

Parental involvement

Self-interest I guess, and then it was the PTA and volunteer work and school board mtgs.

Community is a huge part of it, especially at Alvarado. It's astounding to me that we have such a community, considering how difficult the District has made it to have a community school. We feel like we're in it together and it's neighborhood-based.

Daughter will enter kindergarten next year.

I came to the work because I'm a public school parent. Actually I was looking for a school from my kids. I had heard from older parents about their school search, so I went out looking not really knowing what to look for or how to assess these schools. And in every single one of them, I had a wonderful experience. I was so inspired by the principals, the parents looking at schools, the kids in the school. I really caught the bug. What happens when people enter this scene where there's a common network of people supporting public school? It was hard to even limit my school choices and would have taken any of them and was open to all of the schools I looked at.

I do this work because I feel called to do it. My primary motivation began with my children, and became other people's children.

I got into it because of caring for my children: wanting the best for them.

I have two sons with learning disabilities. I studied to be a school psychologist as a single mom and I have stayed interested in public schools ever since.

I live here, I work here, my kids are in public school now (they were in private school), and I'm a product of public schools.

In the meantime, my boys went to Claire Lilienthal and I was President of the PTA at the time when the school decided to expand through 8th grade, which was another interesting public engagement experiment. It drove my passion for the public schools.

It comes from my kids going to public schools. It wasn't the best, best education but it was good.

It started because my child went to kindergarten. By 1st grade I was on the SSC, by 2nd grade I was chair, and by the time she was in 2nd or 3rd grade I was the District Chair. And I was really pretty anti-PTA. I don't cook much, I'm not interested in baking cookies, but I'm really interested in what they're being taught.

originally drawn to be involved because of my kids. My oldest started school 7 years ago

Selfishly, as a parent, I need to be involved to insure the success of my own children. My parental involvement is the only way for them to make it through the system.

Personal involvement was the real basis. Philosophically we have been committed to the concept of public schools, I went through public schools, my kids when through public schools.

I have children. I live in the City. My kids go to public school. We use the parks. We use the library.

Equity/Fairness/Level playing field/Access/Disparity btwn public and private

I used to give the answer: I got into it because I was angry about injustices I had witnessed. I graduated in 1992 right around the time of the Rodney King riots. I found it very disturbing and wanted to do work that would lead in a different direction...the only way to move toward justice in education is true accountability to students and parents.

"...even the playing field. I wanted to offer similar opportunities [that private school children had in a school where she used to teach]. I wanted to take the things the schools don't have enough money for—the showcases, talent shows, field trips that don't seem relevant but just get you out of your community.

I have a passion to make it better so more and more kids have a chance to find their opportunity and take care of us in our old age. I have a lot of anger about adult issue that stop kids from having opportunities. So, I channel my anger to make it better.

I care about not only her [my daughter's] education but the education of her peers... access to education.

Appalling that the level of education is so varied.

advocated as a parent organizer for education equity issues at Coleman.

I grew up in a tough neighborhood in LA. I grew up seeing some horrible things—ever since I was a little kid. Growing up in the hood, you see some kids getting into some really bad stuff. To watch a system that wasn't very responsive to the needs of most of my friends, especially kids who were just as smart and could be just as successful. It was more about weeding people out then getting them to move on. It's become my personal cause. Education is the only avenue that can help people improve their lives. It's a real social justice, civil rights issue for me.

I sometimes think of life as a race and I want to get everyone to the starting line, so they have a fair chance, at the same time and ability. I see education as the way to do that, whether you choose to run, walk, or even to do the race.

I come to this work from a lens of gender equality. So, my passion is that. And I see education as a way for young girls and women to move the needle to gender quality, particularly wage equity. That's why I come into education work in general.

I am very interested in equity in education.

I particularly love working with underserved children.

I could do all the things that are important in the world, through my work (teaching). My purpose was to make the world a better place, and helping other people see that in themselves. On an active level: prevention and salvation work for kids who are already on a not so good path and future building all at the same time. I hit first grade and I realized that teaching reading was so important. It became my drive especially around the fact that in the U.S. there were laws in place to keep blacks from being able to read.

I believe that every child should have opportunity for quality education.

All the problems we have in our society can be fixed by quality, equitable access to schools. That's coming from my previous work with transitional housing for the homeless. I'm a solutions oriented person and realizing all the divisions in society would be solved if public schools could be available to everyone.

When I started talking to Crystal Brown about Educate our State we talked about, "Yes, you can afford to send your kids to private school but do you want your kids to live in gated communities?" You have to care about all of the kids.

I'm working on behalf of a larger fraternity 60,000 masons, following a tradition that valued equal access to education from its inception. Education is a critical aspect of freedom. The Masons were integral in the first schools in this country that were open to everyone. That has to do with a belief in a constitutional democracy and... [missed this]. The first college in this country that accepted Blacks was Mason. How can you have equal access to participation in government if you don't have equal access to education? California's first Superintendent of Schools was a Mason. We have a long history of supporting public schools.

I think because as the daughter of an immigrant who believed deeply that education was the only way to make strides forward in my economic life. My father really believed in education being the key to privilege.

I'm also motivated by social justice because I believe strongly in public education. We all deserve the same shot. We all deserve quality. I see the disparity and I don't think it's right.

I've been in public education my entire career until coming to the SFF because I wanted to give disadvantaged kids every possible opportunity to soar as high as they could soar. I didn't aspire to have a mid-life career in philanthropy, but I'm using the education platform of the foundation to launch community schools in 9 zip codes across the bay area.

Being an idealist, I had already known I wanted to do something that would help change things for kids who had been traditionally underserved. It's the reason I went in and the reason I stayed in.

sister was involved in civil rights movement; mother went from being a LVN to being a neighborhood organizer developing ????. I continue to follow in my mother's footsteps. What keeps me motivated is 20 nieces and nephews and 32 great nieces and nephews... what's going to be here for them?

I believe everybody should have access to a high-quality education and have the opportunities to learn a whole range of skills. It's not only about the skills, the dispositions that people learn about being in community with each other, to foster multiple intelligences, it's the place where we want to have students exposed to arts, different kinds of social justice opportunities, engage in community service learning, as well as core academics.

It wasn't enough to want the best for my children. We need to want the best for all. Everyone is enriched by making schools better for all.

Kids, future, well-educated population, the sense about what education does at all levels. ...It is about our future and what education means across all lines, jobs, socioeconomic... Until that switch goes on for people who have means, believe in what public schools can and should be doing. I think you have to hang on to the hope of it.

I want to have a good impact on my community and the world. I definitely think things need to change in a lot of ways. I feel like this is the best place for me to make the most positive change I can. I've felt that way for 12 years, so once that changes I'll reconsider it,

I think a lot of what we're hearing in the political world right now with the huge income disparity can be solved by having a level playing field; where public education provides equal opportunity for all. The more you can get the public and private schools to look the same, the better.

I worry about our future if public schools [didn't get this verbatim, but I remember her saying something like, "are only for poor kids."]

Reducing poverty is the cornerstone of education.

We'll never compete with the 1% and how they educate their children: they have smart boards in the classrooms. In our classrooms here, we have kids told to sit down and shut up. In these other places, kids are told "they're just finding themselves..." when they get into trouble. The kids aren't told to just sit down and shut up.

Especially we're doing a bad job with low-income and minority kids, which by 2025 will be the majority of the work force. It's not that parents don't want what's best for their kids, but it's changing culture and changing attitudes. As a country, we've dropped to the bottom 20-25%. We've lost our middle class; we're becoming a country of rich and poor. All of that traces right back to education level.

Grew up in segregated community... haves and have not's... important for people to realize the impact of that

The more you can get the public and private schools to look the same, the better.

I wasn't going to let somebody else's kid down. And really that's the reason I volunteer to do the things I do – girl scout leader, etc. The former principal of McKinley said - All of our children are all of OUR children. That really resonates with me.

What ruins it for me is when it's not working for the kids. I said I would never work for adults. I would work for children. Sometimes adults will do things that are convenient for themselves and I won't do that... I see this more as running an educational movement to get Americans to value children—and I don't think they necessarily do. If everyone treated every kid like their own kid...we give it a lot of lip service, but we don't do that.

chose Francisco M.S. because it was out of her neighborhood and she would be one of a few African-American students and was placed in GATE. Experience that honors students got was not the same of her friends in the general ed track. Coming from the Catholic experience where everyone was in the same classes, experiencing the same things [what she was experiencing in public school] was shocking. doesn't have anything to do with a child's ability to learn.

I'm trained as a child psychologist and implementing the direct service work was impacting one child at a time. I realized that I needed to have a greater impact if I was going to work for social justice and social change....For the past several years at DCYF, we've realigned our mission to focus on educational attainment for kids.

Public Education & Democracy

[Public education] is a foundational element of this country. If we destroy it, we'll destroy everything we believe in! If people can get off their high horse...

I really think, and this sound clichéd, the future of the country is the public school system.

Public access to public education... cornerstone... not treated as such.

My background is not education at all but I see the opportunity as education is the one thing that touches everybody, to influence the one thing that touches everyone.

I have a tears in the eyes passion for public education. This is where America comes from. I think every kid should have a great public school. We as a country need to make a social contract to make that happen. Every school should be a great school. Public schools are where we make Americans.

I firmly believe the future of this state is predicated on the quality of our public education system. I'm in the civil rights business, not the education business. It's the civil rights issue of our time. The promise of this country is bullshit if we don't have equal access to education for all kids.

I'm working on behalf of a larger fraternity 60,000 masons, following a tradition that valued equal access to education from its inception. Education is a critical aspect of freedom. The Masons were integral in the first schools in this country that were open to everyone. That has to do with a belief in a constitutional democracy and... [missed this]. The first college in this country that accepted Blacks was Mason. How can you have equal access to participation in government if you don't have equal access to education? California's first Superintendent of Schools was a Mason. We have a long history of supporting public schools.

that government has a role in insuring that education is a human or social right for all. We cannot say that our public education system only works for those who have the means to make it work. I relate education to a civil right; so a person who has a particular ethnic background, lives in a certain zip code, or is from a certain demographic has the right to succeed in school.

Every kid deserves the basics and every kid who has been historically underserved; Closing the achievement gap is the goal of the District. It's the civil rights issue of our time. We do know that and we promote that but with the limited resources we have, how are we going to get there?

I work in education because I believe it is foundational to have the kind of world I want to live in, so the cliché works to say - it's foundational to democracy.

you can't build a successful society if you're not educating everybody to a common standard. Public education is the only way to do it and that's why we do it.

Public education is the most important education institution because the public schools educate the broadest sector of our community; it's therefore the most important and must be supported. It has the potential to continue to produce incredible people for our community.

Increase advocacy and empowerment of parents/youth

I became PTA president at Sherman, I began to see the bigger picture of education and advocacy and connecting with others in the wider school district, and discovering passions in advocacy that I didn't realize I had...It was gratifying to see people realize the difference they could make. To see parents feel empowered to lift their voices for their own and other kids. I just had a conversation about the complacency of our generation. That is something that really bothers me, and so I felt like it was important especially having a passion for it, to make a difference; to say to parents, "You have to get involved in your kid's education," or statewide saying, "We need more money for education," or speaking up for things you see that you want better and making people see that their vote counts, you have to be involved, you have to pay attention. Teaching people; that is really important to me.

I am interested in how educators, parents, and young people can come together to own the education system. We operate under the misguided notion in education that we're accountable to the State. In fact, we're responsible to students and parents.

I felt I could devote 4 years of my life to being on the Board and bring a parent perspective to the table

Give Back to the System/Product of public schools

It's who I am. I started schools as an English language learner, didn't speak any English, my parents both were blue collar, not well-educated, yet for me, the opportunity to serve the same system that provided me with an avenue to be a successful contributing citizen is my passion.

When I was 9 and my parents had another kid, with intense medical issues. She was in and out of the ICU and my family went into a lot of debt, as many do. You're one sickness away from a lot of debt. The resources my sister and my family needed were not available. One of my parents is an occupational therapist and the other is a nurse and it was hard, even for them, to get the resources my sister needed. My parents found a public school, Tule Elk Park where she had access to all the services she needed. Her getting old enough to get into that school saved my family. That's part of what it means to have a public education system that's available to all. The fact that she was able to get everything she needed at her public school, meant we could get out of debt.

4 generations of my family have been in education.

I am a product of public schools, my child is a product of public schools, my husband is a product of public schools, he's also a certified public school teacher, but hasn't practiced. So, there's familial passion as well. My work - my work for pay and our work for not pay, volunteer work is all around education.

I wanted to teach since I was little. I grew up in SF. My grandparents and parents grew up here. I feel a strong sense of ownership over this city. Growing up, I felt a really strong sense of being here. It is important to give students of color who often feel displaced, the sense that this is our city, that we belong here. So I really wanted to teach in SF.

Because it's the most selfless thing that I can do. It's the one pure way to give back to life. If you don't live to serve a bigger purpose, then what would your purpose be?

I'm a fifth generation Californian.... In my family, it's what you do. My mother would shoot me if I didn't do this work.

I believe in public schools, I am a product of public schools.

My oldest didn't go to public school, but the youngest got in through the lottery (Alvarado). Now she's in 5th grade and we're having a really hard time. We have 40% that are free and reduced lunch. We have a food bank even though we don't qualify for the 50% that you need. And I'm always surprised at how the food always disappears off the shelves. I love helping at Friends School because it's fun and the people are great, but you feel like you really make a difference when you're helping at Alvarado.

After catholic charities, I started my own fund development firm. My primary motivation is, public education has to remain a very viable option and, in fact, one of the most attractive options.

The first is personal: I'm a product of public schools. I went to John Swett, Winfield Scott (which is now Claire Lilienthal), Ben Franklin (which is now Gateway). I was born and raised in San Francisco. Went to what is still Lowell. Being a product of, knowing the importance and value of our public schools.

It goes back to my Dad; to the transformational power of education. There are not that many countries in the world, where you can go from being the son of immigrant sharecroppers to being a college professor. I want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to do that. At this time, we are not doing that.

I feel honored to be part of a group of such talented, smart people, and to be part of the team that's bringing in [additional SFUSD] resources. It's a real privilege.

Improve the System/Institutional Change

I think about my job in terms of being a force of resistance within a system that's inhumane. It's a long-term, short-term strategy. There's a lot of long-term change that needs to happen, but then there are the young people here in this room [classroom]. I need to work to create a supportive classroom, but I also need to work long-term for systems change.

Then, I came to the organization because it offered the opportunity to have a job in this area. I had non-profit experience and it offered flexibility. Since then, I still think I've maintained that level of excitement, but we're doing great work to improve the system. The system isn't perfect. There's a belief in the power of citizens to improve the system. The wrong thing to do would be to abandon it, so the only choice is to do something to make it better.

I was always interested in getting things moving; does it work? How can it work better? To see if we couldn't get the schools better by doing shared decision-making.

If we can't build a world-class public school system in SF, then I don't know where we could build it. If it's not possible here, it's not possible anywhere. This community is so idealistic, supportive of kids and willing to pay for kids. It feels like we're teetering on, "Will we make it work, or not." I wanted to be part of making it work in this city... build something other people envy.

There was no support for the families and no real connection between the school and the community, and things have only gotten worse. I've been in 90% of the schools in San Francisco. I worked for 5 years for the teachers' union and 20 years for the classified union, SEIU, so I know a lot about the schools and the conditions in which they're trying to teach and prepare food and maintain the grounds. It's a nightmare. By example, we used to represent 800 janitors and now we represent 400. The square footage of the schools hasn't changed. They still have to clean the space, but there are only 400 of them now.

We had a lot of deep conversations about whether to send our oldest to private. It's become the lowest common denominator. People like us are pulling their kids out. What about crime? What about gang issues when kids are coming out of school disengaged? I wish we didn't have this public/private split because the schools need all of our kids.

Bayview has been an issue for schools forever. SFUSD has had 10 years in a row in improving test scores. We are at the top in terms of urban school districts in California (we got edged out by San Diego for the top spot), and we have one of the largest achievement gaps in the Country. We're better than that. We have to be.

I look at union work as problem solving work. ...some lady came up to the table. She wasn't talking to me, but she talked for 20 minutes about how difficult it was to do the work she did as a 4th grade teacher. That shouldn't be. That's what I see my role as: solve the problems and make it possible for teachers to do the work they want to do.

You would take a piece of work at one school, and take it to a different school, and it could be greatly different. So a student might get As and Bs at one school and wouldn't be prepared when they get to college. Another problem is the disparity in our schools around teacher quality and teacher expectations of our children. There are schools that just pass kids and just say, "Keep going because I don't have the resources to support you." So what if they graduated with a 3.0 and are unprepared. That is the social justice piece for me.

When I saw things, where the discrepancies are—every child deserves to reach his or her full potential. It's not an achievement gap we're suffering from, it's an opportunity gap. Having a daughter go through Bayview Hunters Point, with kids who know about San Quentin. At 13 every African American male is criminalized (booked into juvenile hall) in this city. The onus is on me to help facilitate the development of those kids who would be my daughters' future mates. All the young men who ended up at juvenile hall visited Log Cabin [Log Cabin Ranch School, a San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department detention facility at 500 Log Cabin Ranch Road in La Honda] as a child. They all go through. The school system is not doing a fair job for the kids. It's not money. Until they put children first, we're on a vicious cycle. To create alternative methods...

Quality of life in SF; keep families here

When my kids were in school, our friends were leaving the city in droves, public schools was a contributing factor.

To positively effect change in our city, communities, state, and country...it's a good feeling to know you can make a little bit of a difference in a place and see it. Most of the time you can't touch it.

Ensure next generation can compete/get jobs

High school is just the beginning of life and we are a microcosm of the City and what's ahead for them. They make some bad decisions here and they don't go to prom and don't get to walk across the stage. I'm hoping that because of that [being held to rules and being held accountable for their actions] that they make different decisions later in life.

We're giving tax breaks to Twitter to keep them in the city, but are we preparing our young folks in the City to work at Twitter? The 4-year college eligibility rate is less than 50%. What jobs are we preparing young people for?

We'll be 1 million bachelors degrees short of what we need in 2025... I got started on this... 37 years with AT&T and we couldn't get a good work force. There's one place where social justice and economics intersect. We need it for the good of our economy and we need it for the good of...

Schools should produce viable sustainable adults in the future.

Raise awareness about schools

My current role is an opportunity to help open classroom doors, school doors so the public can understand more about what's going on in schools. People don't necessarily understand schools of today, youth of today, especially where 70% of people don't have school-aged kids, and 30% send to private schools. We have a very low school-age population, and of those only 70% go to public school.

have a deep commitment to our city and the public schools. It just seems like there are many of us out there who haven't found a vehicle to support public schools. I really worry about public disengagement from the public schools and public misperception of what is happening in the public schools. There aren't just islands of excellence, there are many, many good things happening in the public schools. ... And you know the caring for young people that's more the norm and not the exception. There's a lot to celebrate in our school and lots to be done, but... No rock throwing more championing.

Recognizing the need for greater clarity, understanding and appreciation of public education. One of the things that has disturbed me has been seeing kids in a pass fail context as if there really is an alternative. It's not as if public education can go away and yet the discourse has been in that vein and space. One of the reason I do what I do is this is not the right discourse.

Giving people a sense of hope that changing the paradigm about what and why public schools are important. I still think that's something that's not very well understood here.

There's now even a segment on the morning talk shows, and it's non-college educated, angry white people. Who we elect depends on education... When you have Presidential candidates wanting to eliminate the Department of Education, there is not real support of education in this country. We have to make education the same enthusiasm that they have for their sports team on the weekend. We worked with a District in Maine and he knew they'd arrived when their test scores were in bigger type than their football scores.

For the sake of the children

I love kids, and there's a need, and I'm able. My husband retired a year and half ago. We're in debt, but we get by. I felt privileged that I could do this work. I love working with kids. And now here I am.

I truly believe that I can make a difference in students' lives. That the schools in themselves play a bigger role in young people's lives these days. For young people, high school age, they are their parents. Me on the front steps every morning, it's a face, and there is something stable for those kids. I want the school to be a place of structure, stability, rigor, and safety; and something they can be proud of.

I love learning, children and public education. I spent 45-46 years of my life doing this work.

...saw what one-on-one tutoring could do when I was a student and a teacher. ... Having an adult there to help a student gives students so much confidence. When students see their work published...it's like magic. When students see actual books that their work can be published in, they're excited and motivated.

Drawn into school volunteering, loved idea of engaging community to be a part of local schools... didn't have to be a teacher or parent to care about the young people in the community.

What drives me? I absolutely love teenagers.

I love it, at 6 years old, kids no matter what their tragedy, they still want to learn. They have such a drive and such potential.

The type of work I do is education, because in my community there is a lack of education in law enforcement and why most youth end up in the system. They don't know their rights, they don't know how to deal with they system, what they can or cannot say or do when it comes to law enforcement. So I go out and do education in schools, elementary to college level. I used to use SFUSD. I became a police officer because I wondered why kids complained cops were always picking on them. My dad always said the best way to make a change is to become a part of an organization. I do a lot of volunteer work with education and working with youth in various communities. In the Baview, I work with just about every school.

Other

I enjoy local government issues and this gives us [the Chamber] access to federal-level issues.

I grew up with a strong Jewish faith. Jewish values are mostly around education and learning. From a young age, education is where it's at. I talked to a lot of people about why Jews focus on education. Some say that it's because you never know what's going to happen. If you have to leave, you can take your education with you. That's what we've got.

The U.S. is Super power of the world, but we don't have a good education system. That's nuts.

I don't like to sound corny about these things, but I do think that if you're going to work your life, I want to do something that is deeply important and that will matter and that matters moment to moment, every day.

Public policy, coming from a person who started their career as a therapist—an implementer—has a different way of implementing than someone who comes from a policy side.

I have a lot of background in public engagement. I was at the Fine Arts Museum for 20 years and wanted to do something different. We conducted several public campaigns for funds to rebuild/relocate the museum. After that I took a job with Catholic Charities as Director of Development. They have 36 different programs in 3 counties.

Student Feedback about School

I get really excited about the classes, certain classes are really exciting. I have a new student teacher who is really exciting, really interactive. I like the teachers who are really interactive and puts more fun into the lessons.

other classes you look forward to it, sometimes its not just the teacher, its the activities and the curriculum that is fun and entertaining. A lot of the things that make me want to go to school are entertainment.

I look forward to my friends. It's hard to meet new people if you don't go to school. Even though this community, it's not a bad community, it's hard to just introduce yourself. There are so many diverse people at school, you can make friends by walking up to someone to say hi.

I'm excited about the clubs that I do, they're interesting and they're fun...and its something that can take us away from the academic part. I really love doing sports, it pushes me through the day knowing that after school I get to do sports.