



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 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'm running for the Board of Education because there is nothing more important to me than every young person receiving a high-quality education that provides them with the opportunity to actualize their potential and pursue their dreams.

I was raised in a middle class family in Bay Area public schools, and public schools made many of the opportunities I've had in my life possible. For most of the last ten years, I've worked to improve public education as an advocate, organizer, educator and policy analyst. I've been deeply involved here in San Francisco schools, working to ensure that we provide a high quality educational experience for all of our students.

SFUSD has made a lot of positive changes, but we can do better. I believe I have the skills, background, and commitment to provide the necessary leadership to take our improvements further and offer world class schools for everyone.

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

My qualifications are:

Over the past ten years, as a graduate of Bay Area public schools, I have fought for public education as an educator, advocate, organizer, and policy analyst:

- Executive Director of the UC Student Association, advocating directly for the 200,000 students in the UC system
 - Co-founder and Chair of Citizen Hope, a community service organization bringing thousands of dollars and hundreds of volunteers to San Francisco schools
 - SFUSD Prop H Public Education Enrichment Fund Community Advisory Committee, advising the district on allocating critical funds for sports, music, arts, libraries, preschool
 - Legislative Aide, State Senator Simitian focusing on education policy
 - Appointee, Attorney General Kamala Harris' Education and Truancy Work Group
 - Taught afterschool and summer enrichment programs
 - BA UC Berkeley, MA Stanford School of Education, JD Stanford Law School, LLM National University Ireland
 - Former student of Bay Area public schools
3. What are the top three challenges facing public education in San Francisco? If elected, what will you do to meet these challenges?

My top priority if elected to the Board of Education is to bring more resources to SFUSD. I would work tirelessly to address this by:

- Leading the fight to secure local revenue solutions to close SFUSD's budget gap, including re-authorization of the Public Education Enrichment Fund (Prop H), additional funding from the City, and a new parcel and/or sales tax dedicated to SFUSD.
- Building coalitions in SF and statewide to secure revenue streams from the state to fund public education, including reform of Proposition 13
- Outreaching directly to San Francisco businesses and private citizens, especially in the Tech industry, to increase partnerships

The other two greatest challenges facing SFUSD include:

- Ensuring college/career readiness for all, and closing the achievement gap with real world learning skills and curriculum and
- Expanding our “community schools” model to open up our schools more to the community and extend health, mental health and support services.

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

The achievement gap is without a doubt the most urgent and alarming issue facing the district. It will be a top priority for me. I would immediately:

- Ensure that the District puts together a strategic plan to address the immediate challenge of the 20% of the class of 2014 that is not on track to graduate, as well as the classes of 2015 and 2016.
- Advocate for a move to a 7-period school day to help address credit recovery needs
- Assess the current course option and counseling systems to determine what changes need to be made to provide adequate access to necessary A-G courses
- Prioritize summer opportunities where they are needed the most.
- Expand and streamline dual enrollment opportunities at CCSF, SFSU and other institutions for SFUSD students, and determine how these opportunities can assist with credit recovery needs.
- Fully implement our 9th grade “early warning” system

4. What are your views on charter schools?

I support public education with democratic accountability and oversight over our schools. Therefore, I generally do not support the idea of having charter schools as a central part of our strategy to deliver high quality education to all students. Anything that a charter school does that is effectively serving students, we should be able to do in our district schools. I have concerns about the impact that charter schools have on enrollment in our district. I would only support charter schools in those rare instances in which they were providing high quality education in some sort of special way with an accompanying justification as to why it is something that we cannot provide in our district run schools. I believe that most of the charter schools that we have in our district currently do fit that description that for that reason I have no desire to see their charters revoked.

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

I support the redesigned student assignment system, and I think it is a step in the right direction. There was a tremendous amount of parent and community input that went into creating the new system, and for that reason, I remain optimistic. Still, I would not be prepared to say yet whether it is meeting its stated objectives. While it seems that there have been some improvements in simplicity and clarity, I am concerned that it does not appear to have had a significant impact on diversity in our schools and there is uncertainty around the impact on equity. For that reason, the Board of Education must continue to analyze and assess the student assignment data closely, and if necessary, consider tweaking the process. In any case, we should double down on our efforts in outreach and education related to the process, which could change some of the results.

7. How would you address the problem of truancy?

As a member of Attorney General Kamala Harris' Truancy Working Group, I have looked closely at this issue and how it affects SFUSD students. The first step in tackling truancy is to understand the problem. We must develop better data systems for tracking attendance and truancy. Then we must prioritize funding for site staff that can focus on attendance and truancy. We need these staff members to make home visits and personal calls to parents so that our outreach is more personalized and we can best support these students. Finally, we need to partner with the city, community based non-profits and the District Attorney's office to ensure intervention and support at early intervals to help reverse the truancy trend when we identify it.

Truancy is also tied to a relevant and effective curriculum. We must work to ensure that our students are engaged in the classroom and offered meaningful opportunities outside of the classroom.

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 oppose (undecided at this point)

I worked directly with statewide education leaders to craft this measure. Proposition 30 is absolutely essential to addressing our statewide education funding crisis.

Proposition 31 support oppose

Proposition 32 support oppose

Proposition 32 is a confusing and manipulative proposition. It is intended to cripple the labor movement from playing a critical role in electoral politics. We must fight to defeat Proposition 32.

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

