



**Candidate questionnaire for
San Francisco Board of Education
General Election, November 4, 2014**

Please return this questionnaire electronically to contact_us@phdemclub.org **no later than Saturday, August 30**. Candidates who do not return the questionnaire by the due date will not be invited to participate in the September 9th forum. Questionnaires will be made available to our members online.

Candidate name: **Trevor McNeil**

Contact person:

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Please write a brief response (≤ 200 words) to each question.

1. Please describe your qualifications for this office.

One of my first jobs out of college was working with the SFUSD as a paraprofessional at Leonard Flynn. During that time I also taught afterschool programs at Paul Revere and Glen Park. In my credential program at SFSU I did my student observing at Lawton. After I got my credential I was a substitute teacher throughout the district, most often at Denman, SF Community School, and Burton. I have been a tutor with the San Francisco Education Fund and 826 Valencia working with students in our SFUSD and in particular students at John O'Connell.

Aside from my work in schools I am very civically active serving on the board of the Inner Sunset Neighborhood association, the city's Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee, and as a vice-chair of the San Francisco Democratic County Central Committee. I think a strong commissioner has to know schools intimately, understand public policy, and know how to maneuver San Francisco politics to push for an agenda while maintain contact with our neighborhoods.

2. What are the top three issues facing SFUSD, and what will you do about those issues?

One of my top priorities will be accountability and transparency. By this I mean constantly checking back on past votes to make sure progress is being made. I mean making it clear *prior* to approving budget items what our values on budgeting is. I mean not hiding items deep in budget appendices without explanation.

My other key priority will be working on “microissues” -- the daily frustration of teachers, parents, and students that don’t require a great deal of resources to solve, but when you add them up they create unnecessary frustrations of being a member of the SFUSD. Basically, these are the issues that get shrugs and “it’s always been that way” attitude from administrators. For example, my experience as a substitute with the District was very exasperating. The assignment system is antiquated and there was no way for my skill sets (eg, Spanish speaking credentialed in specific subjects.) to be matched with a daily need (I’d get assigned high school chemistry sub gigs on the same day as a credentialed chemistry teacher would be getting middle school history, etc) The “it’s always been that way” I think comes from the fact that we haven’t elected a teacher in a decade.

Another priority of mine will be recruiting and retaining great teachers committed to a career with SFUSD. There are some other “microissues” that could be addressed here. From the way we assign substitutes to the way we solicit feedback from families, teachers, and students, there are lots of innovative ideas and fixes to the daily frustrations only front-line workers in schools see that I will prioritize in my tenure on the school board.

3. Please tell us about one teacher who had a significant influence on your life.

I am a middle school teacher because I had Tasha Elsbach in middle school. She was interested in us beyond ‘just’ the classroom – she came to soccer games, made sure she knew our parents, and has kept in touch with graduates. She taught us what she had to (content and skills) and pushed us to begin to understand bigger issues (she showed us documentaries like “The Thin Blue Line” and excerpts from Howard Zinn’s A People’s History of the United States). As a teacher I try to make sure I’m keeping the kids on the ball, growing as their next teacher expects, and safe. But I try and teach to the whole child and think that we need a teacher on the school board to advocate for that perspective. Art and music and time for teachers to go to soccer games aren’t “extras” they are integral to having kids appreciate what school can do for them. She shared herself. She modeled critical thinking. She fought for what she wanted us to learn even if the administration wasn’t 100% on board. She still is a friend and she still is a teacher. Recruiting and retaining teachers is a passion of mine – I want every student to have the kind of professional, creative, and influential teacher like Tasha.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to public service. We look forward to seeing you at the Potrero Hill Neighborhood House on September 9th.