

Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire 2014

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 June 27, 2014, to sfparentpac@gmail.com. The SF Parent Political Action Committee 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 Unified School Board to continue advocating for the greatness of all San Francisco Unified School District children.

Common Core implementation

Implementation of the [Common Core Standards](#) and [Smarter Balance Assessments](#), arguably the greatest standards and testing/assessments change in a generation, effects every student, teacher, para professional, administrator, parent, the entire education community. [SFUSD has begun implementing the new Standards](#), but significant work remains:

- Academic and language equity for all students
- Technology parity at every school for every child
- Greater levels of professional development and preparation time for all teachers and administrators

I will bring my unique expertise in project management implementation, organizational communications, and change management to raise the level of the conversation on these most important issues as the Common Core is rolled out through the District.

Laser focus on the continued achievement gap

[Education access and equity](#) is paramount for a large number of San Francisco children.

- In San Francisco, almost half the children enrolled in our schools live in poverty
- Nearly one third begin school not speaking, reading or writing English

While funding and staffing changes within the District have improved with the passing of [Proposition 30](#), the state's continued economic recovery, and the [Local Control Funding Formula](#) will help shore up critical recent historic losses to the district's budget, the ongoing conversation addressing the largest numbers of underachieving students is paramount.

As a School Board member, my Co-Chair role of the [PEEF CAC](#), providing guidance on nearly \$50M annual District program expenditures, many addressing access and equity, will provide the unique background

and oversight experience to continue advocating for those children in the San Francisco School District with less, so they can do more.

Leverage of the entirety of San Francisco's resources

The success of our San Francisco Unified School District children does not start when the bell sounds in the morning nor does it end with the school bell in the afternoon and definitely does not happen solely within the four walls of our schools.

Ensuring our children come to school ready to learn having had a good night's sleep, are fed, immunized, mentored, and cared for is a particular 'whole child' focus I will bring to the School Board.

Within its 49 square miles, San Francisco is a City and County with world renowned resources, from physical and natural beauty, to an arts community rivaling the world's best, to myriad options of higher academic opportunity, to envied LGBT leadership, to passionate civil rights leadership, to ethnic diversity and over 100 languages, to groundbreaking preventative and illness curing healthcare systems, and so much more.

As a School Board member, I will remember the nearly one thousand voices I heard during the 2013 "[Our Children, Our City](#)" community meetings:

- Children are asking for help to reduce the barriers for their success
- **Parents are asking for improved communications**
- CBOs are asking for better program coordination

Also, taking part in the San Francisco Unified School District's 'Vision 2025' initiative, I experienced first hand how San Franciscans from numerous aspects of our city are motivated to step forward and raise the level of opportunity and success for our SFUSD school children.

Finally, my expertise in the areas of community facilitation and coalition-based problem solving will continue the good work already underway bringing together the entire City and County of San Francisco's resources for our children, their future, their success.

2. Briefly state your experience with SFUSD? (Have you been a student, parent, educator, and/or advocate?) Please explain.

I have been an advocate and involved with SFUSD for 15+ years, as long as my husband has been teaching at Argonne Elementary School. I have supported many Argonne PTO activities over the years and on multiple occasions, provided community facilitation to address school site issues.

I served on the San Francisco Human Rights Commission's LGBT Advisory Committee ('07-'12) focusing primarily on youth issues, many involving SFUSD children. In '09-'10 I worked with SFUSD Commissioner Fewer developing SFUSD Resolution No. 912-8A3 which passed (7-0) [In Support that the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) Strengthen the Anti-Discrimination Program in Schools in Order to Effect a Healthier Learning Environment for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) Students].

Appointed in January 2013 by SFUSD Commissioner Norton to the Public Education Enrichment Fund (PEEF) Community Advisory Committee, serving as Co-Chair this last year, I have been providing oversight and guidance on the \$50M (SLAM/Third Third) SF General Fund allocation to SFUSD.

3. What do you think about SFUSD's Strategic Plan? Do you think its implementation is on target?

As a \$750M+ organization, I believe in the Superintendent and School Board providing a "true north" for SFUSD's work that impacts the lives of ~55,000+ children, ~8,500+ administrators, teachers,

paraprofessionals, and staff, and tens of thousands of parents, care givers, and guardians. The guiding principles of the '13-'15 Strategic Plan clearly lay out a two-year map for moving SFUSD forward in the effort to ensure SFUSD students "graduate ready for college, career and life."

A work in progress, implementation of the SFUSD '13-'15 Strategic Plan is both to be reviewed periodically, (e.g. "Do our plans tie back to the Strategic Plan?") and ultimately regarded at the end of 2015. One specific successful item to note, regarding 'Access & Equity', is the significant reduction of school suspensions for African-American and Latino students. There is more work to do, but it is great to see the progress.

Student Achievement

1. As SFUSD moves to eliminate tracking, what are you going to do to make sure that differentiation is effective? What should "honors" really mean?

The elimination of tracking will undoubtedly place more pressure on classroom instructors to provide individualized instruction that challenges, invigorates, and enriches all students' educational experiences.

To support teachers with students who have greater abilities in any subject matter I would propose the District create a Resource Guide that includes both online and out-of-classroom (e.g. Arts Academies, UC Labs, National Park Service) instruction opportunities for greater educational challenges. Individual school sites may supplement with school community or parent expertise in any academic subject. Integrating Common Core State Standards philosophies (e.g. learning physics through dance) when creating a Resource Guide allows for a much broader spectrum of compelling content for students.

As a School Board member, ensuring "differentiation" is effective, I will first build consensus on a singular definition, including parents in the conversation with District leadership. I believe the definition of "honors" will come as a byproduct from the differentiation conversation.

2. How should SFUSD ensure that the Common Core Curriculum is implemented effectively, especially in terms of communicating with parents and supporting teachers?

Effective implementation of the Common Core, the greatest change in academic standards in a generation, is an area of particular focus for me. The changes coming for our students, teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians over the next many years is not to be underestimated.

My first priority for effective implementation is to ensure professional development/training for all SFUSD teachers, paraprofessionals, staff, and administrators that prepares them not just for day one, but for ongoing support and collaboration.

You, as parents/guardians, will find that communications during my tenure as a School Board member will be a common thread for everything I do. I believe in regular and structured communications strategies, greater transparency, and know this is a challenge I am prepared to address.

3. How should the district best prepare students for college and career?

I believe SFUSD can best prepare our children to be college and career ready with:

- Rigorous academics
- Opportunity for flexible learning environments
- Exposure to; Post-Secondary academic institutions, Careers-Days/Fairs/Mentoring, the myriad forms of arts and technical crafts
- Leadership skills development

Starting in elementary school, providing our students the opportunities to experience all forms of various aspects of post-SFUSD life will best prepare them for their lives. Knowing our children will take untold numbers of paths forward in their future, SFUSD can best serve children by providing a solid educational foundation, the opportunity to see and experience multiple work environments, and developing their skills as our next generation of leaders.

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

The complexities of serving Special Education students takes resources and time, both which are at a premium. Recognizing the tremendously wide spectrum of abilities for our children, from those who mainstream easily to others who need either full-time support or nearly that, the challenges of serving all our children are great.

One positive outcome in recent years is the significant reduction in the number of African Americans placed in Special Education simply because of behavior issues.

I believe we need to keep improving how we serve Special Education students. As a School Board member I will work to hold district staff accountable for:

- Greater attention to the management, tracking, and implementation of Individualized Education Plans
- Classroom teacher support and their ability to provide a rich educational experience with Para professional and Special Education instructor support (subject matter knowledge, behavior management skills, collaboration).

Parent Engagement

1. What does effective partnership between SFUSD and parents look like to you? Give an example of where you have seen effective partnership with parents – or not. Be specific.

I believe in creating a partnership in which parents are not just invited to the conversation but are considered a priority.

As stated throughout the questionnaire, I firmly believe in structured and regular communications both from District leadership and from the School Board. Effective implementation of a communications plan will go far in building a greater trust between all parties who have an active interest in SFUSD.

Recent efforts by the Office of Family and Community Engagement coordinating the numerous LCAP community events with various parent and community stakeholders to me demonstrated their knowledge of how to reach parents.

Parental partnership can and should be improved. Recent District changes made to Special Education support and Middle School math programs each had room for improvement as announced by SFUSD.

2. SFUSD says that it values parent engagement. However, SFUSD has a perpetual problem with not communicating with parents until decisions have already been made. What do you propose to do about this?

I favor a model of decision-making that incorporates collaboration and conversation with parents, while recognizing the Superintendent and senior staff have the responsibility to run the school district.

As a governing School Board member, it will be my charge to ensure impacted communities have the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas on potential decisions being made by district leadership. I

will bring my community facilitation, problem solving, and decision making professional experience to the work as your School Board member.

Student Enrollment

1. Do you think that the redesigned student assignment system is meeting its states objectives? This week a proposal was made to switch the order of CTIP and neighborhood area tie-breakers for elementary school applications. Do you support this proposal? Why or why not? Is there a different way we should be addressing student assignment? If yes, how and why?

The redesigned school assignment system, as implemented, is not meeting its stated objective, and therefore I strongly support the "CTIP flip". Over the last three years, statistics have demonstrated the desired school desegregation has not happened. Parents have told me, either they, or those they know, have actually moved to a CTIP area of San Francisco in order to get Kindergarten admission priority to one of the "better" SFUSD schools.

Hundreds, if not thousands of hours were spent over the course of two years developing the current school assignment system. I don't believe there is one perfect solution, but rather there is the well articulated plan that was vetted and implemented, but a plan that we must regularly and honestly, iterate, review, and alter as necessary.

2. Are we serving our middle school students as well as we should be? Why or why not? Be specific.

I believe the Feeder System is both providing the best opportunities and greatest challenges for our middle school children. School communities provide numerous benefits for students and families and are a powerful foundation for any child's success.

For those children initially placed at their neighborhood elementary school which then feeds to their neighborhood middle school, these students and their families are provided the opportunity to build a strong school community experience, close to home, in their neighborhood, with their neighborhood friends.

For those children not placed at their neighborhood elementary school, possibly across the entire city of San Francisco, and then placed at that school's feeder middle school, again, possibly across the city, creates enormous challenges for our middle school students and their families (e.g. time away from home, time traveling, etc.), and I believe that child's opportunity for their greatest success is diminished.

3. What should the District be doing to attract and keep all families in public schools?

As I have stated elsewhere in this questionnaire I believe School District leadership and the School Board should be much more proactive, directly addressing San Franciscans, dispelling myths and rumors, speaking to District successes, and sharing the breadth and depth of opportunities that exist within the San Francisco Unified School District. Additionally, the proposed reconfiguring school assignment system previously discussed, will undoubtedly help attract more families to choose our SFUSD public schools.

Hearing from families all over San Francisco, especially those not yet engaged with SFUSD, without children or with newborns, they are already hearing from their friends about "why not" to choose SFUSD schools. After spending a few minutes talking about PEEF/Prop H program funding, language immersion schools, and SFUSD having the highest urban test scores in CA, you can see beliefs already be changed. This needs to happen not 1:1, but 1:many!

Budget and Finance

1. With the new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), the district is required to create a Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). Parent input is required. How do you propose to solicit and incorporate community feedback into SFUSD's budget development process in a way that is respectful, clear and collaborative?

The recently completed LCAP process was a good first step forward in the new budgeting process as required by state law. The process incorporated various parent/community voices in multiple languages across the many diverse neighborhoods of San Francisco.

Attending two LCAP planning sessions, I appreciated the process (explain, do, review), and the opportunity to provide feedback on the various inputs, but each session felt very rushed, and both sessions raced to be completed in the allotted time, therefore actually limiting opportunities for the kind of engagement and input I would have thought to be most impactful.

Addressing the larger topics of SFUSD district communications and parent engagement over time I believe will improve future LCAP planning and input gathering.

2. What should the district do to make SFUSD's budget more understandable and accessible to parents?

This question directly addresses work I do on a regular basis, making complex content consumable by different audiences.

The 2014-15 306 page Vol 1 and 294 page Vol 2 budget documents are both imposing by size and content. I would deliver the content in various formats and multiple deliverables allowing people to more readily access the information in the form they prefer. Volume 1 example:

- (NEW) Introductory "infographic" – Visually convey overall budget, revenue and expenses, with icons to explain the most basic information
- (NEW) "Budget Overview" – 2-4 page written summary to include recap from previous year, significant changes impacting new budget cycle, and guidance for ongoing budget cycles

CURRENT VOLUME 1 – Break the current document into its separate sections allowing readers to more easily find and access what matters most to them

Pgs 14-54 – Fund Structures (would include overall infographic to more easily explain the various sources)

Pgs 55-82 - Exhibits

Pgs 83-306 Central Office Budgets - If people are interested, they can review the detailed data.

I also recommend creating multiple short (5-7 min.) videos recorded by district personnel, posted on the SFUSD website, explaining various aspects of the budget, and communicated through an improved parent/community engagement structure. These videos can provide another level of detail for those interested to learn more.

Creation of infographics and videos do not solve for all the detailed budget complexities, but are excellent communication tools for consuming complex content when created and implemented well.

Finally, new and innovative ideas might be to have a "Tweet-up" or an online Facebook event, providing for real time engagement with SFUSD personnel. These sessions take planning and coordination, but when implemented well, do bring conversations to those who may not engage in other ways.

3. For the 2014-2015 school year, SFUSD expects to have \$13.2 million more in revenue than its current obligations. Some areas under consideration for additional funding include: increased teacher and paraprofessional salaries; adding a 7th period to the school day in middle and high schools to accommodate electives, A-G, and other required courses; and adding teachers to reduce class size in elementary schools. The district has already proposed to put \$3.5 M back into schools by increasing

the weighted student formula and also the MTSS (targeted assistance to schools with higher needs). Every 1% of salary increase given to UESF teachers costs about \$2.2 million. Adding a 7th period to the school days of middle and high schools would cost about \$13 million total (\$5M for middle and \$8M for high). Reducing class size in elementary schools would cost about \$6 million. What is your approach to balancing the budget, given that all the priorities everyone wants to fund can't be funded? Give specifics.

My highest priority for the FY14-15 funds noted would be to encourage district personnel negotiate with UESF providing a 5% raise to teachers and paraprofessionals, with a longer term salary and benefits package increase that incorporates expected future budget increases to SFUSD.

With remaining funds, I would target access and equity at school sites in the following ways.

- Work with SFUSD District IT staff to purchase the requisite equipment and bring wifi capabilities to all school sites.
- Provide additional funding to school sites for their use, whether buying paper and supplies or providing professional development.

Longer term, in subsequent years as LCFF and hopefully a revamped Prop. 13 lead to greater funding for our San Francisco schools, I favor exploring targeted budgeting that makes demonstrable impacts regarding technology at school sites. Additionally I would target professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals as a high priority.

Role of the Board

1. What is the role of a School Board member versus the Superintendent?

I look forward to serving as a governing member of the San Francisco Unified School District, overseeing the Superintendent and his running of the San Francisco Unified School District. As a School Board member, I welcome the opportunity to work with the Superintendent, his senior staff, and also, "skip level" managers to ensure adequate levels of program, school, staffing, financial, and administrative oversight.

The School Board has entrusted the Superintendent to run the school district, but my role as a School Board member, elected by the citizens of San Francisco, will be to bring their inquiries, insight, and recommendations to the Superintendent and his staff.

I also believe, together with the Superintendent, we should serve as the loudest and proudest communicators and promoters of the San Francisco Unified School District. Coordinating and implementing an overall communications strategy that addresses all San Franciscans, and beyond, of the great work, success, challenges, and opportunities within SFUSD will further demonstrate the district's efforts at community building.

2. What role should the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors have in the education of SF children and youth, if any?

While the education of San Francisco's children in the public school system is the responsibility of SFUSD, I strongly believe that all children in San Francisco are "our" children. In that regard the Mayor, Board of Supervisors, and every Department Head within city government that receives any amount of funding to serve children should be included in conversations about how best to serve our San Francisco children.

I will be a passionate proponent of including other San Francisco city leaders in conversation about how best to coordinate, collaborate, and educate our children, working to eliminate silo'd and overlapping services our children receive. Examples: 1) Work with the Department of Public Health to develop/deliver

services ensuring all our children have healthy teeth and eyes. 2) Continued/closer collaboration with Recreation & Parks regarding the myriad services they provide to all San Francisco children. 3) Ongoing conversations with SFMTA regarding the most practical and effective ways to transport our SFUSD children. 4) Greater collaboration with DCYF following the passage/reauthorization of both the Children's Amendment and Public Education Enrichment Fund.

Is there anything else you would like us to know?

I proudly ask the San Francisco Parent Political Action Committee for your endorsement and support in my campaign to be a member of the San Francisco School Board.

Regards,
Mark J. Murphy (6/26/14)