



**Questionnaire for candidates for the office of SFUSD School Board
General Election, November 2, 2010**

*Please return this questionnaire electronically to contact_us@phdemclub.org no later than **Monday, August 30**, to confirm your speaking slot.*

Candidate name: Margaret Brodtkin
Office sought: Member, Board of Education
Contact person: Margaret Brodtkin
Mail address: 45 Graystone Terrace, San Francisco, 94114
Telephone: 415-863-2710
Email address: mbrodtkin@sbcglobal.net
Web address: www.brodtkinforSchoolBoard.org

Please write a brief response (≤ 150 words) to each question. We will make these questionnaires available to our members before the endorsement meeting.

1. Why are you running for office?

I want to bring everything I have learned from my three decades of successful work on behalf of San Francisco's children to the most important job in the city – developing policies for our public schools – the places where children must be inspired and prepared to live up to their potential.

We are at an important crossroads with our schools and I want to help provide leadership to ensure that we are moving effectively in the right direction: We have some of the best public schools in the country, and 10 of the worst performing schools in the country. We can make all schools great schools – or we can continue to lose families because they don't trust the system. We can segregate our lowest performing kids or we can educate

all kids to a higher standard – together! We can focus narrowly on testing – or we can create hubs of learning for the 21st century.

2. What are your qualifications for this position?

I have a 32 year record of successfully working for children in San Francisco – creating new funding streams, new programs in every neighborhood, and new ways for parents and young people to be empowered and participate in the decision-making that impacts their lives. I have committed most of my adult life to working on behalf of children and am deeply committed to that cause.

During my 26 years as its leader, Coleman Advocates for Children became a powerhouse for change, moving children's issues from relative obscurity to a civic priority.

During my 4 1/2 years as its Director, the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families became a hub of innovation, partnerships and community engagement – a new kind of bureaucracy.

As Director of New Day for Learning, I have inspired people about the education of the future.

Some of my accomplishments include: the creation of the SF Children's Fund (now valued at \$50 million/yr), DCYF, and the SF Youth Commission, funds for childcare wages, Beacon Centers and family resource centers.

4. What are the top three challenges facing public education in San Francisco? What will you do to meet these challenges?

- Sustaining and increasing resources for our public schools.

I will protect the funding we have, ensure that the City fulfills its funding commitment to the schools, support new revenue measures for the schools (bonds for 21st century facilities), a parcel tax and other possibilities, and promote in-kind services to the schools through partnerships with city departments and community organizations. At the state level, I will make sure that we use the lawsuit about school funding as an avenue to seek new formulas for schools and additional funding sources.

- Creating and implementing a 21st century vision of learning that can better prepare all children for success.

I will promote full-service community schools in partnership with parents, teachers and community – making schools vibrant hubs of learning for our communities. This entails partnerships throughout the city, expanded learning time, experiential hands-on learning, support services and schools open from morning until night.

- Closing the achievement gap (see below)

5. If you are an incumbent, please describe your major accomplishments while in office.

6. How do you propose lessening the achievement gap between students of different backgrounds?

- Closely track a success plan for every child, so that appropriate intervention can occur before a child falls far behind.
- Provide schools with the resources to respond to the individual needs of children who are challenged in school - I support the current efforts to have our best staff support our lowest performing schools.
- Put the support services in place through a full-service community schools model so that we can address the non-academic barriers to success and children can come into a classroom able to focus and learn.
- Expand learning time – through after-school and summer.
- Implement a vigorous plan to welcome and engage parents as partners in their children's education in more intensive ways than ever before.
- Create a culture of high expectations and help our children believe that they can succeed from early elementary on.
- Educate all children to a higher standard – e.g. develop creative strategies for credit recovery and open access to high level courses.

Note: **I am not supportive of the federal insistence on reconstituting staff as a reform strategy. We have tried this before in San Francisco without success.**

7. What are your views on charter schools?

I believe that there is a rationale for charters, when a charter has the potential to do work that SFUSD is unable to do and when SFUSD has the opportunity to learn from the charter. Life Learning Academy is an example of a charter that meets those criteria.

Public accountability mechanisms must be strong for charter schools. Charters are no panacea - overall, charters have not proven to be more effective than regular public schools. I will push to have the district provide what is needed to have schools flourish and promote innovation and initiative within our own system whenever possible. Small-schools-by-design is an effort to do just that – experiment with autonomy and student engagement within a cohort of schools for which the district is responsible.

It should also be noted that Prop 39 poses challenges to the SFUSD schools in providing space to charters while maintaining appropriate and adequate space for regular SFUSD schools.

8. What are your views on the current school assignment system?

I support the new system – it is a balance between the needs of our lowest performing students, the need for proximity (which is a high value for many families) and the need for predictability for families. And, most importantly, it is flexible, so that it can be modified as we see whether it is working to achieve its goals to satisfy more families, sustain diversity in our schools, and increase opportunity for our students who are most in need of support.

I understand that middle school feeder patterns have created concerns for many parents – I will always be responsive to parent and student input so that we can work together to find solutions that both meet the district’s overall goals as well as the needs of as many families as possible.

9. How would you address the problem of truancy among high school students?

- Intervene early w. elementary school truancy (greatest predictor of later high school truancy) to identify and address family issues that create barriers to school attendance in order to prevent truancy later on.
- Create a more relevant, hands-on curriculum and structure – emphasizing real life experiences – so students find school interesting and important to their futures.
- Provide greater flexibility for students to learn with different modalities so students experience school success.
- Replicate in other communities the BVHP truancy center (housed at the YMCA) which I started when directing DCYF, which is accessible and provides transition back to school.
- Expand creative credit recovery options so that students feel they can return to school and still succeed.
- Work with parents to understand the importance of school attendance.
- Identify student problems that create barriers to school attendance, and help students address those issues with counseling, mental health services, peer support, etc.

Do you support or oppose the following Propositions on the November ballot?

Proposition 19 support oppose

Proposition 23 support oppose

Proposition 26 support oppose

Thank you for your time, and your commitment to the children of San Francisco. We look forward to seeing you on September 7th.