MEILIN OBINATA - CANDIDATE FOR AREA 1 TRUSTEE OF THE PVUSD

meilin4pvusd@gmail.com

HIGHLIGHTS

- 30+ years of volunteering for students, educational causes and educational institutions
- 14 years of guiding students 1:1 from high school to competitive college admissions
- Secured funding to launch a youth mentoring program within the Santa Cruz County NAACP
- 10+ years of creating and organizing community events to spark engagement and awareness
- Trained and experienced mediator who has settled disputes between hostile parties

EDUCATION

- Attended schools within the Pajaro Valley Unified School District and Santa Cruz County: Mar Vista Elementary, Aptos Junior High School, Aptos High School and Cabrillo College
- B.A., Mathematics, University of California, Santa Cruz – Santa Cruz, California
- J.D., Mitchell Hamline University School of Law – St. Paul, Minnesota
    - Thurgood Marshall Scholarship (full tuition coverage for all three years)
    - President and Co-Founder, Multicultural Law Student Association
    - Co-President, Asian American Law Student Association

STRENGTHS & SKILLS

- Natural connector with a talent for introducing people and organizations to break down silos
- Extensive knowledge of Northern California public, private and charter K-12 systems, including the following: Pajaro Valley Unified School District, Pacific Collegiate, Santa Cruz City Schools, Harker, Basis, Mission San Jose, Archbishop Mitty, St. Francis, Palo Alto, Gunn, Dougherty, American, California, Notre Dame, Carlmont, San Francisco Unified (Taraval, Lowell), etc.
- Trustworthy, creative, and an excellent collaborator—adept at helping people feel comfortable enough to voice their best ideas
- Connects well with diverse groups, including engineers, artists, activists, educators, etc.
- Experienced in managing projects under non-negotiable deadlines for many years

EMPLOYMENT

- Senior Admissions College Counselor – Insight Education (12/2020 - Present) | Cupertino
- Senior College Counselor – Enlighteens Education (06/2018 - 12/2020) | Cupertino / Pleasanton
- Presenter / Counselor – IvyMax (04/2018 - 05/2018) | Palo Alto
- ThinkTank Learning – Essay Consultant, Academic Consultant, Senior Education Consultant (2012-2018) Palo Alto / Cupertino
- K-8 Math/English Tutor – Club Z! (09/2012 - 12/2012) | Santa Cruz / Watsonville
- Contract Administration – Granite Construction, West Marine (2009-2011)
- Complaint Investigations Officer – City of Minneapolis, Dept. of Civil Rights (2005-2008)
    - A sampling of cases: Veliz v. City of Minneapolis Police Department, Wright v. City of Minneapolis Fire Department
    - Investigated allegations of civil rights violations
    - Successfully mediated case settlements between frequently hostile parties
    - Conducted community outreach at events such as Juneteenth and Twin Cities Pride

- Law Clerk - City of Minneapolis, Dept. of Civil Rights (2004-5)
- Law Clerk - Shulman and Dornbos (civil rights litigation firm) (Summer of 2004)
- Extern - Superior Court of Santa Cruz County (Summer of 2003)
- Apple, Caere, Borland, Com21 – Various roles in publicly-traded tech companies (1995-2002)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

- 30+ years as a volunteer for various K12 schools and afterschool programs (1990s to the present)
    - Classroom aide, reading buddy, Barton tutor, teacher's aide and more
    - Classroom Aide/Tutor Volunteer (2011 - 2016) – Mar Vista Elementary, Branciforte Middle, Christa McAuliffe Elementary, Aptos Junior High
- Representative, District 2, Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee (Fall 2025 - present)
- Secretary, Mid County Democratic Club of Santa Cruz County (2024 - Present)
- (nominated for) Treasurer, Pajaro Valley Democratic Club (pending, 2026)
- Equity Workgroup Member, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (2023 - 2025)
    - Provided input on processes, data collection, and project prioritization criteria
- Volunteer, Santa Cruz Black Film Series (2024 - Present)
    - Researching films and filmmakers
    - Facilitating discussions to encourage attendees to share their thoughts
- Producer & Host, KSQD Community Radio (2023 - Present)
    - Notable shows / interviews include: people from the organizing committee of the Monterey Bay Aquarium Workers, local healthcare and tech workers resisting workplace issues, Malcolm Harris, author of "Palo Alto", Jamie Edwards, first president of Trader Joe's United, Dr. John Silva of Protect Salinas Renters, Raul Ureña, the first transgender mayor of Calexico California
    - Recruits volunteers to increase diversity and geographic relevance of station
    - Source guests for my own shows and those of others
- Co-Host, Stakeholder Listening Sessions, City of Santa Cruz Existing Building Electrification (2022)
- Executive Committee Member, NAACP Santa Cruz County (2013 - Present)
    - Developed concept and wrote draft for a grant application, seeking funds for a youth mentoring program, ultimately successfully securing a gift from the Santa Cruz County Community Foundation, the largest single donation that the branch has received in the last 12+ years
    - Organized first trip to the Black College Expo in Oakland for local Black-identifying students
    - Developed new event concepts, including an "I Am Not Your Negro" panel discussion with professors for a showing within a movie theater during its first run
- Pro Bono College Counseling & Tutoring (2015 - Present)
    - Worked with students from Santa Cruz County, including students who were attending schools in the PVUSD or were alumni of the PVUSD
    - Helped a first-generation CSU Monterey Bay student pass a mandatory remedial math course
    - Assisted Black Student Union leaders and first-generation Latine students with freshman and transfer applications to colleges
- Programmer / Founder of a film series within the Santa Cruz Public Libraries, at the Aptos, Downtown and Capitola branches (2015 - 2023)
    - Curated independent, documentary and foreign films for a monthly screening
    - Fostered community
    - Secured permissions from filmmakers
    - Collaborated with filmmakers to create unique film experiences
- Technology and organic agriculture incubation (2008-2011)
    - Startup Labs, Santa Cruz

- ALBA Organics, Salinas

Candidate Background

1. Please attach a copy of your resume.

I pasted it at the top of this document.

2. Have you previously held any public or elected/appointed offices? If so please list them with the title and time served.

(to be clear, none of these positions were the result of public elections but elections within a set of members)

Santa Cruz County NAACP, Executive Committee Member at Large (2013- present, elected)
Democratic Central Committee, District 2 Representative (2025 - current, elected)
Mid County Democratic Club, Secretary (2023 - onwards, elected)
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group (2024 - 2025, appointed)
Museum of Art and History (2021 - 2024, appointed)

3. PVFT represents teachers, librarians, psychologists, counselors, SELPA, and other certificated non- management education workers. What is your experience working with these groups?

I've interacted and supported teachers and other non-management education workers for 30+ years in various volunteer capacities whether tutor, classroom aide, etc. This includes work I have done with students with learning differences. In those roles, I interacted with all manner of education workers. I have volunteered as an Orton Gillingham (Barton) tutor to work with elementary school students who could not read, to enable them to read which required close collaboration with teachers, aides and parents.

In law school, I worked in the Child Advocacy Clinic, representing (under the guidance of a supervising attorney) children whose parents were losing their parental rights due to neglect or abuse in the home, which required me to collaborate with social workers and other adults connected to the child. As the President of my law school's Multicultural Law Student Association, I developed partnerships with public schoolteachers to support efforts for funding of various programs such as a field trip to retrace important historical places in the Civil Rights Movement.

As part of the Santa Cruz County NAACP, I have collaborated with public school teachers and other members of the branch to launch a mentoring program for youths in public schools. I

drafted a grant proposal in close consultation with branch leaders and community members. This proposal was successful, and landed the largest gift the branch has received in my time with the Santa Cruz County NAACP from the Santa Cruz Community Foundation. As part of the Education Committee of the SC NAACP I also initiated and chaperoned a field trip to Oakland for a college fair, accompanying local youths to meet college representatives and other educators to encourage them to start planning early for college.

I have worked with students who were interacting with non-management education workers in my paid work as an academic counselor for the past 14 years, including students who have Individualized Education Plans, 504s, and diagnosed disabilities for which families did not seek accommodations.

On a granular level, as an academic counselor for the last 14+ years in private education businesses and as someone who has offered those services for free to under-resourced families, I have assigned my students tasks such as communicating and meeting with teachers, mental health professionals, special education staff, and librarians to help them pursue their educational goals, whether to make up missed assignments and tests or to help them make better use of their school's resources. I have asked my students to contact school counselors regarding mental health challenges, to work with teachers regarding accommodations issues and more.

4. Have you ever been a union member? If yes, please name the union. Are you or have you ever been an officer in a union?

Yes.

When I worked as Complaint Investigations Officer in the Civil Rights Department for the City of Minneapolis for three years after law school, my position was within a union. In that role, I investigated primarily matters of workplace discrimination involving employers within the city limits, cross-filed with the EEOC, on various protected classes (race, gender, national origin, etc.), at times in the context of collective bargaining agreements, including union members who worked for the City of Minneapolis, such as the Minneapolis Police Department and Minneapolis Fire Department. I have linked to some notable cases in my resume above.

No, I have not been an officer in a union.

5. Please list if you are involved in any community groups and what roles you have played

Current:

- NAACP Santa Cruz County, Executive Committee Member At Large (2013 - present)
- Santa Cruz Film Festival, Programmer and Juror, (2016 - Present)
- KSQD Community Radio Producer and Host (2023 - present)
- Secretary, Mid County Democratic Club of Santa Cruz County (2024 - Present)

- Volunteer, Santa Cruz Black Film Series (2024 - Present)
- Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee, Representative of District 2 (fall 2025 - present)

Previous:

- Equity Workgroup Member, Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission (2023 - 2025)
- Co-Host, Stakeholder Listening Sessions, City of Santa Cruz Existing Building Electrification (2022)
- Trustee, Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (2021 - 2024)

Why Are You Running?

1. Why do you want to serve as a trustee for the Pajaro Valley School Board?

A short answer is: teachers need **higher pay** and **competitive benefits**. There is no learning without educators. School districts across California during COVID have experienced what happens when children don't have access to teachers - they don't learn.

We also need to move away from a board filled with political operators, board decisions based on a lack of negotiation skills to one which is willing to ask hard questions.

I also want to see a real strategic plan for the district for the next 5 and 10 years to start, and beyond so that the community, including PVUSD workers, can understand and rely upon the district as a trusted partner.

A longer answer goes as follows.

I am a daughter of this district. I attended Mar Vista, Aptos Junior High, and Aptos High School before attending Cabrillo College, UC Santa Cruz for a degree in Math and a JD from the Mitchell Hamline School of Law on a full-tuition scholarship. I am living a version of the American Dream as someone whose parents did not receive college degrees.

I want to know if we can make sure that the district fully supports the dreams and aspirations of <u>all</u> of the families in this district.

I have worked in technology companies, education businesses, and government. Those opportunities were only available because of my access to education. If we aspire to make our society into a meritocracy, then, we must conduct the work of education with honesty and substance. If we want the enviable PISA scores of Finland or South Korea, then we must empower educators to bring the best ideas to the forefront and encourage students by providing them the resources they need to flourish.

Especially when times are tough, we need leaders to listen to the community to identify what are the priorities. Because when money and resources are short, whatever is not the priority simply falls by the wayside. It's important to not only have a "triage" mindset but to think clearly about the futures we want our students to have.

For the last 14+ years, I have enjoyed mentoring students in their education journeys across multiple school districts, spanning from San Francisco Unified to Pajaro Valley Unified. I love helping students plan for the long-term, mid-term, near-term and to think about the future expansively, hopefully yet extremely realistically.

I have worked with kids with Ds and Fs, as well as straight A's. I've worked with students participating in the most competitive robotics and debate teams in Northern California, students who were recruited by colleges for their athletic excellence on the national or international level, as well as kids who told me they were acting as advocates for their parents' workplace issues because they were the ones who spoke fluent English. I have lived as a worker within different parts of the American economy, and have helped students at various points in that range with excellent results.

I want us to learn from the mistakes of the past, and heal so that we can do a "reset" for a brighter future.That requires accountability, partnership and honest conversations with teachers, staff, administrators and the community.

I love helping kids.

I can bring that energy to all the families of the district, and to the board itself. I love seeing the future on the faces of my students; that's why I am applying to be a trustee.

2. What qualifications and strengths will you bring to the School Board?

A short answer - my qualifications include the fact that I have multiple decades of hands-on K16 educational experience plus previous board experience; my strengths include respect, conflict management experience, and openness.

A longer answer is below.

My qualifications include: previous board and committee experience and hands-on K16 experiences.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE EXPERIENCE

I have served on multiple boards and committees. One thing I have observed in such roles is the constant struggle over money. The PVUSD board is also a board which faces money struggles, like other school boards.

I have served on the board of the Santa Cruz County NAACP for over 10 years. I have initiated and voted upon motions for various actions and decisions, with controversial topics brought to our attention at times. My time as a board member has also afforded me interesting opportunities to channel my interests in education because I also serve on the Education Committee which I describe elsewhere in this document.

For a few years after COVID, and after the MAH successfully pursued a capital campaign for $5M to purchase what has become Abbott Square in downtown Santa Cruz, I was a trustee of the Museum of Art and History. I cast votes on various matters concerning the health and wellbeing of the MAH as an arts institution despite massive problems in multiple areas. This was a tumultuous time in which an executive director decided to leave, so the board's energy also went into recruiting candidates to find a new ED. I felt like the board worked very well together to manage this transition.

I know I can use my past experiences and strengths to help the district through these difficult times.

2 - HANDS-ON K-16 EXPERIENCES: 30+ years of classroom volunteering, plus 14+ years as a professional academic counselor guiding students through competitive college admissions

Since 2012, my livelihood has been focused on competitive college admissions, which has given me a lens on dozens of school districts throughout Northern California from San Francisco Unified to Pajaro Valley Unified School District as I mentor my students through them. I have been accountable to them in the form of their college acceptances - meaning, I am very mindful of how I guide them because I want them to ultimately match up with a post-high school context that works well for them.

I've also worked in and adjacent to classrooms as an aide and tutor in both paid and volunteer capacities for the last 30+ years.

All of that work has shown me how various school districts with differing resources provide resources to children. I have seen the difference that extracurricular programs and other non-academic factors can make.

I have worked with students who light up seeing their family history reflected in their World History classes, for example. I am intimately familiar with the UC/CSU-AG systems, as well as the need for literacy programs because of my hands-on experiences in a variety of educational contexts.

I am also very aware of the needs of students with various learning differences, whether reflected in a 504, IEP, neurodiversity, and other situations because my students and their parents have walked their educational journeys with me. I have heard about students who want to commit suicide due to the stress they are experiencing from the inequalities of their learning environments.

I am also very aware of opportunities available at community colleges, University of California campuses, California State Universities, private universities such as the Ivy Leagues and out-of-state public universities. Being a college counselor, I have working knowledge of subject matter requirements and qualifications common to the most selective colleges as well as the minimal requirements for eligibility.

My personal strengths match well with highly tense, conflict-oriented situations.

RESPECT AND EQUALITY

I connect with people with different personality types, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, physical and intellectual abilities, hobbies because I extend respect to all. I believe in equality. This doesn't sound exotic but as I grow older, believing in equality is rarer than I would have believed.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

I am extremely comfortable with conflict. I don't run from it. I'm OK if people disagree with me, or with each other.

Working in tech I learned how to deal with people facing various internal political pressures as well as time constraints and huge amounts of money (millions) at stake. In one company, I remember having to establish a peace between various stakeholders in different departments because each had different resources to share yet unfortunately bore insecurities and fears about their positions which expressed itself in personal hostilities. I was happy when I was able to bring people together, using some diplomacy, to get people onto the same page (and thus make it possible to ship some software products).

I have mediated conflicts with parties who were extremely hostile towards each other, when I was working in the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department. I did not flinch at conversations with attorneys getting paid hundreds of dollars per hour to call me and intimidate me to get me to drop my investigations. They were not successful - I just kept doing my work.

OPENNESS

I'm OK with people telling me I'm wrong. If they bring me evidence, I am willing to change my mind.

3. What are some things you think the district does well?

There are many experienced and deeply caring people within the district, in both the administration and staff.

4. What are three areas that you would target for improvement in the District and what new ideas do you have for improvement?

By the way, this is a great question!

ONE: CULTURE OF RESPECT

The dynamic between the administration, board, educators, and other staff, students and the public, needs fixing. This is doable, but requires work on all sides, especially the administration which has made some unfortunate decisions that have harmed students. Respect requires truthfulness.

One recommendation I have is for all board members to undergo mediation training - as in, the training that people receive for conflict resolution. I have received and used this training when I worked as a civil rights investigator, settling cases between hostile parties. It doesn't mean that everyone must use this training to resolve disputes but understanding the basics will make board members able to 1) negotiate better deals for the district and 2) understand the nature of conflict more clearly.

If Nelson Mandela was able to institute the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to lead South Africa to a peaceful transition, surely we in the PVUSD can also reconcile with each other with honesty and move forward.

Respect also means being transparent, which leads me to my next point.

TWO: TRANSPARENCY - ESPECIALLY REGARDING MONEY

In general, we need to maximize transparency of as many district decisions as possible. Using closed sessions to make decisions a fait accompli without public feedback makes families and staff feel disconnected from the decisions which impact their daily lives and actual work in classrooms.

This is especially true when it comes to matters of money - transparency regarding budgets and income flows are a MUST. These need to be legible by the average person so that community members can clearly see what money is flowing where, and why. This is yet another reason we

need to have strategic planning to address the next 5, 10 years and beyond to make sure our money decisions are connected to our strategic goals.

THREE: MAKING DECISIONS ANCHORED IN EVIDENCE AND DATA

Connected to both the first and second areas, transparency and respect, making decisions based on evidence and data is critical. This helps protect the district from decisions based upon personal relationships or hidden agendas such as reconnecting to former employers, connecting vendors to no-bid contracts, or possibly overpaying for similar services as compared to other nearby school districts. Conversely, if there are great personal connections to board members or the administration etc., being able to use data to persuade people will help make decision-making become more transparent.

Historically and in the present-day, many board members are beholden to political insiders who are not prioritizing students but instead are putting their ideologies and agendas first which does not ultimately serve PVUSD families.

In terms of collecting, reviewing and interpreting data, we will benefit from exercising academic rigor in doing so. For example, "data collection" cannot simply mean throwing together some sort of internet survey which 9% of respondents complete (see page 15 of this document).

Having all of us on the board becoming educated as to what are the best practices for a basic level of research will help us be more discerning about the processes by which we make decisions so I believe some professional development for the board will be helpful too.

I firmly believe that one ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Making good decisions will help us move forward strategically and also prevent expensive mistakes which compound our troubles.

5. How will you engage with your constituents and the stakeholders in our school communities such as parents, students, staff, and voters?

As your trustee, I will make a phone number and email available for people to contact me. I am easy to reach. I would also invite the public to hop onto Zoom calls or in-person coffee chats so that I can receive their feedback about how they see the district is doing.

Labor

1. Describe your views on the collective bargaining process and the role of unions in today's society.

The purpose of collective bargaining is for people within a bargaining unit, for example, a union, to set forth the terms and conditions of their employment with an employer.

Union density is essential for civic engagement. Union membership is often the only means of supplying a countervailing viewpoint to ideologies which are hostile to working families.

I have made a point in my role as a host and producer at KSQD to cover labor issues which made an impact nationally, such as interviewing from the organizing committee of the Monterey Bay Aquarium when they were attempting to form a union as well as local healthcare and tech workers facing labor disputes as well as the first president of Trader Joe's United, Jamie Edwards, and Eric Blanc, author of "We Are The Union" and organizer with the Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee. I have linked to a few shows in the resume I pasted at the top of this document.

Labor issues are connected to pressing matters, such as our housing crisis. For example, there are some affordable housing projects using taxpayer monies. However, not all of these types of projects require the use of Project Labor Agreements.

If I were to serve as a trustee, I would advocate for PLAs for affordable housing projects developed with taxpayer dollars, such as subsidized housing for teachers and other educators. Providing such housing is something that other school districts do, to help with recruitment and retention. I would work with other trustees to hear their points of view regarding this to ensure the best chances of success.

2. What do you think are the biggest misconceptions about the PVFT or teachers' unions in general?

At times, the public may envy the security or benefits they perceive those in the PVFT or teachers' unions to have which may lead to misconceptions about union members having it "easy" or not working as hard.

3. How will you seek-out information from PVFT members and representatives to gather more information about situations and board agenda items that you hear about from management?

I love talking to people to receive information. I believe in doing my own research to make up my own mind - and part of that research includes speaking with PVFT members because they are in the perfect positions to provide excellent information because they are in the classrooms.

4. How will you ensure that communication is open between district management and the union?

I will ensure I have good communication between teachers and management in my area. This is something which is surely needed.

One of the powers of a trustee of a school board is to make fact-finding inquiries. I would be willing to make such inquiries of the PVUSD to support transparency and facilitate the flow of information from the district to the public, including the union.

5. How will you oppose efforts to contract out certificated and classified jobs?

I oppose efforts to contract out these positions. I will vote accordingly and will seek preventive measures by collaborating with others.

Budget and Funding

1. What is your understanding of the different funding sources our district receives and how it is allocated?

The bulk of the PVUSD's funding comes from the State of California, with some federal funds, local funds, and one-time grants. Student attendance (Average Daily Attendance) and the unique numbers of students are variables used to calculate funding so enrollment and attendance matter greatly.

2. What are your funding priorities for the district budget? If or when the district is faced with extreme financial hardship, what difficult decisions would you be prepared to make?

I would do my utmost to keep cuts away from classrooms.

One area which I believe there is popular consensus is reducing administrative bloat. Especially in a time in which narratives about money are quite fractured, paying for more district administration roles seems extractive and not productive in terms of enhancing student performances. It also shows a lack of connection to community perceptions regarding enormous wealth disparity. The district monies cannot be perceived as a treasure for cronies to plunder.

I am willing to make difficult decisions, but those decisions must be anchored in evidence. I also believe that a good decision will require keen listening to the actual people who work with students. What I am hearing from people, whether parents, teachers and others, is that the district has not done the hard work of identifying what aspects of the district are the most impactful, as evidenced by cuts to jobs for which the district is having to recruit for on EDJoin, as one example.

This goes back to why it's important to have a strategic plan - and that includes planning for the worst-case scenarios. Workers and families have to do that all the time - plan for the worst - and so can the district.

3. What is your current understanding of our rate of turnover in PVUSD? How can we recruit and retain experienced, competent staff given the high cost of living and the historically low wages educators receive?

PVUSD staff often leave the district's employment in favor of higher pay and benefits in other districts in Silicon Valley. Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties face enormous cost-of-living

challenges; Santa Cruz County is one of the least affordable areas in the USA. I referred elsewhere in this application that I would look for ways to provide housing to staff to alleviate some of the housing burdens.

Note that I am a current dues-paying member of the California Democratic Renters Council and will be seeking their endorsement.

Early Childhood/Adult Education

1. Do you support early childhood educators earning a living wage that reflects the importance of their profession, training, and responsibilities to prepare our youngest students for school?

Yes. Absolutely yes. Many studies show that helping children in the long run works best if we make sure our youngest students receive solid support. The smash success of Oklahoma's universal pre-kindergarten is one such example.

2. How would you promote collaboration between Adult Education and other departments within PVUSD?

First, I would support making the most of what educators and others on-campus already know. So, I would want to know what teachers, counselors and other adults on campus would like such collaboration with Adult Education to look like.

Second, I would recommend providing existing staff paid opportunities to be treated as experts based on their hands-on experiences instead of hiring vendors who will form temporary, transactional relationships or worse yet, relationships borne of cronyism, to the district.

Third, I would want us to look at the best ways to support departments within the district to figure out if we could leverage existing affinities and/or establish new ones.

SELPA

1. PVUSD currently runs its own SELPA department. How will you ensure that student and staff needs are being met within the programs offered?

I will meet with parents, students, and staff to listen to what needs to change and work with others to push for these improvements. If we want to hope for a democratic future, that means we must support equal access to education. For that to happen, we must do our best to include all learners.

2. What is your experience working with this special population and your understanding of the legal rights of these students?

I have some information above regarding my experience working with professionals who are working with students with various learning issues as well as my own personal experience with students. In terms of legal rights of students, I am aware that there are multiple sources of law implicated with students, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, California Education Code, Americans with Disabilities Act, to name a few. As a trustee, I would want to educate myself further.

Failing to serve students who have legally recognized disabilities leaves the district open to liability which is a preventable, and foreseeable cost we should avoid. As I mentioned elsewhere an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

3. How will you ensure we are staffed at levels that support our students and families, for nurses, psychologists, counselors, and teachers to maintain recommended caseloads and class sizes?

Proper staffing is part of student health and safety actually. We need to make sure that we have the right ratios of staff to students. For that, we need input from the people in the jobs listed above. Before the board voted on the first wave of massive job cuts, I heard a behavioral professional speak about one of her students, who would find it devastating when she would receive her pink slip. She was also worried about the wellbeing of other students because she foresaw difficulties he would have in interacting with other students in terms of getting into fights. She expressed deep interest in her students' care despite knowing she would likely herself be out of a job.

It's important for us to take strategic planning seriously - to assess how we can get to where we are now to where we want to be. Some districts attract people by offering higher salaries, better benefits, bonuses for positions which are difficult to recruit for (STEM, ESL and SPED). We also need to look at whether we are giving teachers sufficient preparation time.

For example, not all the high schools have the same number of periods - Aptos High School has seven periods whereas Pajaro Valley and Watsonville High School have five. Let's apply good ideas and practices from one one school to others, district-wide instead of lowering the quality of the experiences students and staff are having.

K-12 Education Issues

1. What specific ideas do you have on improving the teaching and learning environments?

First, we need economic and education plans for the next 5 years, 10 years and 20 years.

The best time to plant a tree is 50 years ago and the second best time to plant a tree is now. To make such plans, I believe that the PVUSD would benefit from a strategic planning and analysis process, including feedback from the entire community but predominantly reliant on educator, student, family and alumni input. Feedback from those who are in the classrooms would be essential for such a process. We have to know where we are going with students in order to make sure we are focusing on the right things today.

Understanding the economic future of the district will help us figure out how to make sure educators have a decent and dignified quality of life because that is **essential** for creating a healthy teaching and learning environment. Some school districts provide housing in various forms, whether for renting or purchasing, available for educators, for example, as a recruitment and retention tool.

As part of the strategic planning, I would collect input regarding all aspects of the classroom experience, whether staffing, curricula, activities, or teaching tools. Where are the gaps in resources? In some countries, for example, the person teaching you Calculus also taught you how to count. How can we make for manageable class sizes so that teachers and students can truly connect? Are there grades and subjects in which we want to allow more or less specialization?

Second, we need to set a culture of sustainable, lasting change.

We need to have a firm grasp on what is working well already before we make drastic changes for new ideas. And any new ideas we want to pursue as a district, we need to have capacity for experimentation. I have been hearing from deeply unhappy teachers and parents who are telling me about massive changes regarding staffing, new job functions, new curricula, etc., taking place without any sort of safety net in case anything goes wrong or if students fall through cracks. We need to listen to teachers and others who work in classrooms to figure out how to make great decisions together.

Third, we need to truly, truly, welcome families to engage. I believe a school district is the most important public treasure a family will receive in the USA. Roads, electricity, water and other infrastructures are important but the future of a family is the most important. We need to consistently welcome families to campuses so that they are a seamless extension of their homes and so that it’s easy to engage the public with substantial relationships instead of ones that are distant or extractive.

2. Some PVUSD schools have the resources to offer more electives, programs, field-trips, etc. than other schools. How would you help ensure that all students in the district receive an equal educational experience?

We need to set a minimal set of core electives available to students at each school.

I have many ideas about this but first I would want to seek input from staff, other board members, teachers and other educators, parents, students, site councils and the entire community about this matter. Making sure solutions are good for the entire PVUSD, and not just Area 1 which is exclusively Aptos, I believe is critical.

Second, I would want to receive input from everyone about the feasibility of sharing resources across campuses. There are already solutions in place such as being able to take electives in various high schools in the PVUSD but we do not have the transportation logistics to support students who may want to actually do that. So making it easier for students to tap into the great resources across the PVUSD not only in theory but providing logistics support will be important to consider.

Third, we need to figure out what are some options for the community to help educators without getting in the way.

3.What is your understanding of charter schools and the different types of charters?

Charter schools use public resources of a school district while being able to operate mostly independently. PVUSD has multiple charter schools.

Because charter schools can use criteria for enrollment which are different from a typical public school, this can be harmful for students who often lack meaningful representation, such as students with special needs and disabilities so I believe we need to be mindful about how we balance the needs of all students.

4. What do you see as the role of board members, district staff, teachers, and parents in assisting English language learners?

Providing equal access to education means assisting ELL students - that includes optimizing resources such as board members, district staff, teachers and parents.

For a trustee, that means advocating for properly allocating resources for students to ensure equal access to education - we need strong support but also nuanced solutions. There are varying levels and aspects to language proficiency - speaking, listening, reading and writing - and students may develop different skills at different times. Some students move to the USA earlier or later in life. We need to offer nuanced solutions so that we are matching the needs of ELL students - who are not a monolith.

5. Do you believe textbooks should support cultural diversity, including for LGBTQ youth and gender non-conforming students?

Yes. I was very concerned a few years ago when a Moms for Liberty-affiliated group visited this area in the hopes of attracting followers by offering BBQ but fortunately they did not seem

successful. I am familiar with the research showing the benefits of curricula such as Ethnic Studies for all students, regardless of ethnicity.

We need to help students learn about the wonderful variety we possess in this country, in California and in the PVUSD.

6. How do you see yourself advocating for the safety and well-being of students, teachers, and staff?

We need to properly support and honor classified staff and office staff who are breaking up fights, keeping children from running out into the street (these are called “elopements” apparently), and other crises.

This means paying people better if we want them to stay.

We cannot have a board majority that co-signs decisions to fire counselors and eliminate programs, essentially pulling the rug out from under students and workers, making for absolute chaos and misery.

This is not what families are envisioning when they think about their children attending school.

I would advocate for properly staffing schools to promote the well being of everyone on the campus.

7. What is your understanding of the role that alternative education programs play in supporting students, and how would you advocate for these programs?

Alternative education programs are extremely important so I would advocate for continuing these. I am open to hearing various recommendations for improvement from teachers and other staff, whether to welcome more students to Renaissance, identify ways to invite students back to K12 opportunities and so on.

Campaign Assessment

Please attach a list of endorsements, including elected officials, community leaders, business or labor organizations, etc.

Jessalyn Levine, Choir Teacher at Aptos High School and Aptos Junior High

Barry Scott, Aptos History Museum, Rio Del Mar Improvement Association, resident of Aptos

Sandino Gomez, Pajaro Valley High School History Teacher

Lani Faulkner, Equity Transit

Adam Scow, former PVUSD trustee of Area 6

Omar Dieguez, anti-pesticide activist, Aptos High School alum and former student body president

Do you seek the support of the PVFT? If yes, what form of support do you desire?

Yes. I would appreciate the support you typically offer candidates, whether door-to-door canvassing, financial donation, in-kind donations, etc.