

Questionnaire for candidates for the office of  
Member, San Francisco Board of Education  
General Election, November 6, 2012

Please return this questionnaire electronically to [contact\\_us@phdemclub.org](mailto:contact_us@phdemclub.org) no later than Tuesday, September 4, to confirm your speaking slot at the September 11 endorsement meeting.

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

**1. Why are you running for office?**

I am a Latina parent with two children in San Francisco's public schools. I am running to bring the Latino perspective back to the School Board. It has been four years, since we have had Latino representation, and over a decade, since there has been a Latino mom's perspective. The SFUSD is 24% Latino and our families need a voice in the development and implementation of policies that affect our children. Our students with learning disabilities, Latino, African American, and Pacific Islander are facing challenges of inequity. Because of these inequities if I get elected, my goal is to continue the work of past commissioners that is to minimize or eliminate the achievement gap. There is an opportunity gap that needs to be addressed if we want to close the achievement gap that focuses on differences and solutions. Our high school students need to complete the A to G College Requirements to graduate from high school and to attend college and beyond.

**2. What are your qualifications for this position? If you are an incumbent, describe your major accomplishments while in office**

My experience as a parent and community leader on the SFUSD Bilingual Citizen's Advisory Committee (going on my second year), in the San Francisco Chapter of Parent Voices (an organization that is fighting to make quality child care affordable and accessible for all families), and my 18 years of experience working with families to find success in their lives has made me keenly aware of the difficulties many families from various cultural communities without representation have had influencing policy that affects their children's education. I will work inclusively as a commissioner to make sure all communities have input into policies implemented by the School Board.

Furthermore, I have served as the Associate Executive Director for the Mission Council on Alcohol Abuse and

am an elected delegate for the California Democratic Party Assembly District 17. I also earned a Master Degree in Counseling with three specializations: Marriage and Family Therapy, Rehabilitation, and Career Counseling from SFSU in 2001. I am a board member of Mission YMCA for numerous years, and of the Democratic Women In Action.

**3. What are the top three challenges facing public education in San Francisco? If elected, what will you do to meet these challenges?**

The achievement and opportunity gap are the core problems facing public education in San Francisco. How to make sure that our students complete high school/A to G College requirement.

- 1) Our students, specially our students with learning disabilities, African American, Latino, and Pacific Islander are having difficulties with reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade. Without having a strong foundation, it is very difficult for our students to succeed in middle and high schools (A to G College Requirements).
- 2) Our students with learning disabilities, African American, Latino, and Pacific Islander are being expelled or suspended at a higher rate, and every day that they are not in their classroom, it is like missing 1 or 2 months of learning. As a result of this, students start missing school regularly and eventually 75% of them will drop out of school all together.
- 3) Nutrition is a big problem in the SFUSD. Our students receiving free lunches are not eating the probably only “healthy” meal of the day. The food in the cafeterias is frozen and unpalatable and much of it ends up the trash.

**4. What are your ideas for lessening the achievement gap between students of different backgrounds?**

- a) Dedicate more resources to Pre-K-3 reading programs to increase every student's opportunity for success at the middle and high school levels (A to G College requirements). Ensure Language Immersion programs are accessible to all students so they can be also English proficient by the end of 3rd grade and have a strong foundation for middle and high school levels.
- b) Continue Restorative Practice to keep students, especially African American, Latino, Pacific Islander, and students with learning disabilities, in the classroom and learning through disciplinary issues. If we are not able to keep our students in the classroom (No in the principal office to justify that they were not sent home) learning, we are setting them up for failure, and pushing them to be part of the criminal justice system.
- c) Improve the food that is sold in the cafeteria or that is given to students who qualify for free lunches. Our students, especially the one receiving free lunches need to eat healthy in order to concentrate, learn, and improve their behavior. It is well known that our students are not always eating their free lunches because they don't taste good, and even if they eat their free lunches, they are healthy frozen food that comes from another state in the USA.

**5. What are your views on charter schools?**

I know that San Francisco has had some charters schools that have successfully helped students who were either not receiving and/or denied the school services they needed to be successful in school, such as Urban Pioneers or Gateway, or simple had dropped out. I am also aware that SFUSD in the past has forced school communities to go through a charter “path” because of the reluctance to respond to the needs of that school’s community that wanted their children to have education opportunities. My understanding is that educators and

other school workers within current district charters have little or no employee protections. All school workers in all places receiving public funds should have the benefit of union representation. As San Francisco, we need to be a model to other cities, that is, San Francisco Charters schools are public schools receiving public funding, public buildings and our public school children. Educators and other school workers should be treated with respect and have the benefits and protection of a union. In addition, our public school students deserve to receive the benefits of school workers who have good working conditions and some job security.

**6. What further improvements would you make to the current school assignment system, in particular with regards to access to neighborhood schools?**

**Do you think that the redesigned student assignment system is meeting its stated objectives? Why or why not?**

No completely, so far. There are parents who are not happy with their school assignment because of the lack of quality of those schools. There are other parents who are happy because they are assigned to high performance schools that are close to their homes. There are parents who are happy because they have more choices in many of the special programs. There are parents who are happy of the proximity of their assigned schools, but unhappy because of the lack of diversity. There are parents who are unhappy because they are not assigned to their neighborhood school. We need to continue having conversation with all stakeholders, parents SFUSD, community organizations to improve school assignment.

**7. How would you address the problem of truancy?**

First of all, it is important to say that 75% of the chronically truant students eventually drop out of high school. When a student is skipping school, it is a sign that he/she is struggling and needs help.

The City of San Francisco started a truancy intervention program, the Truancy Assessment & Resource Center (TARC) in conjunction with the Mayor's office, the San Francisco Unified School District, Department of Children, Youth & Their Families, Urban Services YMCA, community-based organizations, the San Francisco Police Department, Huckleberry Youth Programs and the District Attorney's office. It is an intervention program created to help students to be in their classroom and learning by assessing and addressing their psychological, social and academic needs. To learn more visit this website <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/services/truancy-intervention/overview.html>

**8. Do you support or oppose the following Propositions on the November ballot? Please give your reason (=50 words) for each position.**

Proposition 30 support

Reason: Protects funding for schools and local public safety.(taken from the CA Democratic Party).

Proposition 31 \_\_\_support \_\_\_ oppose

Reason: "Locks California into permanent underfunding of education, health, and other vital services".(taken from the CA Democratic Party website)

Proposition 32 oppose

Reason: it is a proposition that it is against unions helping with moneys to support candidates or measures that are beneficial for our communities and not big corporations. "Creates special exemptions for billionaires and

Super PACs allowing them to buy elections” (taken from the CA Democratic Party website).

Thank you for your time, and your commitment to the children of San Francisco. We look forward to seeing you on September 11th.