

# South Bay Progressive Alliance Candidate Questionnaire For School District



Please download and complete the questionnaire and email the completed document to [info@SouthBayPA.org](mailto: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.

Name: Derek Grasty      School District Name: Mount Pleasant Elementary School District  
Address: 4330 Bella Madeira Lane, San José, CA 95127  
Phone(s): (408) 230-7030  
Email: [Derekgrasty@gmail.com](mailto:Derekgrasty@gmail.com)      Website: [derekgrasty.com](http://derekgrasty.com) (in progress)  
Line of Work: Educator

## Candidate Pledge:

*If you cannot 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, Charter Schools Associations (except for union PACs and PACs that refuse corporate donations), 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 from ballot to local races? *I have not been asked to endorse anyone, however, I support the Biden/Harris ticket and Democrats all the way down the ballot.*
- b. Are you endorsing anyone else in your own race? *No, I am not.*
- c. Who has endorsed you? Current and past endorsers include: *Congressman Ro Khanna, Senator Jim Beall, City Council Chappie Jones, School Board Member Jim Zito, President, 100 Black Men of SV, Inc., Sean Dickerson, NAACP President, Jeff Moore, South Bay Progressive Alliance and others.*
- d. Whose endorsements are you seeking or expect to receive? *Assembly Member Ash Kalra, D6 Candidate Jake Tonkel, Brenda Zendajas, Reaffirming Ro Khanna, Jim Beall and SBPA.*

- ### 2. Campaign Funding —
- a. How much money have you raised so far?
  - b. How much do you plan to raise for your campaign?
  - c. Where will the money come from?
  - d. Describe sources of financial contributions for your campaign that you would refuse to accept (if any). *I will not accept corporate money or money from charter schools. I am in the early stages of fund-raising.*

## Office-Specific Questions:

1. **Motivation**—Why did you choose to run for School Board? *I believe in public service, and supporting students. I am an educator with over 30 years in the field of education. I strongly believe that an educator needs to be on Boards of Education. I know first hand how decisions I make will impact schools, employees and students sitting in the (virtual) classroom.*
2. **Program and Priorities**—a. What do you believe are the main priorities for the School Board? *1) Set the priorities for the district; 2) provide governance; 3) approve the budget and district goals; and 4) evaluate the superintendent.*

Elected office provides the opportunity to proactively lead by placing new ideas on the agenda for consideration and development. b. What are some specific ideas you intend to pursue if elected?

*Ideas: Innovation with technology and the new normal of distance learning; Enhance parent and community engagement; and build partnerships with local businesses for funding and as an educational/community resource.*

3. **Qualifications**—**a.** Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of School Board. **b.** If you are an incumbent, what issues have you worked on that have made a positive impact? As an incumbent tell us about your service on the school board, and share with us the decisions you have led, which have impacted the school district? *1) I have over 30 years in the field of education as a teacher, principal and mentor of school administrators. 2) I have been active in the East Side Union High School District and the Mt. Pleasant School District serving on: Bond Oversight Committee (6 years); African-American Advocacy Committee; Latino English Language Advisory Committee; Pre-registering and registering Mt. Pleasant HS students to vote, supporting distance learning opportunities for students outside of school; involvement in the Mt. Pleasant Neighborhood's Association. Additionally, providing Technology field trips for Black and Brown students in the Bay Area (100 BMSV); Serving as a teacher's union elected board representative and union negotiator, having an unwavering commitment to student education, Supporting Jim Beall's SB 1362 (restricting charter schools/did not pass), etc.*
4. **School Climate, Engagement**— **a.** What is your understanding of the kinds of changes that most schools are making to improve school climate and school discipline policies? **b.** What are your views on school suspensions? **c.** 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? **d.** Where do you stand on police presence in schools? *A) schools are eliminating police on campuses and looking at restorative justice models for school discipline. B. I believe suspensions should be a last resort, not a first option. The education code 48900 should be strictly followed regarding suspensions. However, it is best to have positive programs, inspiring curriculum that respect students' culture while building self-esteem, and student activities at school sites, to create a positive climate, thus, reducing or eliminating the need for suspensions. C. Find out why they are absent, sometimes students are home taking care of a sibling. Use internal and external resources to support students, counselors, mental health specialist, etc. D. Police on campus during the school day send the wrong message to students. Solicit parent and community volunteers, people students know and respect.*
5. **Equity & Access** - The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the severe equity issues in education in communities of color. **a.** As a board member, what ideas and strategies will you bring forward to close the equity gap for students facing challenges of digital access and facing difficulties with remote learning. *Schools should provide students with laptops and digital access. Many districts are doing that during this pandemic. Communities of color don't always have access to the internet. I propose after school programs, strategically placed buses in the community that*

*serve as a means for internet access. (Buses are the not spot) and making sure schools provide internet access with a range that stretches into the community.*

6. **Inclusion**— a. What are your views on special education? b. What changes, if any, need to be implemented? c. Should special education students be included in general education classes? Why, or why not? *A. Schools need to provide special education services to meet the needs of all students. B) We need more special education teachers and para-educators to support our students. Parents need to be communicated with often and make sure the Individual Education Programs (IEPs) of students are properly addressed. C. Mainstreaming is good. Special education students should have the same access to programs and activities. Special education students should also be mainstreamed into general education classrooms when appropriate and educationally sound.*
  
7. **Charter Schools**—a. Beginning July 2020, districts have begun considering the fiscal impacts a charter will have on programs and students in any given district. As a board member, what will be your position when considering a new charter school petition or request to expand (either by a countywide charter, or on appeal) that will have negative fiscal or community impacts on one or more districts in the county? b. What level of oversight and accountability do you believe the Board of Education must provide \after approving a charter school application? In your opinion, has the County Board done an adequate job providing such oversight and accountability? If not, what do you think should be done? c. Do you support the right of charter educators to unionize? How will you enforce that right? d. Do you support appointing community members to the boards of charter schools that are authorized by the county? *I am generally not in support of charter schools. The expansion of charter schools have a negative impact on the budgets of school districts. Districts should be able to oversee and hold charter schools accountable. Charters need to be transparent with student data, curriculum, teaching practices and community engagement. The County Board has not done a good job of oversight of charters. They have been mostly a “rubber stamp” to charter applications.*
  
8. **Testing and Teacher Evaluations**—a. What should policy be around student testing, and teacher evaluation? b. Do you see alternatives to the use of mandated standardized tests in meeting local, state and national education goals? c. How much are we teaching to the test now, and what should we be doing differently, if you feel it should be different? *Test scores have not and should not be tied to teacher evaluations. This is true in districts where I have served. Multiple measures should be used to evaluate student progress. We should teach the state standards.*

9. **Common Core**—What are your views on the use of the proposed Common Core curriculum? *I believe the Common Core Curriculum should be used, however, it falls short in areas of diversity and inclusion. Teachers should continue to have flexibility to supplement the curriculum. Particularly in areas of diversity and inclusion where the typical textbook falls short.*
10. **Budgetary Priorities**—Imagine in the year after your election to the school board, due to a shortfall your annual budget is reduced by 10%. a. Where would you make cuts? b. What would you try to shield from cuts? *Cuts should be made away from the classroom as much as possible. Staff, teachers, administrators, parents and the community should have input into priorities and where cuts, if any, should be made.*
11. **Governance**—a. What concerns, if any, do you have relative to the current School Board? b. What policy changes would you make? c. What solutions would you propose to address and prevent conflicts of interest and misuse of public funds? *People in the community believe there needs to be more structure to the Board meetings, including opportunities for listening and hearing what the community has to say. I would propose policies to provide more opportunities to hear from people at Board meetings and in the community, including coffee meetings with me as a Board meeting.*
12. **Accountability**—a. Concretely and specifically, how will you make yourself accountable to the voters who elect you? b. How can the voters participate in holding you accountable if you are elected? *I have a long history of character and integrity. I will do what I say I will do. I want to be held accountable on the votes I make on the Board, with what I say and do. Voters can come to school board meetings and express their opinions on my voting record on the Board. They can send emails, write letters or talk with me directly.*
13. **Environment:** a. What policies would you put in place to protect our environment? b. What would you do to reduce your district’s carbon footprint? *I believe in the environment. I support Green Initiatives and energy conservation. We will look at ways to: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.*
14. **Anything Else?** — Is there anything else you would like to share? *I believe my educational background and experiences make me the most qualified person to sit on the Mt. Pleasant School Board. I work well with teacher, staff, community members and students. Thank you.*

## Positions on Issues

**Please answer YES or NO for each statement.**

Do you support Proposition 15 Schools and Communities First? \*\*\*YES NO

Do you support a living wage for all district employees? \*\*\*YES NO

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

\*\*\*YES NO

Do you support free public education from preschool 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 Medicare for all? \*\*\*YES NO

Do you support building or subsidizing affordable housing for faculty and staff?

\*\*\*YES NO

However, I support this if that's what faculty and staff want. Teachers in the East Side UHSD did not want the district to provide housing on District property.