



**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.

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

1. Please describe your qualifications for this office.

As a graduate of San Francisco public schools and having committed my career to supporting students in the SFUSD, I have a unique perspective on what students need to succeed, and have demonstrated a professional record of success in accomplishing those outcomes. Since starting my career working to improve public education, I have served as Co-Chair of the Prop H Public Education Enrichment Fund Community Advisory Committee (PEEF CAC), in providing oversight of over \$30M in funding to support public education funding at the time. I have also built a scholarship organization called San Francisco Achievers that sends African American males that graduate from San Francisco Public schools to college, the vast majority of which are underserved, first-generation college bound students.

Through my work at the San Francisco Education Fund I have worked collaboratively with principals, teachers, para-professionals and families to send more students to college. I firmly believe that in a city like San Francisco, with the right leadership and a clear understanding of what works in education policy, we can make significant

increases in student achievement, attract more teachers to the professions and make our public schools a national model for effective community schools. Having overcome significant adversity through a troubled home life while growing up and attending many schools that were considered underperforming, my candidacy represents what's possible through our public schools. I am running to ensure more students experience those opportunities and to champion the causes of educators, families, and our disenfranchised communities to maximize the student learning experience for all our students.

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

The most important work happening in our schools is the engagement between the trained professionals working in our schools and the students they support. My priorities will always reflect my commitment to that idea. A few things I'd like to accomplish by the end of our first term include the following:

- **Improving Teacher Retention:** We lose 50% of our SFUSD teachers in their first five years of service. Our attrition rates are greatest at schools with higher concentrations of students living in poverty. Our best opportunity to interrupt these trends is to put our educators in a better position to grow professionally and give them meaningful access to experienced educators who can serve as mentors. In addition, they need frequent access to professional development and training to help them improve their practice. Part of teacher retention is also ensuring that the people we entrust with teaching and caring for our children are adequately compensated to live in a city like San Francisco. To that end, I will continue to support compensation levels for school district employees that are aligned with the rising costs of living in San Francisco. Finally, we need to ensure teachers have access to housing that gives them a real path to stability and homeownership. Any retention plan without the promise of a life as a resident is incomplete.
- **Supporting Restorative Practices:** I believe the culture we create for our students and how we engage them leaves a lasting impression on the way they approach school. The San Francisco Board of Education recently passed a Safe and Supportive Schools resolution that aims to shift the way educators engage our most vulnerable student populations. Ensuring that these practices are successfully implemented and that the district is providing school sites the support they need is going to be critical in these first few years. During my term on the board I will make the successful implementation of the policies set out in the Safe and Supportive Schools resolution a top priority.
- **Strengthening Pre-Kindergarten system:** Our earliest opportunities to address issues of achievement and parent engagement happen when families participate in our Early Childhood education programs. Research has confirmed how critical these early years are for children, but it also gives parents an opportunity to engage in their child's education in a long-term way. We need to expand Pre-School access that more families can participate and build out programs to create parent leaders that can go on and meaningfully participate

as leaders throughout the child's education.

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

I credit my San Francisco public school teachers with every major opportunity I've been afforded in life. When I pick one teachers, I often talk about my tenth grade English teacher Allison Rowland. She was in her first year teaching in her early twenties at Thurgood Marshall High School. I was at a critical transition in my life, I had been struggling in schools for years and started to get deeper and deeper with friends that where caught up in self-destructive behavior. I knew I wanted more for myself and that the behavior I exhibited wasn't positive. She introduced me to a summer program for high school students at Stanford University. I spent three weeks on campus meeting kids from all over the world. I knew then that if I wanted to go to the best colleges, I would have to compete with those students. After the experience I had a renewed commitment to my education and made it my top priority. When it came time to apply for colleges, she told me about her alma mater, Williams College. I was admitted and had an incredible experience as an undergraduate. Had it not been for my tenth grade English class and her support I am absolutely convinced I would not be running for office today.

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.