

South Bay Progressive Alliance Candidate Questionnaire For School District



Please download and complete the questionnaire and email the completed document to info@SouthBayPA.org. By submitting your responses to this questionnaire to the South Bay Progressive Alliance (SBPA), you agree that your responses are public and that we may share your responses with others.

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Candidate Pledge:

If you cannot not make the following 4 affirmative pledges, the SBPA cannot endorse you at this time.

CORPORATE-FREE. As a corporate-free candidate I commit to refuse donations from corporations, industry lobbyists, corporate representatives, political bundlers, and Political Action Committees (except for unions) and publicize that I am a corporate free candidate in my campaign literature. YES** NO

PLEDGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY. I commit to publicize and hold regular listening sessions with my constituents, to stay in touch with their needs and concerns. YES** NO

PROGRESSIVE POLICIES. I commit to author, co-author, support, promote and defend people-focused progressive policies and practices that incorporate SBPA core values to improve communities and the quality of life for my constituents. YES**. NO

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION. I commit to help level the playing field for ALL people and prioritize the development of leadership among under-represented communities. YES**. NO

General Questions:

1. Endorsements—

- a. Who are you endorsing, from national races all the way down ballot to local races?

I have traditionally supported Democratic and Progressive candidates such as:
President Obama, Senator Kamala Harris, Gov. Brown, Assembly Member Ash Kalra,

State Senator Jim Beall and recently Omar Vasquez, Shay Franco-Clausen, Betty Martinez (Mt. Pleasant SD), and Jim Zito (Evergreen SD).

b. Are you endorsing anyone else in your own race?

I am not endorsing anyone in my own race for school Board.

c. Who has endorsed you?

Jim Zito, Craig Mann (EVC) Betty Martinez-pending, possible endorsements from Assembly Member Ash Kalra, Sen. Jim Beall, City Councilmember Magdalena Carrasco- D-5, Omar Torres (Franklin-McKinley School Board)

d. Whose endorsements are you seeking or expect to receive?

Beall, Kalra, Carrasco

2. **Campaign Funding** –How much money do you currently have for this race? How much money do you plan to raise? Where will the money come from? Describe sources of financial contributions for your campaign that you would refuse to accept (if any). How much money do you currently have for this race? How much money do you plan to raise? Where will the money come from? Describe sources of financial contributions for your campaign that you would refuse to accept (if any). I have very little money, I hope to raise at least \$2,000.00 The money will come from private donors. I am hopeful endorsements from various organizations will support my campaign. I am a corporate free candidate.

Office-Specific Questions:

1. **Motivation**—Why did you choose to run for the School Board?

2.

My two sons are East Side graduates. I have 13 years of service with the East Side Union HSD including six years on the Bond Oversight Committee, also serving on the African-American and Latino PTA, Student Advocacy Group, initiated a mentoring program at Independence High, supported technology tours for students to: Google, Lam Research, Cisco Systems, and NASA. Also, I have lead educational partnerships with the East Side Alliance, and East Side's feeder districts. I participate in educational trips to Sacramento on numerous occasions to lobby for more funding for all students and also funding to closing opportunity gaps (AB2635).

3. **Program and Priorities**—Elected office provides the opportunity to proactively lead by placing new ideas on the agenda for consideration and development. What are some specific ideas you intend to pursue if elected? What do you believe are the main priorities for the School Board? The Board sets policies and provides governance. I would enhance policies that are inclusive of all students with respect to equity and diversity. I would also limit the amount of charter schools in the district. We also need to engage parents more, and have increase the number of students taking AP classes. I would also explore ways we can support students taking the SAT/ACT exams for college.

4. **Qualifications**—Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of School Board. If you are an incumbent, what issues can you point to in your time as an incumbent that have had a positive impact? As an incumbent what can you tell us about your service on the school board, and share with us the decisions you have made in this capacity that you believe made a difference in the functioning of the school district?

I continue, for thirteen years, to serve the East Side community as a mentor, principal, administrator and community leader. I know first hand how decisions I make on the Board will impact students in the classroom. I also know that as an educator, I bring a lens to the Board that does not currently exist in East Side. My goals are to close achievement gaps for students of color, increase parent/community engagement, support equity with high expectations for all and prepare students for college, career and life.

5. **School Climate, Engagement**—What is your understanding of the kinds of changes that most schools are making to improve school climate and school discipline policies? What are your views on school suspensions? What are your views on restorative practices and restorative justice in schools? What are your suggestions to support students who are chronically absent, students who have dropped out or left school or are on the verge of leaving or dropping out?

Schools should be welcoming places of learning and open to the community. Students and staff should feel safe, free from bullying and harassment. Schools are looking at ways to improve climate by having positive activities on campuses for students and community members. Policies and programs centered on positive character traits, respect, diversity, and inclusion have helped bring about positive climates on campuses.

Discipline policies, not punishment, should be promoted at schools. Engagement with parents along with restorative justice practices, and Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies (PBIS) create better understanding between and among students and staff. Also, counseling and student leading behavior review panels are additional ways to support students at the high school level.

We need to continue to find ways to engage students and connect them to programs and the curriculum so they do not have chronic absences or drop out of school. I have support and help organize technology tours for middle and high schools students to show them how math and science can help them reach a dream job at Google or NASA.

Additionally, we need to explore why a student is absent. Is that student taking care of a sick sibling, is the student having transportation issues, does the student have a bed to sleep in at night. These and other questions need to be asked prior to labeling a student as lazy or not caring about school.

6. **Inclusion**—What are your views on special education? What changes, if any, need to be implemented? Should special education students be included in general education classes? Why or why not?

7.

Special education will always be part of schools. We need to support them with services that are least restrictive. Inclusion in mainstream academic and social activities is also very important for the emotional and academic development of special education students. Schools need to continue to find ways to meet their needs.

8. **Charter Schools**—What are your views on charter schools and charter school expansion? What is your understanding of the controversies surrounding the privatization of public

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education? Would you support measures that would strengthen transparency and oversight of charter schools? Yes, I would support measures that strengthen transparency and oversight of charter schools. Charter schools should be much different than the public schools. For example, an all-male academy for leadership and college readiness; an all-female academy focusing on math and science to increase opportunities for women in tech jobs; a performing arts academy or a STEM academy are also good uses for charter schools. Charter schools should not try and replicate what the district schools are doing. The charter schools do not have the resources or facilities for that purpose.

9. **Testing and Teacher Evaluations**—What should our policy be around Student Testing and Teacher Evaluation? Do you see alternatives to the use of mandated standardized tests in meeting local, state and national education goals? How much are we teaching to the test now, and what should we be doing differently if you feel it should be different?

We need standardized test as one measure of academic achievement. However, I believe in multiple measures: portfolios, hands-on activities, essays, powerpoint presentations and oral reports are other ways to gage student knowledge and ability.

Teachers should teach the Common Core State Standards with fidelity, and provide test-taking strategies. These efforts will support student on standardized tests.

10. **Common Core**—What are your views on the use of the proposed Common Core curriculum?

We need to continue supporting Common Core curriculum. The Common Core curriculum focuses on rigor, linking topics across grades, supporting academic language, and knowledge through content rich non-fiction literature. Additionally, the Common Core curriculum features lifelong skills such as: collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical-thinking/problem-solving.

11. **Budgetary Priorities**—Imagine in the year after your election to the school board, due to a shortfall your annual budget is reduced by 10%. Where would you make cuts? What would you try to shield from cuts?

Cuts should be made as far away from the classroom as possible, so not to negatively impact student learning and achievement. We need to save special education and particular kinds of service, such as math programs.

12. **Governance**—What concerns, if any, do you have relative to the current School Board? What policy changes would you make? What solutions would you propose to address and prevent conflicts of interest and misuse of public funds such as those recently exposed in the Alum Rock School district?

I am concerned with the Board supporting so many charter schools. Hopefully, legislation, such as SB 1362 or the like, will provide more flexibility for Boards to make decisions on charter schools. Transparency needs to be evident at all levels of accountability. This will help curb conflicts of interest.

13. **Accountability**—Concretely and specifically, how will you make yourself accountable to the voters who elect you? How can the voters participate in holding you accountable if you are elected?

I will make myself available to the public to listen to their praises, concerns and issues. Voters can meet with me to discuss issues via coffee meetings, from the floor at Board meetings, and on other designated occasions. Board and district reports should be assessable to the community. All spending should be discussed and transparent.

14. **Anything Else?** – Is there anything else you would like to share?

I believe my knowledge, educational background and skills will be an asset to the East Side UHSD and the community.

Positions on Issues

Please answer YES or NO for each statement.

Do you support a living wage? YES**. NO

Do you support participatory budgeting (citizen involvement in school board budgeting)?

YES**. NO

Do you support free public education from pre-school through graduate studies?

YES**. NO

Would you support allowing undocumented immigrants to vote in school board elections?

YES**. NO

Do you support the right of transgendered individuals to use the restroom of their choice?

YES**. NO

Do you support the use of city funds to develop worker-owned co-operatives?

YES**. NO

Do you support a policy to place school board funds in a Public Bank? YES**. NO

Do you support single-payer healthcare? YES**. NO