



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?

Over the last couple of years, I have seen our seven-year-old daughter fall in love with her teachers and educators at our nearby public elementary school in San Francisco. This year I experienced the delicate balance of how to respond when, without warning, my daughter expressed sadness that her garden science teacher was leaving and she didn't know why. I had to explain the concept that it costs money to run schools and sometimes difficult decisions had to be made affecting some teachers, but not all.

After almost ten years of draconian state budget cuts to public education we are now facing unprecedented times. How do we stop the 'crisis' and change the conversation away from a 'cuts mentality' to a 'we must invest strategy'?

In my race to be a member of the San Francisco School Board, I am committed to pursue bold and innovative ways to stabilize the workforce and find pragmatic solutions to stop the lay-offs.

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

I currently serve as the Legislative Chair of the San Francisco District Parent Teacher Association, on the Bilingual Community Council for the San Francisco Unified School District, on the SF Workforce Investment Board, on the Governor's Employment Training Panel, and am a founding father of the Futures without Violence Organization. My core policy priority areas continue to be K – 12 public education, workforce development, unemployment, job training, apprenticeships and ending domestic violence.

I have had the honor to serve in public service at the federal and state levels. At the US Department of Energy I was the Assistant Director of Science Education and was instrumental in developing national programs to provide Master Teacher Professional Development Scholarships and fellowships for economically disadvantaged students and their professors from Community Colleges.

At the state level, I spear-headed the creation of the first Labor and Workforce Development Agency and help launch programs to fully-fund student teachers who desired to have expertise in Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM) subject matter at UC and CSU campuses. I later served as the Chief Deputy Labor Commissioner ensuring that the most innovative and progressive laws related to fair wages, break periods, work safety and others were adequately enforced.

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

I bring an extensive professional portfolio of public and private sector experience to the Board, especially policy development, governance, program evaluation, budgeting and finance. This professional expertise is grounded by my life experiences as a child of immigrant parents, living in a union-household, experiencing domestic violence, and living on public assistance during my early teenage years. Consistently throughout my entire youth it was my teachers who were my role models, extended family and, at times, life-lines, especially during challenging times. Outside my mother there was no other greater influence on my life who contributed to my sense of worth and character than my teachers during middle school and high school.

I will concentrate my efforts on the following budgetary and policy issues:

- Build a sustainable Budget for SF Public Education by stabilizing the workforce and creating an “investment culture” rather than a “defensive environment of disinvestment” with innovative revenue propositions.
- Expand a policy framework to close the achievement/opportunity gap and enhance academic excellence for all students.
- Create a pipeline of qualified teachers in science and math for grades K through 12.
- Bring best practices of good governance and oversight to improve transparency.

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

It is imperative that we address the existing “achievement/opportunity gap” head-on and own it as the most critical public policy issue of our time, as we guide the SF Public Education System to the next level of accountability, transparency and academic excellence for all parents, kids and stakeholders.

Only 17.7% of the households residing in the County of San Francisco have children totaling approximately 156,000 kids. Our public school enrollment is estimated around 56,000 kids – comprised of 39% Asian, 25% Latino, 11.3% African American and about 11% White.

More than 41,000 kids in San Francisco below the age of seventeen live the following communities: Outer Mission, Excelsior, Ingleside, Inner Mission, Bernal Heights, and Bayview/Hunters Point. A majority of families in these communities suffer from income inequality and lower education attainment than other parts of the city.

I support the following strategies to help identify and support kids to stay the course from early childhood education thru high school, and graduate college and career-ready:

- Wrap around services to help kids and their families to be ready to learn from Pre-K – 4th grade
- Special Education services focused on reading from K – 3rd grade
- Integrate science literacy with the basic curriculum from K – 3rd grade
- Integrate parents as primary partners from Pre-K through High School and incorporate parent engagement and education strategies.
- Fully supported community schools – that will also offer summer classes
- Develop a sustained monitoring and tracking system that focuses on early identification of students who veer off-track in their academic studies, and implement intervention strategies.
- Integrate the SF Workforce System from middle school through high school so that kids begin to understand the labor market, skills needed and opportunities available.
- Build a state of the art ‘trade skill hub’ at a SF Public Middle School to encourage kids at an early age to build skills and practical knowledge about skilled trades. A middle school ‘trade skill hub’ will engage students early on sheet metal processing, carpentry, plumbing/pipefitting, electricity, general mechanics, energy audits, and tooling. Studies have shown that young students will stay in school longer if they can be engaged in hands-on learning and project building.

5. What are your views on charter schools?

I am generally not supportive of Charter Schools tapping into public tax dollars to run their operations.

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

It remains a mystery to understand. Although I support its goals and mission, I am concerned that there is inconsistent communication to parent groups about how the lottery works and the influential factors in making decisions about student assignments.

More importantly, I am very concerned that we have not developed an integrated communication and outreach plan to inform and educate elementary parents, teachers and principals about the new middle school feeder assignment system.

I would propose to engage elementary parents early about middle school neighborhood schools and what they offer so that parents can begin to prepare and have comprehensive information to make the right choices for their students.

7. How would you address the problem of truancy?

I experienced first-hand “inclusive practices” during my daughter’s first grade experience. I am very supportive of increasing supportive measures that encourage teachers to fully implement these practices and receive the proper professional development and feedback necessary to achieve success with all students. “Inclusive practices” is a learning program that benefits all students, and potentially parents. I believe we should integrate a program for parents to participate in to become better informed and knowledgeable of its benefits.

We must implement a policy to “help first” and not encourage suspensions or expulsions of students. SF District Attorney, George Gascon who shares these values and has one of the most innovative programs to holistically address the issue of truancy that keeps at risk students in school.

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

Reason: The state needs to restore and consistently fund public education.

Proposition 31 support oppose

Reason: The state legislature should determine the policy framework to institutionalize a two-year budget cycle.

Proposition 32 support oppose

Reason: A badly written proposition to favor one interest group over another to have a political advantage in political giving.

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

