

Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire 2012

San Francisco Parent Political Action Committee

We appreciate your time and thoroughness with these answers and will be posting them online for voters to educate themselves on your views and experience. Please return this questionnaire by August 3rd, 2012, to sfparentpac@gmail.com. The SF Parent PAC may contact you for an interview following its receipt of this questionnaire. The interview date will be announced early next week.

Candidate Information

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Please answer each question below in 150 words or less. If desired, you may choose two questions to answer at greater length.

Qualifications and Involvement

1. Why are you running for Board of Education and why should parents support your candidacy?
 - I am running for the San Francisco Board of Education because I want all children in San Francisco to be successful and I believe the main vehicle for that success is through SFUSD. We owe it to our children to provide the best learning experience possible and I know that I can build the rapport, consensus and garner the resources needed to do that more effectively. As a parent who has raised two children in the public school system, I know and understand that it takes hard work and dedication to ensure that our children receive a quality learning experience. Being a public school graduate myself and raising two children in the public school system, I have a personal connection and insight to what it takes to provide our students with the things they need in order to be successful within the public school system.
2. Briefly state your experience with SFUSD? (Have you been a student, parent, educator, and/or advocate?) Please explain.
 - Since 2003, I have had the opportunity to work with SFUSD in several capacities. As the School Readiness Coordinator and Director of the Potrero Hill Family Resource Center, I created and implemented kindergarten transition programs at Starr King Elementary School, I coordinated parent workshops (around SFUSD Enrollment, nutrition and parents rights and advocacy), I started the School Readiness Health Fair at Starr King (along with Principal Chris Rosenberg) and started the Peace Walk in the Potrero Hill Community with both Daniel Webster and Starr King Elementary schools. More recently I have coordinated, planned and managed tutorial, job and life skills training programs at high schools (Phillip Burton, Thurgood Marshall, Balboa and Wallenberg). I have also assisted in the development of mentorship programs in Starr King Elementary and Everett Middle School.
3. What do you think about SFUSD's Strategic Plan? Do you think its implementation is on target?

- The plan is ambitious and in order to truly increase student achievement—throughout the entire district—we have to increase student motivation, which means providing the resources for more innovation and more opportunities within the schools. The plan’s components around identifying who is responsible for what is a good start, but over the next year and final year of implementation it is truly the time to hold every responsible party accountable for its success. The implementation is on target in terms of instituting a system where all students can become high achievers (but there needs to be resources to make sure all students can acquire the academic skills needed to be successful in an A-G requirements system). The district is still missing the mark in terms of ensuring equity for all of its students and increasing graduation rates for students affected by the achievement gap.

Student Achievement

1. Currently each middle and high school site decides whether to offer an honors track or not. Do you think that this model of decentralized decision-making works well to serve all students? Why or why not?
 - I think that this decentralization of the honors track at middle schools is not the most effective way to ensure equity within in schools throughout the district and to a degree is part of the issue that causes some disparities in the options for a quality middle school learning experience. I truly believe that we need to ensure that honors track options are offered throughout the district and within all communities. This allows for more options for families when choosing middle schools and it also assists in creating equity across schools. Honors programs are needed in order for our students to obtain the ability to compete academically at high levels. It is unfair that the distribution of honors programs is not available throughout the entire district. I would focus on providing more offerings of honors programs at all levels district-wide.
2. What should the district’s role be in addressing students’ physical and mental health and well-being? You may focus on specific issue(s) if you choose.
 - The district has to play a major role in addressing students’ physical and mental health well being because these both can be barriers to a quality learning experience for all students. The district has to ensure all students’ needs are met and leverage mental health programs and wellness programs working with community based organizations (CBOs) that provide these services. Mental health is expensive and leveraging services offered by CBOs can prove to be real effective in assisting our students with issues and concerns (especially outside of school hours). Physical health is important to a student’s overall success and attitude. Students need to be physically active and provided with proper nutrition. SFUSD needs to work hard to ensure proper nutrition is provided to students and to ensure that more P.E. programs are brought back into schools. An overall healthy lifestyle is needed for students’ immediate and long term success.
3. How should the district best prepare students for college and career?
 - In order for the district to best prepare students for college they need to provide college connection and college awareness programs within the schools at all levels (starting at the pre-school level and all the way through high school). This means exposure to colleges and universities during circle time in pre-schools, this means literature and posters all throughout each school so that everywhere students look they are inundated with college and college success. This means more literacy and book bag programs (such as Raising-A-Reader) in schools during the K-3 years of a student’s education. This means that schools need to hold forums and college fairs on site; this

way students who are not exposed to college at home, are always provided with what they need via SFUSD. Programs that provide tutorials and academic assistance need to be in all schools and we need the academic assistance to start early. Many times we wait until middle or high school to provide tutorials and exposure to higher education and this can be detrimental because once a student gets behind it is extremely difficult to address any academic concerns. Leveraging relationships with community based organizations (CBOs) and institutions of higher learning that provide these programs in schools is imperative as well.

- In order for the district to best prepare students for career, we need to provide more internship and vocational programs within the schools. We need to leverage tech companies and all sectors of employment for internships at the middle and high schools levels. We need more mechanics and construction training programs within the schools. These types of opportunities allow students to begin to understand how their learning relates to employment and their successes, but it also opens the door to careers in architecture and in engineering. We need to institute more school-to-career pipeline options in sectors such as healthcare, retail and hospitality. We want to always promote college first, but we also want to provide options for individuals who may not be on track to attend college or who would have the ability to obtain living wage jobs after high school graduation.
- As an Executive Director of a workforce development organization, I have had the opportunity to see student success in a lot of the above mentioned areas. We are currently providing internships for 15 participants with the SF Public Utilities Commission and Parsons and AECOM engineering and architectural firms. These 15 students are receiving a high level internship experience and learning about architecture, engineering, finance, communications and governmental relations. This experience is affording them the opportunity to receive insight about the careers they are interested in, before they attend college. Not only are they now excited about learning, but they now also have seen what it means to wake up and go to work, be responsible for projects and be a part of a team. We are also providing tutorial, job training and life skills training in high schools in SFUSD. We have already seen successful results when students are provided adequate academic assistance outside of the classroom on a daily basis and when the learning demonstrates how it relates to their overall success in the future. Last summer we provided this model of assistance at Balboa High school and 70 out of 74 students who failed Algebra and English passed under this model. We have provided this model during the school year as well at Phillip Burton and Thurgood Marshal High Schools and over 90 percent of students who participated in the program have increased their grades from F's and D's to C's and B's. Instituting strategies that teach our students how learning relates to employment and that includes components that expose them to institutions of higher learning are the best ways to prepare students for college and career.

4. Do you think we are serving our Special Education students well? Why or why not?

- I think that we have a long way to go in terms of serving Special Education students well. Having a child with an IEP, I understand a lot of the issues around ensuring that children with special needs get what they need. We need to focus on providing Special Education students with the supports they need to be successful in traditional classroom environments through inclusion techniques, but we also need to focus on providing them with the exposure and opportunities we provide all SFUSD students. It is important that Special Education students receive classroom training with their peers and have the opportunity to socialize with their peers and interact with their peers as a part of the learning process and still ensure that all students receive a quality education. This

happens with the proper supports in the classroom and when there are smaller student to teacher ratios.

5. In February, the Board of Education approved a plan to “skip” layoffs of low-seniority teachers in Superintendent Zone schools. After the resolution was challenged by the teachers’ union and struck down by an administrative law judge, the Board declined to pursue the issue further and layoffs proceeded per the collective bargaining agreement. Do you agree with the outcome? Please explain how you arrived at your opinion.
 - As someone who is originally from Bayview and who has worked in the zone for years in several capacities, I was not in agreement with the Board of Education’s decision to “skip” layoffs of low-seniority teachers within the Superintendent Zone schools. I believe in letting union process take precedence when layoffs are a necessity. There would have been several quality and tenured teachers coming into the zones. There was an opportunity to provide these same tenured teachers with trainings that were received by teachers in both zones (through SIG funding). There are dozens of other schools with similar low test scores and problems that plague schools in both zones that did not receive the same consideration. Divisive techniques are strategies that do not provide the results we need and pitting teachers in two communities against teachers in the rest of the district is not productive for the system as a whole.
6. Given the cuts to professional development and general District resources, how should SFUSD attract, retain and develop high quality educators, administrators and school support staff?
 - Having inherited and organization—as an Executive Director—that has endured many funding challenges, I knew that in we needed to garner more resources. I have been able to find additional resources for our organization that align with our mission and we have raised over 2 million dollars (\$2,000,000.00) in less than two years by focusing on garnering additional resources. SFUSD has to do the same to attract and retain high quality educators, administrators and school support staff. The entire school community has to believe that the Board of Education is willing and able to obtain the resources needed to provide quality education. The Board of education has to look at the available options (federal funding, set asides from developers, the private sector, foundations, tax options and extractions) and see which of these resources align with the goal of ensuring that all SFUSD students receive a quality education.
7. How should the district better support and engage parents? Be specific.
 - Transparency and building off of commonalities is always the best way to support and engage anyone. The district’s staff, board and all personnel need to be willing to engage in dialogue with parents on a constant basis. The district leadership needs to have an open door policy for parents so that they feel welcomed to provide feedback. Board meetings and board hearings are not always the best place for this dialogue and therefore the district leadership has to allow for that space of dialogue on a consistent basis. Members of the board and district leadership should be out in the communities where families live and visiting the schools on a continuous basis as well. As a member of the Board of Education I would visit schools (at least 4 a month) and spend time within the schools’ communities. I would host meetings with parents frequently and attend various parent group meetings.

Student Enrollment

1. Do you think that the redesigned student assignment system is meeting its stated objectives? Why or why not?
 - I do not think that the redesigned student assignment system is meeting its stated objectives. We still do not have the diversity needed across all SFUSD schools and in some cases many groups of students are still attending schools with predominant ethnicities which contributes to racial isolation. We have to do a better job of providing a quality learning experience in EVERY SFUSD school, so that EVERY SFUSD neighborhood has 1 or 2 quality schools and parents would be excited about several school choices. As long as we cannot guarantee quality neighborhood schools, we will have a student assignment problem. I have been working with SFUSD parents for years and I know that with parents' passion and quality leadership, we can work towards a system of student assignment that would be equitable, satisfying and successful, but this is something that we have to do together.

2. Last June, the Board of Education passed a new middle school feeder pattern policy. Do you think its implementation is on track and headed in the right direction? What do you recommend the District do to ensure its success?
 - The middle school feeder pattern is not on track in terms of creating continuity for academic programs and for building the appropriate bridge from elementary to middle school. From anecdotal conversations with parents and from observation, I have learned that some students are receiving a great academic and school experience in elementary school and that is not always translating to the same in middle school. Many of the quality programs that exists at some of the elementary schools are not offered or provided at some of the feeder middle schools. A couple of things we could do are, make sure feeder patterns take into account what programs and services were being offered at the elementary level and offer them at the middle school level and we need to make sure that there are transition programs in place that afford elementary and high school teachers the opportunity to share information about students and best teaching practices.

3. Should SFUSD have competitive entry schools, such as Lowell and School of the Arts? Why or why not?
 - SFUSD would not need competitive entry schools if we do our job at the School Board and SFUSD personnel levels. The biggest reason for need of competitive schools is to ensure that students who do well have the opportunity for an enhanced learning experience and to make sure that they are provided with the challenging and rigorous academic options that they need. My vision and what I plan to work towards immediately is garnering the resources that will allow for all schools to be competitive and include the necessary programs and classes that ensure the success we see at competitive entry schools. Once we institute more AP courses throughout the district and include more quality arts programs within several schools, the need for competitive entry schools lessens and more of our children have to an opportunity to be successful across the district.

4. What should the District be doing to keep families in the City and in public schools?
 - In order for the district to keep families in the City and in Public schools, there needs to be more options for families. Families need to know that there is a quality public education system in town and that their children will benefit from SFUSD, whether they are a high achieving student or a student who is struggling. The district needs to work on family and school faculty retention strategies. Keeping families in San Francisco is key to the districts success and keeping quality educators in San Francisco is key to providing parents and families with the evidence they need that there is a true investment in education within the district. The district needs to work with City

legislators on affordable housing policies for families with children so that they want to stay in San Francisco and send their kids to SFUSD schools.

Budget and Finance

1. California's public schools continue to face severe funding cuts. How would you suggest SFUSD restructure or leverage existing resources to serve our students effectively? What do you think is the best approach to the budget process?
 - With the severe budget cuts that the district continues to endure, there needs to be a plan in place to generate revenue for the schools outside of the state. There are resources at the federal level that the district can leverage to provide funding for the schools. The federal government spends millions of dollars on student vocational and student job training programs each year. The district needs to aggressively submit proposals to the federal government to leverage these resources and bring more funds into the schools. As a nonprofit executive director, I have had the opportunity to aggressively research atypical funding sources that align with the mission of my organization and then submit proposals for funding. The district school board needs to work towards a system where all developers in San Francisco provide a certain percentage of their revenue to SFUSD schools. There are billions of dollars in development coming into San Francisco for the Sewer System Improvement Project, the California Pacific Medical Center Project, the University of San Francisco Hospitals Project, the Warriors Arena, the Lennar Shipyard Project and the Central Subway system. If we can work with City legislators to set up a pot of set aside funding or system of extraction for some of these revenues, then there is the potential of millions of dollars that could go towards funding SFUSD.
 - I think the best approach to the budget process is always to be transparent and include all SFUSD stakeholders in the process. I think that community meetings and town hall style meetings should take place on a consistent basis throughout the entire school year, so that everyone from students to parents, care givers, families, teachers, administrators and the entire school community have an opportunity to provide feedback and insight around budget priorities. Once this type of dialogues is allowed, the School Board has the opportunity to hear the many different needs and concerns of the school community before making decisions about the budget. Assessing all stakeholders on the front end is key. Then we need to set priorities in accordance with the dialogue received and put a budget in place that is reflective of these identified priorities.
2. What should the district do to make SFUSD's budget more understandable and accessible to parents?
 - I believe the district should provide community meetings in each San Francisco neighborhood and at various school sites throughout the district. These community meetings should not only focus on receiving input from parents and families around their thoughts on budget process, but there should also be a focus on educating the parent and family community on how to read budgets and the important items to look for when reviewing budgets. The district should work to include narratives along with the budget that are more reader friendly and that provide a detailed, but uncomplicated explanation of every aspect of the budget.
3. There are two state funding initiatives on the November 2012 ballot. If both initiatives fail, SFUSD will face mid-year cuts of \$24 million. What should our contingency plan be as a district and city should this happen?

- If the funding initiatives on the November 2012 ballot fail, the district should focus on a plan to immediately research available funding sources for schools through the federal government, private sector and the philanthropic community. Once identified, the district should aggressively begin to solicit funding from each of these entities through the appropriate process. I also think that the School Board should be negotiating with the Board of Supervisors on a plan to garner more resources from the City and County of San Francisco's (CCSF) Rainy Day Fund and General Fund. For the 2012-2013 school-year SFUSD will receive 6.3 million dollars from CCSF and there should be constant conversations about how to receive more funding from the City (even through more funding from DCYF). The bottom line here is that these conversations should be ongoing currently and working on these strategies needs to be taking place as we speak.
4. When we are able to fill back in the holes of the current cuts, what should our next funding priorities be?
- When we are able to backfill holes from the current cuts, our priorities should be on hiring more teachers in the district (so that we can decrease student teacher ratios), funding more arts programs in the schools, funding more college connection and awareness programs in the schools. We should focus on providing more vocational programs and tutorial programs so that all students have an opportunity at success. We should also focus on providing resources for internships at the middle and high school level (particularly in partnership with these tech and green companies and the healthcare sector in San Francisco), so that we can create a school-to-career pipeline for our students. We should also hire a district point person to develop a system that affords parents the opportunity to learn from and model other parents at schools that are successful in garnering resources for their schools.

Role of the Board

1. Who do you believe are the most important stakeholders to shape the direction of the school district? How would you engage those stakeholders to ensure they have a voice in the Board of Education decision-making process?
 - I believe the most important stakeholders in shaping the direction of the school district are: students, parents/care givers, teachers, administrators and other school personnel. I believe the best way to engage these stakeholders is through allowing a space for constant dialogue and communication. I would have an open door policy for all stakeholders and allow for discussion and face-time on a consistent basis (outside of typical School Board hearings and meetings). I would conduct meetings and conversation sessions in EVERY neighborhood in San Francisco. I would truly pay attention to the feedback I receive on a consistent basis and also bring this feedback to the rest of my colleagues on the School Board. Through constant feedback and communication, I would work hard to make decisions in accordance with the needs and concerns of the school community.
2. What is the role of a School Board member versus the Superintendent?
 - The School Board is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the district (via the Superintendent) as well as setting the budget priorities and making sure that these align with the goals of the district. The School Board has to hold the Superintendent accountable in handling the management of the district and the implementation of all components of student learning. The School Board sets policy and answers to all SFUSD stakeholders. The Superintendent is responsible

for ensuring that district personnel do their job and that the goals of the district's Strategic Plan are met and answers to the School Board and all SFUSD stakeholders as well. In short, the School Board sets the policy with the Superintendent and stakeholders, and the Superintendent is responsible for the execution and implementation of all plans, policies and strategies on the ground. Both the School Board and Superintendent are responsible to all of SFUSD's stakeholders.

3. What role should the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors have in the education of SF children and youth, if any?
 - The Mayor and Board of Supervisors (BOS) should play an increasing role in the education of San Francisco's children and youth. The Mayor and BOS should release an agenda each year about their priorities for youth and include their focus for students in SFUSD. I believe that the Mayor and BOS should be working hand-in-hand with the School Board to identify sources of revenue for the district and to figure out a strategy where some of the CCSF General Fund can go into the School District. I don't think the 6.3 million dollars SFUSD will receive from the CCSF for 2012-2013 is enough, particularly in a city with over a 7 billion dollar budget. San Francisco legislators need to play a more pivotal role in ensuring that our students receive the resources that they need. I would work closely to develop that relationship with the Mayor and BOS.

What should the role of parents be in our school district?

- Parents should take a very active role in the district. Parents should work to hold school board members and school personnel accountable for the education of their children. Parents should advocate for the changes, programs and services they would like to see in the district. Parents should always voice their concerns and provide input on issues that affect their children's learning. Parents should also work towards providing the district with solutions that address their concerns. Many district parents have expertise in several areas and parents should provide that expertise and insight to help effectively make change where needed. Being a public school parent who has provided mentorship programs, tutorial programs, academic enrichment programs and college awareness and connection programs in my children's' schools, I understand the importance of playing a pivotal role in your children's' education.

What are some of the pressing issues for parents/guardians educating children in San Francisco?

- I have had the opportunity to sit down with several parents from various backgrounds and have discussions. Through my conversations with parents and working within the district, some of the following concerns have been expressed:
 - School assignment and the anxiety around obtaining the school selection that parents feel is best for their child,
 - The elimination of choice involved with the new feeder pattern;
 - The lack of adequate resources for students and teachers which creates some unmanageable learning environments at several schools (particularly due to increased class sizes);
 - Transportation costs and difficulties in getting children to school across town. The safety within in schools and some of the communities that surround our schools; and

- Lack of transparency in the budget making and other SFUSD decision making processes;
- Ignoring the needs of students who do well in order to address the achievement gap concerns;

Is there anything else you would like us to know?

- Our students and parents/families deserve someone who values the entire learning process; someone that understands the necessity for a multi-faceted approach- one that includes student and family supportive services, mental health services, as well as health and wellness resources to support our students' learning. I recognize that in order to see the healthy development and successful education of our students, SFUSD departments must work as a team. I will work with each department to create a system that supports a unified, collaborative, seamless effort. Throughout my career, I have been working hard to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn and be successful. I have spent my entire adult life working with students, families, teachers, and public school personnel on creating and supporting programs within the schools that carve pathways to success. Having taught for a very brief time period (two years) I will continuously work to truly understand the obstacles and challenges parents face when ensuring their child gets a quality education. I have the unique perspective of being a parent and someone who has been providing quality programming in SFUSD for years, which allows me to identify with concerns and issues of other parents. I have worked with elementary schools to provide universal access to screenings for children from 3months-5 years in order to identify any developmental delays before students reach kindergarten. I have worked with elementary schools on kindergarten transition programs and secured funding for regular classroom teachers to provide instruction over the summer for students who will enter their classes. I have managed truancy prevention programs within the schools and assisted in increasing attendance for students involved in those programs. No one will work harder than me to have continuous and open dialogue with educators ensuring that the proper resources and opportunities are available for students and teachers to be successful during the learning process. I will always make decisions with the philosophy that the parents/care givers with children in the district are one of the most integral pieces of ensuring student success.
- I have a Bachelors Degree in Political Science (from Morris Brown College in Atlanta Georgia) and a Masters Degree in Public Administration (from San Francisco State University). I have managed millions of dollars for the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families, as well as for several nonprofit organizations. I currently serve on the Board of Directors for Parents for Public Schools-San Francisco; I am very active with the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Pi Chi Chapter in San Francisco, which allows me to work as part of a team that is a reservoir of help to the community. In addition, I am a member of the San Francisco Latino Democratic Club, the San Francisco African American Democratic Club, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the American Society of Public Administrators, a LeaderSpring Fellow (Class of 2013) and the Bayview Rotary Club. Most of all I am the proud father of two (Daughter-Monique and Son-Malcolm).