francisco K-12 and community college teacher and earned a graduate degree in education;**

*** Effective Leader-As Executive Director of Wu Yee Children's Services for over 15 years, I managed hundreds of employees and grew the organization, increasing it to a multi-million dollar budget.**

*** Proud Public School Parent-My two children attended San Francisco public schools, from kindergarten through 12th grade.**

My ability to see all sides of an issue and to collaborate with stakeholders holding multiple perspectives has made the School Board more effective and has brought more voices into our decision making process.

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

One of my top priorities is to close the achievement gap. I would support this by building on work from my previous term and strengthening our District's parent engagement policy. Research has shown the strong correlation between parent engagement and student achievement. I have seen the power of parental involvement as a parent, teacher and as the head of a large child development organization. I would also continue to expand quality preschool for our children. I was the co-chair of the San Francisco Universal Preschool Program and I am seeing the results of that planning effort. I would also support and hold us accountable to the strategies we collectively agree on to ensure that our District Balances the Scorecard. I was involved with the process of

developing the goals and strategies in improving our District for all students. It is of utmost importance to me that we stay focus on these goals and give the strategies a real chance to succeed.

The second priority is to address the student assignment process to provide some geographical consideration for students, especially for those entering elementary school.

Thirdly, we also need to advocate that the State government fund education adequately and for the Federal government to provide the full amount promised by No Child Left Behind (Title 1) and IDEA.

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

Yes, I was the executive director of Wu Yee Children's Services over an eighteen year period. I grew the organization's budget from \$2000,000 plus to a budget of over \$10 million before I left in 2001. I left the organization in great fiscal condition despite taking on challenges to help low income children and families.

I recently authored a resolution to look at the District's transportation costs, especially those services that are not mandated. I am hoping to eventually save several million dollars from the transportation expenses. I am the chair of the School Board's Fiscal Committee. I also have served on budget committees on First Five and Parent Services Project, Inc.

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

Yes, I advocated for local and state governments to provide funding to give childcare workers substantial stipends. I have increased the child care services to San Francisco families greatly. I have been a long-time advocate for the immigrant community. I fought to have a more transparent process for the Board of Education by co-creating the District's sunshine policy.

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 mentioned above, I recently authored a resolution to look at the District's transportation costs, especially those services that are not mandated. I will make the hard decision based on what impacts the classrooms least. I advocate that the state close loopholes of weathy tax (or non-tax) payers. If we do this, we would not need to increase taxes. Short of that I support bringing back the state license vehicle fees.

We also continuing to build stronger partnerships with the City and the extra resources we are receiving from the City has benefited the students immensely.

2. Absent radical changes, state and federal mandates (like 8th 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?

Recently, we have laid out strategies when the Board approved our Strategic Plans based on the balanced scorecard approach. This Strategic Plan had the input of all stakeholders and we are just beginning to implement it this school year.

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? The strategies outlined in our strategic plan is targeting the education gap and drop out rate. We have set goals to improve the dropout rate.

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?

Beyond the general strategies identified in our Strategic Plan, I support the following.

It will be crucial to have consistent leadership over the next four years to build on the positive momentum we have created in order to fulfill the potential of our District and our students. The right kind of leaders will be key to stay focused on implementing the strategic plan and improving educational experiences for San Francisco's students and their families, while taking on challenges such as state budget cuts and demographic shifts.

Key to addressing the achievement gap are the following items:

- Support stronger early childhood programs.
- Actively encourage more parent involvement.
- Support a greater number of mentor teachers to support teachers teaching in low performing schools
- Create alternative high school programs such as small schools by design.
- Develop strong partnerships with the City to provide more support services for the children and families.
- Conduct a thorough analysis of best practices in schools serving students from low social economic families and apply those to schools with similar students that are not doing well.
- Create welcoming school environments that encourage community participation.

We have started addressing address the long-standing gaps between East side and West side schools when we passed the latest Proposition A supporting teachers. We included additional compensation of \$5,000 for teachers assigned to hard to fill schools, which are concentrated in the East side.

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 would like to give some preference to geographic consideration, especially for elementary school children. I would like to see a system that guarantees that an elementary school child gets to attend a school within a certain radius distance from his home (i.e. 2 mile radius). Kids can than overlapping communities can create diversity.

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, but I must understand the fine details of the system before totally committing to it.

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: While I commend the organizers for getting enough signatures to place JROTC on the ballot, I don't support the concept of putting this issue on the ballot. This is a non binding resolution. I would support having the School Board having another vote on this issue.

- 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: I am the parent of 2 daughters and they know they can talk to me about anything. If they couldn't come to me or another family member for help, I would want there to be safe avenues for them. I have opposed similar efforts as Proposition 4.

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

Support X Oppose ____ Reason: Our prison system is very overcrowded.

- 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 Reason: I don't support more spending for prisons. We spend more money on prisons than we do on our public schools. This initiative would will criminalize our young people when we should be spending more money to educate them.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.