



2024 Candidate Questionnaire: Board of Education

Please submit the completed questionnaire as a pdf
to contact_us@phdemclub.org no later than Monday, August 26.

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1. If elected, name the first **key area** you would prioritize for change.

1. What **specific** actions would you take to drive change in this area? Please see below the specific areas that I would address:

- **Bring solutions that address the near-term fiscal crisis and longer-term growth.**
 - Closing schools is not the answer; it will only make things worse and drive more families away from public schools. It will also make the existing schools more crowded and class sizes even larger; the schools that are targeted for closure are the smaller schools and specialty schools that are much needed in our communities. Closing schools also does not solve the budget deficit.
 - We need to address the fiscal crisis in the next few months and will need to make hard decisions in the near-term so that SFUSD survives; costs will need to be addressed, both direct and indirect costs. The administration's costs have grown exponentially while enrolment has declined drastically over the past several years. We need to reduce the administration's costs and manage the district's assets more effectively.
 - In parallel, we will need to invest in the longer-term growth of enrollment, investing in schools, upgrading of our curriculum, raising performance of educators, and working with our communities to implement change.
 - This is solvable and I know how to do this; I do this everyday as CEO. Balancing the budget, managing multi-billion-dollar budgets and organizations of thousands is not foreign to me. I have the necessary skills and experience; I have turned around organizations many times. We need people like me who can do this and do it on Day 1. Experience matters at this time to solve the near-term fiscal crisis.
- **Increase enrollment and bring families back to SF public schools.**

- o Assess the 125+ schools in our district and really understand their needs. In business we always start with the customer in mind and work backwards to develop the right solutions. The SFUSD “customers” are the families, students, teachers, and schools.
 - o Develop the improvement areas for each school with the “customers” and then overlay it with the SFUSD administration needs. This needs to be both a bottoms up and top-down assessment so that the best solutions can be developed. We need to do the hard work of understanding our “customers;” everyone is interested in keeping and making SF public schools the best and keeping our schools open.
 - o When we invest in our schools, they will be more competitive in the marketplace and families will come back to public schools; we can look at best practices within the U.S. as well as at models in Europe and Asia.
- **Invest in our schools and move resources from the administration to where it is needed – the schools.**
 - o There is plenty of money in the budget (over \$1.2 billion) and yet the money does not trickle down to the schools.
 - o While enrollment has declined sharply, administration costs and budgets have increased.
 - o Look for revenue sources and funding at the federal, state, and local levels; exhaust all options on revenue sources inclusive of grants and bonds.
 - o Streamline the administration and implement position control as well as indirect spend management.
 - o The savings from the above can then be used to invest in our schools.
- **Develop robust curriculum that focuses on the bringing back the basics of education and offering accelerated courses; we need to arm our children to be competitive in the global economy.**
 - o Start early with core subjects like math, science, history, and foreign languages in elementary and middle schools; offer accelerated courses and gifted programs; keep the language immersion program.
 - o Raise the bar on performance for all schools and ensure that we challenge our students and not hold them back; they can and should accelerate.
 - o Ensure that specialty schools that support our communities and our families are resourced.
- **Bring back educators that are good and want to teach; pay them fairly and expect excellence.**
 - o Work with the administration and the union to retain and attract good teachers back to the school system; ensure that we expect high performance and strong competencies from our educators.
 - o Give educators a career path and leverage them as assets; they have ideas that we should listen to and incorporate.
- **Really engage with parents and community in school improvements; they know the solutions and can help with implementation.**
 - o Visit and meet with schools, parents, teachers and especially principals to truly understand their needs and ideas for improvement.
 - o Involve them in the assessment of schools, idea generation and implementation; they are our most valued assets, and they can help.

2. Please share **relevant experience** demonstrating your ability to achieve this change.

Experience matters on the School Board, and I bring 35 years of experience in solving problems collaboratively and getting things done. This is what I do every day as CEO of a SF healthcare company with 500+ employees. Managing \$1B budgets is not foreign to me. In fact, I have worked for Fortune 100 companies in six continents (speak English, French, Chinese), headed up regions and businesses, and collaborated with all types of groups to achieve financial and operational results. Having been CEO multiple times gives me the unique ability to turnaround businesses, which is what is needed given the fiscal crisis at SFUSD. I know how to grow revenues along with reducing costs. I believe strongly in education as a mother and product of public schools myself. I hold two bachelor's degrees from Penn, two master's from MIT and Johns Hopkins and a doctorate from Johns Hopkins. The Board needs the experience I bring to grow our schools, not close them, and bring families back to public schools as well as to push for a stronger curriculum by bringing back core subjects: math, science, languages, and the arts. Join me to make good education a right for our children.

2. (optional) What **other areas or issues** (up to 2) would you prioritize for change?
 1. Again, what **specific actions** would you take? See #1.
 2. What **relevant experience** can you share demonstrating your ability to be effective? See #1.
3. What past or current Board of Education initiatives **align with your vision** and goals for SFUSD?

SFUSD is currently implementing some of the cost saving measures and I support those actions. In addition, SFUSD is relooking at revising the lottery system and looking at ways to improve the admissions process; both of which are good initiatives to pursue.

4. Considering the significant financial pressures facing SFUSD, please describe your background and experience with complex budgets and managing **budgetary trade-offs**, highlighting your vision for where to trim and what to protect. Please be specific.

I have managed multi-billion-dollar budgets in my experience and staff of tens of thousands. From a budgeting perspective, we should start with zero-based budgeting and ensure that every line item is justified. We should have both a robust business plan for the fiscal year as well as a multi-year strategic and financial plan. Based on the business and strategic plan we can prioritize spending and investments. Balancing and managing budgets is what I do every day as CEO of our company. I also have

extensive financial analysis and planning expertise as well as operational and strategic experience.

5. What relevant background and experience do you have in supporting families, students, teachers, and staff through the **school closure/merger** process?

I have extensive change management experience in communications and transition planning and implementation. I also have post-merger integration experience and have closed facilities, plants and offices and consolidated facility footprints in my past 30+ years of experience.

6. Beyond paying educators adequately, competitively, accurately, and on time, what should SFUSD do to **recruit and retain highly qualified educators**?

- Bring back educators that are good and want to teach; pay them fairly and expect excellence.
- Work with the administration and the union to retain and attract good teachers back to the school system; ensure that we expect high performance and strong competencies from our educators.
- Give educators a career path and leverage them as assets; they have ideas that we should listen to and incorporate.

7. What steps should SFUSD take to **attract - and retain - families** who have the option to choose private education? Please go beyond the issue of 8th-grade algebra in your response.

- Develop robust curriculum that focuses on the bringing back the basics of education and offering accelerated courses; we need to arm our children to be competitive in the global economy.
- Start early with core subjects like math, science, history, and foreign languages in elementary and middle schools; offer accelerated courses and gifted programs; keep the language immersion program.
- Raise the bar on performance for all schools and ensure that we challenge our students and not hold them back; they can and should accelerate.
- Ensure that specialty schools that support our communities and our families are resourced.

8. What challenges and opportunities does **SFUSD Early Education** face in rolling out the Transitional Kindergarten (TK) expansion Universal Pre-Kindergarten?

The key challenge is to have enough enrollment for these programs. Early education is good and needed but we will need to ensure that we can increase enrollment and make this program other options that parents have in the community.

9. What priorities, initiatives, or funding would you support for **Special Education** and/or unmet needs in the classroom?

Special education is an important component of our public school system. We should ensure funding for it. Many parents depend on special education for their children and the community needs these programs/schools.

10. Please share your **personal experience with SFUSD**.

I have attended all the SFUSD board meetings and have engaged with some of the board members. In addition, I have visited many of our 120+ schools and met with the principals, teachers, and sat in on classes. I have also spoken to many parents as well. Furthermore, I have spent time with the SFUSD staff to better understand the financials as well as the operational challenges, so I have a very good grasp of the issues and the solutions that make sense for us.

11. **What else** would you like Potrero Hill Democratic Club to know about you? Please include any aspects of your background and experience that have not already been touched upon, or endorsements you are proud to share.

I am a product of public schools, and I am very proud of it. My family came to the U.S. from Africa in 1972. We were immigrants and my parents did not have the resources to send us to private schools but luckily, we were able to attend public schools in our community. I started in 2nd Grade. Back then, I did not speak a single word of English, but my second-grade teacher, spoke a little bit of French, my native language at the time, and she made me feel at home right away. In fact, I remember many of my teachers from elementary, middle, and high school and how much they meant to me. I remember my sixth-grade teacher, who said that 'if Min was left in the classroom by herself, she would still be studying and doing her work even when no one is watching.' I also remember my ninth-grade English teacher who introduced me to poetry and encouraged me not just to read other people's poems but to also write my own and my 11th grade history teacher who instilled in me a lifelong love for learning about every part of the world and why it is important. I also remember my tennis coach who made me the tennis team captain even though I was the worst tennis player on the team, just because she wanted to encourage me to learn how to lead. These teachers mentored me and gave me the confidence to apply to an ivy league school even though our high school was a very small, and my classmates generally went on to work in their family farms. These teachers and my experiences in public schools are what made me who I am today, and I am so grateful. I am running to be part of the San Francisco Board of Education because I want to do for public schools, what public schools did for me. I feel incredibly lucky and fortunate that I had a great experience in public schools early

in my life. It allowed me the opportunity to apply and be accepted into some of the best universities in the country and to subsequently earn two bachelors, two masters and a doctorate degree. I have also worked for many Fortune 100 companies and led several organizations as CEO. None of this would have been possible without the encouragement and support of public-school teachers. It is this critical foundation in those early years that allowed me to excel in my career and life. I feel so lucky that I had these positive experiences, but I do not want our children here in San Francisco to depend on luck. A good education is a right. Our children should have what I had, supportive schools and teachers, which can expose them to all the possibilities and give them the confidence to grow into their best selves. I know what a good public-school experience should be, and we can bring that to our school system here in San Francisco.

This is why I am running for the school board. I am not a politician. I am a regular parent, citizen, and taxpayer in San Francisco. I have over 35 years of experience in solving problems collaboratively and I know how to get things done. This is what I do every day at work. I am not running to build a political career; I am a CEO and lead a successful healthcare company here in San Francisco. I am doing this because I believe that we can be effective together and that the SFUSD Board needs someone like me. Because I am not from the educational system, I can bring an outside voice, best practices from the business world like fiscal responsibility and operational excellence as well as different perspectives to challenge the norm and find unique solutions to our problems. Moreover, I will bring a fundamentally different approach. In business, we start with the customers in mind, and it is no different here for SFUSD. We should listen and understand the needs of all our schools and work backwards to develop the school system that meets those needs, not the other way around. Knowing the needs and the gaps will help us develop the kind of school system that incorporates the communities' needs. The SFUSD Board of Education needs diverse voices and diverse thoughts to grow our schools, not close them, and bring students and families back to San Francisco's public schools. The SFUSD Board needs to push for a stronger curriculum that arms our children so they can compete in the global economy, by bringing back core subjects of math, science, languages, the arts as early as possible in elementary and middle schools. A good education should not be a privilege, it should be a right. I hope you will join me to make 'good education a right' for all our children.

Thank you for answering our questions and thank you for running for office! Please submit the completed questionnaire as a pdf to contact_us@phdemclub.org no later than Monday, August 26.