

South Bay Progressive Alliance

Candidate Questionnaire

For Board of Education

Please complete this 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.

Name: Jaria Jaug

School District Name: Berryessa School District

Phone(s): (408) 463-6857

Email: votejariajaug@gmail.com

Website: <https://votejaria.com/>

Line of Work:

Candidate Pledge:

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

CORPORATE-FREE. I commit to be a corporate-free candidate and publicize that I am a corporate free candidate in my campaign literature. YES X 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 X 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 X 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 X NO ☐

General Questions:

1. Endorsements—

- a. Who are you endorsing, from national races, all the way down from ballot to local races? Are you endorsing anyone else in your own race?

Peter Ortiz for San Jose City Council

Endorsing Shanna Brewer and Thelma Boac for Berryessa Union School District

- b. Who has endorsed you?

CA Teacher Association
Planned Parenthood
CA Democratic Party
Congressman Ro Khanna
Asm. Alex Lee
County Assessor Neysa Fligor
Berryessa Union School District Trustee Thelma Boac
Berryessa Union School District Trustee Jai Srinivasan
Berryessa Union School District Trustee Shanna Brewer
Berryessa Union School District Trustee Khoa Nguyen
Santa Clara County Supervisor Susan Ellenberg
Santa Clara County Supervisor Betty Duong
Valley Water Director Richard Santos
Orchard School District School Board President Virginia Varela-Campos
San Jose-Evergreen Community College District Boardmember Clay Hale
Los Altos School District School Board President Vaishali Sirkay
Santa Clara Unified School District Board Member Vickie Fairchild
Santa Clara Unified School District Board Vice President Jim Canova

Full list here: <https://votejaria.com/endorsements>

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

Campaign Funding —How much money do you plan to raise for your campaign? 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?

Currently I have 19k on hand, a majority are from individual contributions and labor unions.

- a. Will you reject campaign contributions and endorsements from oil companies, oil company associations, public utilities, and PACs which take money from any of the above including, but not limited to, Chevron, Valero, Western States Petroleum Association, and Sempra Energy? YES X NO ☐
- b. Will you reject campaign contributions and endorsements from law enforcement groups? YES X NO ☐
- c. Will you reject campaign contributions and endorsements from the Apartment Association or the Association of Realtors? YES X NO ☐
- d. Will you reject campaign contributions and endorsements from for-profit health care entities and insurance companies? YES X NO ☐
- e. Will you reject campaign contributions and endorsements from charter school associations? YES X NO ☐

f. Will you reject campaign contributions and endorsements from corporate PACs? YES X NO ☐

Board of Education Questions:

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

As a lifelong Berryessa resident and a former student from the district, I decided to run as an advocate for those in our community that have oftentimes been overlooked. Growing up in East Side San Jose, I am no stranger to the opportunity gap and inequities that become normalized in our area. These lived experiences fundamentally shape the way in which I approach decision making on the dias, and I plan to continue and fight for the very community that raised me. I am running to improve student safety and push policies that invest in the construction of safer routes to school in addition to secure classrooms. Additionally, I plan to foster pathways to student success, through continuous support of after-school programs, online tutoring, and summer math programs. I have kept my promise of ensuring that all students are provided the resources they need to succeed, and I would love the opportunity to continue this important work.

2. **Program and Priorities**—

a. What do you believe are the main priorities for the School Board? 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?

I believe that the main priorities for the School Board should first and foremost be serving the students and meeting their needs academically. This is why if elected one of my platforms is Academic Achievement. I have and will continue to guide the district to meet students where they are—whether it be going beyond grade level or providing additional resources to support students. This priority has been grounded in equity, providing additional care and programming for McKinney–Vento students, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families. This programming includes specialized afterschool tutoring using Title 1 dollars, summer math programming for students who need more support, and more.

Additionally, another initiative I plan to pursue if elected is the Pathways to the Future. Through this program, I will continue to push our district to innovate our schools and invest in solutions that can support Berryessa for decades to come, like building workforce housing and leasing our land to partners who can support our community. I will also continue to invest in our workforce to ensure that we continuously have strong union partnerships for future transformations and to increase retention and longevity.

Finally, I plan to continue and invest in school safety. I believe that safety and protecting our students from harm should be a main priority for school boards. Being a consistent champion for climate infrastructure, updating our classrooms to have proper ventilation and cooling to keep our students healthy, I firmly believe that everyone in Berryessa deserves to feel safe and included. I will also continue to invest in and protect mental health services for everyone in the district.

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?

- I have been on the Berryessa Union School Board for four years, and over the years I have been a proactive member, seeking community input, working directly with our labor partners, and

bringing new ideas to the table to ensure that our district remains fiscally solvent in the long run. In addition to being on the school board, I bring perspective as a lifelong Berryessa resident and former student from the district years ago. By being raised in Berryessa, I have lifelong connections to community members and staff. Notably, I have worked alongside our teachers and built upon the existing relationships I have with them to craft and address issues affecting their staff. Additionally I have experience advocating for healthcare reform for working families. In my day job as an Associate Director of Care Policy, I have organized and supported the efforts to increase healthcare accessibility and worked alongside healthcare workers to keep hospitals open and clinics available for everyone. I work to research and advocate for local policy and funding relating to healthcare and childcare. With my day job intersecting with the work I do on the school board, I am able to effectively provide leadership, connection, and policy expertise on the dais.

- These experiences shape the way in which I approach decision-making on the board. From my previous term on the dais I have spearheaded initiatives that have decreased suspension and expulsion rates over the years. This has been achieved through prioritizing restorative justice practices and investing in positive behavioral intervention systems within our district. Additionally on the board I have led the passing of our LGBTQ+ Resolution every year, ensuring that we have gender neutral restrooms available for students, inclusive stories in libraries, and our annual pride flag raising at all district and school sites. Climate resilient infrastructure is another issue I have advocated for, through investing in updated HVAC, solar panels, and grants for low-flow toilets.

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?
 - Currently the Santa Clara County Office of Education is utilizing a multitiered system of support called (MTSS) which seeks to uplift students through a comprehensive approach. Specifically it aims to integrate support at the academic, behavioral and socio-emotional levels of learning to meet the needs of all students. I have been a consistent advocate for this framework of policy and believe that we must approach school discipline policies at multiple levels rather than purely punitive. Specifically I have fought to include positive behavior interventions and support when addressing school discipline issues. This can include implementing support systems like social workers, therapists, and counselors to intervene. As a result we have been able to decrease expulsion and suspension rates overtime.
- b. . What are your views on school suspensions?
 - I don't believe that school suspensions alone address the root cause of a lot of disciplinary issues. Oftentimes there are other causes to student misconduct that can go unnoticed. Rather than purely utilizing school suspensions as a disciplinary measure, I believe we should approach the issue at its root, and offer support systems in place.

- 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?
 - I believe that to support students who may have issues with attendance and dropping out, we should give resources and support to them early on. For example, within Berryessa we have a student services coordinator who is responsible for meeting with these students and providing them with social service connections like housing and food. This helps students today who are currently struggling with accessing basic needs that can oftentimes provide a barrier to education.
 - d. Where do you stand on police presence in schools?
 - I don't believe in police presence in schools. I firmly believe that police presence can oftentimes instill fear in students and having them on school property regularly is unnecessary. Unless it is an emergency, there should be no police presence on campus.
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.
 - As a previous board member, equity has been the basis of all my decision making and governance. I make it a firm priority to invest resources in students who have historically been put at a disadvantage. This support can come in the form of specialized school programming, after school programs, resource fairs, that meet the needs of low-income students, BIPOC students, and students with disabilities.
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?
 - During Berryessa's budget shortfalls and school consolidation process, I was a proponent of protecting our workforce and impacts to the classroom. Throughout the process, I advocated against layoffs and protected services that directly benefit our students, like our special education programs. I worked alongside our union partners to address issues as they arose and expedited concerns from our community members to district leadership. I was a key advocate for addressing concerns from our special education teachers by pushing for expedited infrastructure projects to ensure that their new classrooms met the needs of the students. I actually volunteered in the pod classrooms at Majestic Way to hear and experience the concerns of noise and elopement. I directly worked with district staff and continuously advocated to get these concerns addressed, leading to the piloting of the new classroom walls at the entrance of the pod. These walls are now implemented at all of our pod schools.
 - To ensure that special education providers in Berryessa are consistently valued and are able to support our students requires a comprehensive approach. One proponent of this would be

establishing strict caseload limits and increasing oversight on their adherence. California has a higher number of allowable caseloads in comparison to many states, which can lead to burnout long-term. Additionally, to further address this issue, I have advocated for the expansion of support staff for our providers. For example, we can increase the number of trained instructional assistants to support IEP meeting coordination and compliance tracking so that our special education providers can focus on day-to-day classroom operations.

- Additionally, I support having special education students included in general education classes. I think that having them engage with general education students is mutually beneficial for both groups of students, as it helps reduce the stigma around special education students in addition to helping with their development.

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.

a. 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?

- No. Charter schools are privately run, publicly funded means to privatize education in America that prey on historically low-income communities that have not had enough public investment I don't believe they should be approved because of the costs it may have on one or more districts in the county. Instead we should invest more into our public education system rather than pivoting to a charter school.

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?

- I believe that the Board of Education should look at their fiscal impacts and student achievement to determine if they are meeting student's academic needs. The County Board has done a good job in providing that oversight, however there is still more work that can be done to further support public school districts. Additionally Berryessa School District has no charter schools registered.

c. Do you support the right of charter educators to unionize? How will you enforce that right?

- Yes I support the right of charter educators to unionize. I firmly believe that if a charter school is to be approved there must be language established in the contract to support the workers. Specifically, there should be a labor peace agreement established that outlines an agreement between the union and employer on how to proceed during union organizing. To enforce this right, school districts must ensure that the charter schools have labor peace agreements so that employees can unionize without disagreement from the management.

- d. Do you support appointing community members to the boards of charter schools that are authorized by the county?
- Yes I fully support appointing community members to boards of charter schools authorized by the county. I firmly believe in having people directly within the community represent the communities they seek to serve.

8. Testing and Teacher Evaluations—

- a. What should policy be around student testing, and teacher evaluation?
- I do not believe that student testing and teacher evaluations should be tied to one another. There are too many conflicting factors that complicate student testing, and correlating the two can be problematic. Instead, we should utilize student testing as a diagnostic tool to assist in figuring out where teachers can further support their students in the classroom.
- b. Do you see alternatives to the use of mandated standardized tests in meeting local, state and national education goals?
- Yes, I do believe there should be alternatives to the use of mandated standardized testing in order to evaluate goals. With the SAT no longer being required, educational institutions are now using grading systems to assess students in a way that is more holistic.
- c. How much are we teaching to the test now, and what should we be doing differently, if you feel it should be different?
- I think that in some ways we are still teaching to test and instead should be moving towards holistic grading that doesn't emphasize grades as much as learning. I still believe that there needs to be some form of benchmark and testing can aid in that, however it should not be the only thing we evaluate when analyzing student data. Instead we should aim for a holistic approach to teaching that supports student learning without fully relying on test scores.

9. Curriculum—What are your views on the use of the proposed Ethnic Studies Curriculum? Do you support the teaching of Critical Race Theory in schools within your district?

- I fully support the use of Ethnic Studies Curriculum in the classroom and the teaching of Critical Race Theory within Berryessa School District. If we are introducing Critical Race Theory into middle school classrooms, the curriculum should be tailored in a way accessible to 7th and 8th grade students to understand.

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?

- In my term within the Berryessa School Board, I experienced something similar, in which we had to cut our budget by 6 percent. This led to immense school closures, and I was the only sitting member that voted no on school closures to ensure our students had equitable access to schools near them. Instead I would aim to make cuts in administrative positions that are unnecessary

rather than making any cuts in the classroom. Additionally I would utilize generous retirement packages to try and reduce our staff size.

b. What would you try to shield from cuts?

- I would shield school social workers, mental health support workers, school counselors, teachers, and necessary classroom materials from cuts. I believe that these resources are of absolute importance to students and are non-negotiables.

11. Governance—

a. What concerns, if any, do you have relative to the current School Board? **b.** What policy changes would you make?

- Right now one of my biggest concerns is ensuring that students have access to safety net services. Schools have become a safe haven for so many low-income families. I strongly believe we need to protect basic services like providing bus transportation, additional food services, and housing navigation services to those who desperately need it in our schools. Additionally, I am incredibly concerned with the increasing number of students struggling with their mental health. I firmly support and will defend investments we make to address the mental health crisis not only for our students, but our teachers and staff. We need to protect the number of psychologists and social workers on campuses to ensure continued work is being done to support everyone in the district. Another concern I have and plan to address is the retention of our employees. During Berryessa's school consolidation process, I was an avid protector of jobs during this process. I worked to ensure that we did not do major layoffs. Instead, I worked to ensure that there were spots available and open to those who had their schools closed and worked to mitigate these impacts to our staff. Finally, I believe that everyone in Berryessa deserves to feel safe and included. I have been a champion for addressing unconscious bias in our school system, as our Hispanic students have been overidentified for special education. We are working with the National Equity Project to provide professional development for all employees in order to directly address the issues of racism and bias in our schools.

c. What solutions would you propose to address and prevent conflicts of interest and misuse of public funds?

Elected officials must disclose if any conflicts of interest may occur when negotiating and approving contracts and deals with outside organizations. Public funds must also be used only for public purposes; however when contracting out services, these should only be used for unionized labor agreements. Disclosures should be required and if contracted services are needed then the jobs should be union jobs, and

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?

- To hold myself accountable to voters, I plan to be completely transparent on all decisions I make on the dais. This means not only having efforts to ensure voters are informed about our decisions, but also making sure that all information is easily accessible and understandable to an everyday person. This can be done through social media campaigns, town hall meetings, and public comment sessions during board meetings. I am committed to advocating for the students and staff, but also know that I do not know everything. I plan to consistently circle back to the community that has raised me and seek ways in which I can improve throughout my term.

c. Do you support hybrid in-person and online meetings?

Yes, I support hybrid in-person and online meetings to keep everything accessible for everyone!

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?

- Under my leadership, Berryessa underwent major changes to address environmental and climate infrastructure in our district. I worked with the administration to do a complete climate resiliency study of all of our school sites to see where upgrades can be made to mitigate our emissions and promote green energy on all of our sites. From this study, we were able to allocate financial resources to climate resilience upgrades like solar paneling all parking lots and upgrading HVAC systems. I have also been a champion for climate advocacy, passing and writing a resolution to declare climate change as an ongoing issue in Berryessa. I have also worked alongside our partners at Valley Water to receive a grant to upgrade all toilets in Berryessa to low-flow toilets.

14. Does your campaign commit to engaging substantial numbers of new voters? If yes, what is your plan to make it happen?

- Yes, I am doorknocking 5 days a week reaching at least 120 voters. We also are working with my board colleagues to run on a slate to reach even more voters. I am also seeking endorsements from multiple labor unions even outside Berryessa with the South Bay Labor Council.

15. **Anything Else?** — Is there anything else you would like to share?

Positions on Issues

Please answer YES or NO for each statement.

Do you support a living wage for all district employees? YES X NO ☐

Do you support participatory budgeting (citizen involvement in school board budgeting)? YES
X NO ☐

Do you support free public education from preschool through graduate studies? YES X NO ☐

Would you support allowing undocumented immigrants to vote in school board elections?
YES X NO ☐

Do you support the right of transgendered individuals to use the restroom of their choice?
YES X NO ☐

Do you support a policy to place school board funds in a public bank? YES X NO ☐

Do you support Medicare for all? YES X NO ☐

Do you support building or subsidizing affordable housing for faculty and staff? YES X NO ☐