



High Quality Education for All

As Democrats, we believe that free, universal, high-quality public education is a human right, as well as a necessary condition for democracy. We know that we are far from this crucial goal. Our public schools are drastically underfunded, our teachers are undervalued, and the dream of an integrated education system continues to lie just beyond reach.

The national policy of “No Child Left Behind” has deformed curricula, while state and local budget crises have drastically undermined the quality of education at all levels. Teachers are the cornerstone of our education system. We reject the characterization of teachers in general and teacher’s unions specifically as a “special interest”, and are proud to stand alongside the Santa Barbara Teacher’s Association in working to improve and expand education for all.

Our vision of education starts with **free universal pre-school for all Santa Barbara County children**. It continues with elementary education that focuses on well-rounded curricula, including art, music and experiential learning in every County school district. High school education should include opportunities for both academic and vocational training and should emphasize a commitment to community service. All of this means **keeping student-to-teacher ratios low and ensuring educational opportunities** that decrease the achievement gap for English language learners and other students with special needs.

While we are supportive of innovative experiments in educational strategies and support local control, we believe that schools should be integrated economically and ethnically and provide a quality education for all. The issue of inter-district and intra-district transfers should be approached carefully, as we are in danger of continuing the educational segregation we have worked hard as a society to overcome. The goal of integrated education is also threatened by rigid English-only policies, and we call for the return of bilingual education.

Schools themselves must be built around progressive values. Green design guidelines should be followed in all school construction, and we should ensure that schools are safe environments, free of

physical and health threats. Socially, schools should be accessible and safe environments for all students, including gay, lesbian and gender-non-conforming youth. School food should be healthy and nutritious, and, where possible, locally-grown. Corporate advertisement of all kinds must be eliminated from our schools.

Education does not end with K-12. Community Colleges play a crucial role in preparing young people for University, providing vocational training as well as serving as a major source of life-long learning and cultural development. Santa Barbara County is blessed with two fantastic Community Colleges, and we support their continued success and expansion. To accomplish these goals, we call on Santa Barbara County school districts to:

- Provide educational opportunities of the highest caliber at minimal personal expense that enables members of the Santa Barbara County community to participate in the global economy.
- Ensure that students with exceptional needs be educated in the most appropriate placement with full funding provided.
- Offer high school graduation requirements that are well-balanced and broad-based, including programs that include both academic and vocational programs that complement each other;
- Provide schools that are safe environments that are free of physical and health risks, and free from toxins and carcinogens.
- Establish and extend age-appropriate, non-discriminatory sex education.
- Promote community participation as in mentoring and adult literacy programs.
- Ensure that decision making policies are open to the public.
- Work to develop policies that more equitably distribute community funds raised by schools to supplement public support.
- Subsidize the cost of AP testing at high schools for students in need.
- Expand transitional programs for community entry when special education students reach adulthood.