

School Board | League of Pissed Off Voters

November 2020 Questionnaire

Hello candidates! Thank you for filling out the League's questionnaire. Please use THIS FORM rather than formatting it into a Word document or PDF. If you have any questions, you can contact us at TheLeagueSF@gmail.com.

Candidate Info

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Where is one place in San Francisco you'll want to go celebrate when the pandemic is over?

While I miss my favorite restaurants (Ocean Ale House, Eagle Pizzeria, and Taraval Okazu Ya in particular), I want to celebrate by inviting friends over to dinner at my house. My husband loves to smoke meat and I mix a mean cocktail. I envision ribs, pulled pork, and bourbon-themed cocktails (Manhattans, anyone?). Friends can bring the side dishes for a good old fashioned pot luck dinner. Afterwards, we can sit on our deck under the heat lamps and enjoy each other's company long into the evening.

Tell us about yourself.

Why are you running for this office?

The Board of Education is where I believe I can best serve my family and my greater community. This is not a professional layover on the way to "bigger and better" things. I do not plan to seek any other office; I plan to work in collaboration with other government entities to bring more resources, programs, and partnerships into our schools. My goal is to create a public education system that truly meets the educational needs of all students, and prepares all San Francisco students for our 21st century city. I have seen first-hand how our current model doesn't work for so many of our students. Schools should be a learning of institution that closes the equity gap; too often, our segregated schools widen it instead. I have spent the past decade advocating for students. I've attended hundreds of district Board of Education meetings and committee meetings. I'm ready to make the move to the other side of the table: I want to do more than comment in committees and at board meetings. I want to ensure that we consider and support our most vulnerable students and families in every decision, resolution, and guideline.

Why do you want the League of Pissed Off Voters' endorsement?

Because I want the cool kids to like me! I'm seeking the League of Pissed Off Voters' Endorsement because of the organization's critical work in demystifying San Francisco's political process. Y'all write voter guides that are informative, engaging, fun, and snarky at the same time. It is more important now than ever to engage, empower, and educate our electorate, which is exactly what you do. I want a piece of the action. Or to paraphrase Hamilton, I want to be in the guide where it happens.

What are your values and how did you get them?

I was raised by a strong mother (who was raised by a strong mother). I grew up in a very tight knit extended family in Ohio. Nothing is more important than family, and being a contributing member of my community has always been an expectation instilled in me. My mother and grandmother were both teachers who made sure we all understood the importance of education. My dad ran a restaurant and taught us all how to work hard.

As a former foster parent and mother of African American children, all of whom have learning differences, the issues of social justice and equity are very personal to me. I began down the road of advocacy to support my kids and children facing similar struggles. In the Community Advisory Committee for Special Education (CAC), I've learned the importance of inclusion and acceptance. Joining the African American Parent Advisory Committee (AAPAC) has strengthened my appreciation for the collective work and responsibility that many communities feel for their students.

What communities do you represent and how do they hold you accountable?

I'm very hesitant to claim to be a representative and/or authority on the communities I am affiliated with. I belong to multiple groups in different capacities. As a CAC member, I often represent parents of students who are differently abled. But we are not a monolithic community; as the expression goes, "if you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism."

As a white woman who is an AAPAC member, I am in a relative unique position of representation. While my children are African American, I am not. I can never fully appreciate the lived experience of an African American mother, but that doesn't mean that I never stop striving to achieve a higher level of understanding. I will always speak and advocate with the Black community, but not never for the Black community. I use my role to elevate voices as much as I can.

As a candidate seeking public office, it is my responsibility to constantly be in a state of learning. It is my job to do the work to reach out into communities and learn the issues; I cannot expect them to do the work of educating me. The communities I'm a part of hold me accountable by being stakeholders in creating new policies and practices for SFUSD.

I have been honored to work alongside many parent advocates in the aligned advisory committees. I have been honored to collaborate in reports to the Board of Education as well as parent empowerment and training seminars. I still have much to learn about many of our communities, and I'm sure there are many communities that I don't even know that I need to learn.

While there are affinity groups for parents of African American, Pacific Islander, Native American, and English learner students, there isn't a district-level advisory committee for parents of LGBTQ+ students. In my work as CAC Chair, I have worked to expand the focus of "inclusion" beyond students with disabilities. I have and will always continue to work towards inclusive policies that enfold, validate, and protect all of our students. We need to address this shortcoming and include LGBTQ+ families in important stakeholder conversations. I am open to advocating for additional parent advisory committees as I learn more about the needs and wants of other communities.

What three endorsements are you most proud of?

I'm very proud to be endorsed by State Senate candidate Jackie Fielder, SF Tenants Union, and SF Berniecrats. All are dedicated and committed to bettering the lives of SF residents by working alongside community leaders on the platform of economic equity and social justice for all. I am in the process of seeking additional endorsements. The fact that many fellow public school parents are encouraging me to run and supporting my campaign is important to me. Most importantly, I have the support of my husband and four children.

What for-profit or non-profit boards do you serve on, including political organizations?

I am the Advocacy Chair of the SFUSD Community Advisory Committee for Special Education, as well as President of the District 11 Democratic Club. I work with CASE, the Community Alliance for Special Education, a small but mighty San Francisco non-profit, as a special education advocate but I do not sit on the board.

What local and state commissions and policy bodies have you served on -- currently or in the past?

My work over the past few years has focused on the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, ability, and socio-economic status. As well as my work with the CAC and AAPAC, I'm a founding member of the Advisory Committee Alignment Summit and working groups, where the district advisory committees (CAC, AAPAC, District English Learner Advisory Committee, Early Education Advisory Committee, Pacific Islander Parent Advisory Committee, and others) have worked in unison to share our concerns and raise our collective voices to district officials and the Board of Education. I am currently a member of the LCAP Task Force, the Charter Oversight Committee, Equity Studies Task Force, and the School Reopening Task Force. In the past, I've participated in the district's Attendance Working Group (to reduce chronic absenteeism) as well as Coordinated Early Intervening Services and Performance Indicator Review Committees (to review and address disproportionately low graduation rates and overidentification into certain special education categories of African American students).

Local Issues

Do you support San Francisco Employees' Retirement System (SFERS) fully divesting from fossil fuels within three years and holding SFERS accountable at the ballot if they do not divest?

Yes

No

Do you support San Francisco purchasing PG&E assets to create public power in San Francisco?

Yes

No

Do you support the closure of 850 Bryant, jails #3 and #4?

Yes

No

Did you support SB 50 (Senator Wiener's Zoning Bill) as written?

Yes

No

If not, are there amendments that would make you support it?

While I agree with the intent in addressing San Francisco's dire housing crisis, I don't think it will be successful in implementation. Marginalized communities who are at the forefront of gentrification have been excluded as stakeholders in the development process of SB 50. The bill's top down approach leaves a lot to be desired in terms of addressing the most pressing concerns by affected community members. If the Bill is to be successful, the affected communities have to be included and consulted in its revision.

Do you support congestion pricing for the downtown core?

Yes

No

Do you support creating a Public Bank in San Francisco?

Yes

No

If Costa Hawkins was repealed at the state level, would you actively support legislation enacting vacancy control in San Francisco?

Yes

No

Do you support a baseline percentage of 40% of affordable housing in developments when negotiating the number of housing units?

Yes

No

Do you support requiring 100% affordable housing on public land?

Yes

No

If not, under what circumstances would you support allowing a percentage or all market-rate housing?

In this economy and housing market, none. We are in desperate need of affordable housing in San Francisco.

Have you previously and/or will you in the future accepted donations from any law enforcement officers or associations?

Yes

No

If yes, please explain why.

What percentage of the SFPD budget do you think should be reallocated towards housing, homeless services, social workers, health, and education?

50

Would you support legislation to implement the Budget Analyst's recommendation to adopt a more efficient weekly staffing schedule for the SFPD? (Recommendation 2.2 here: https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/BA_Report_PA_of_San_Francisco_Police_Department_061218.pdf)

Yes

No

November 2020 Election

Who are you supporting for US Representative, District 12?

Nancy Pelosi

Who are you supporting for State Senate, District 11?

Jackie Fielder

Who are you supporting for District 1 Supervisor?

Connie Chan

Who are you supporting for District 3 Supervisor?

Aaron Peskin

Who are you supporting for District 5 Supervisor?

Dean Preston

Who are you supporting for District 7 Supervisor?

RCV Myrna Melgar/Vilaska Nguyen

Who are you supporting for District 9 Supervisor?

Hillary Ronen

Who are you supporting for District 11 Supervisor?

John Avalos (to be honest, I will also RCV Ahsha Safai #2 due to the recent work he has done with the African American community in the OMI, but I'm "Team Avalos")

Who are you supporting for Board of Education?

Mark Sanchez and Kevine Boggess (as well as myself, Alida Fisher, of course!)

Who are you supporting for Community College Board?

Shannel Williams, Tom Temprano, and Alan Wong

Who are you supporting for BART Board, District 9?

Bevan Dufty

Do you support the charter amendment to create a Workforce Education and Recovery Fund for City College (WERF)?

Yes

No

Do you support "Vote 16" the SF charter amendment that authorizes youths aged 16 and 17 to vote in municipal elections?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment to allow non-citizens to serve on boards, commissions, and advisory bodies?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment creating the Office of the Public Advocate?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment creating a Public Works Commission, Sanitation and Streets Commission, and Sanitation and Streets Department?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment establishing term limits for City boards, commissions and bodies?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment creating the Sheriff's Department Oversight Board and Inspector General?

Yes

No

Do you support the charter amendment to remove the minimum police staffing requirement and require the Police Department to submit a report and recommendation regarding police staffing levels?

Yes

No

Do you support the ballot measure to increase the gross receipts tax on businesses with a greater than 100:1 ratio of the pay of their highest-paid employee to the median pay of their SF employees?

Yes

No

Do you support the gross receipts ballot measure proposed by the Board of Supervisors (Yee, Haney, Peskin, Fewer) [File No. 200648]?

Yes

No

Do you support the gross receipts ballot measure proposed by Mayor London Breed [File No. 200645]?

Yes

No

Do you support the ballot measure authorizing development of up to 10,000 affordable rental units in the City?

Yes

No

Do you support California Proposition 15, Tax on Commercial and Industrial Properties for Education and Local Government Funding Initiative?

Yes

No

Do you support California Proposition 21, Local Rent Control Initiative (Costa-Hawkins changes)?

Yes

No

Do you support California Proposition 22, App-Based Drivers as Contractors and Labor Policies Initiative (AB5 Referendum)?

Yes

No

Do you Support California Proposition 25, Replace Cash Bail with Risk Assessments Referendum (Cash Bail Referendum)?

Yes

No

Who did you support for Superior Court Judge?

Maria Evangelista, Michelle Tong, and Cari Gold

Who did you support for DCCC?

I predominantly supported the Social Justice Slate. However, I believe the DCCC should be a stepping stone into the political world; I would rather not see so many DCCC members hold other elected office.

Did you support March 2020's Prop D, a tax on vacant storefronts?

Yes

No

Did you support March 2020's Prop E, limits on office development?

Yes

No

November 2019 Election

Who did you support for District Attorney?

RCV Chesa Boudin/Suzy Loftus

Who did you support for District 5 Supervisor?

As a resident of District 11, I didn't take an official position on this race. However, I appreciate the work that Dean Preston is now doing for his district and how he is supporting renters city-wide.

November 2018 Election

Did you support November 2018's Prop C "Our City Our Home" tax on gross receipts of businesses to fund homeless services?

Yes

No

June 2018 Election

Did you support June 2018's Prop F "Tenant's Right to Counsel"?

Yes

No

Did you support June 2018's Prop H "Arm Police With Tasers"?

Yes

No

Past Elections

Did you support 2016's Prop D "Let's Elect Our Elected Officials" to have special elections to fill vacancies on the Board of Supervisors?

Yes

No

Did you support 2014's Prop G, the anti-speculation tax?

Yes

No

Board of Education

What are the top three issues you will work on and how will you implement solutions in a timely manner?

My top three priorities are social emotional supports (for staff as well as families), family engagement, and reading interventions. We need to meet our students' and teachers' basic social emotional needs before any learning can happen. Now more than ever, it's important to prioritize the mental and physical health of students and teachers. We need to engage families in order to engage students. And once we have our students engaged, we need to ensure they are proficient and confident readers by third grade. The correlation between the ability to read and success is irrefutable. A student not reading at grade level by the end of third grade is four times less likely to graduate high school. For students from low income families, that number jumps to six times less likely to graduate. A study of inmates at the Brownsville, TX state penitentiary showed that 80% of new inmates were functionally illiterate, and 48% of those had hallmark signs of dyslexia. I will continue to work with SFUSD to implement Tier 2 and 3 reading interventions in every school so that all students are proficient readers by third grade.

In order to achieve these priorities, the role of educating students, meeting their diverse needs, and engaging families cannot fall solely to the classroom teacher. We need more social workers, nurses, school counselors, and school psychologists. We need more paraeducators! We need credentialed reading specialists who are trained in multi sensory structured literacy.

To support these initiatives, it is paramount to engage in a transparent and accountable budget and decision making processes at every level of the district. Budgets are value statements. Some families fear that funding initiatives to support children with disabilities, English learners, or students of color will negatively impact other children by taking away resources from their child(ren)'s learning environment. I have found the opposite to be true. Education isn't a zero sum prospect. Research shows that diversity helps us become more thoughtful and innovative. It helps us become better problem solvers. And for those of us raising kids in San Francisco, it helps prepare our kids for the reality of our city.

Do you support painting over the Victor Arnautoff mural, The Life of George Washington, at George Washington High School?

Yes

No

Do you support changing the names of schools that are rooted in colonization, genocide, slavery, or oppression of any marginalized group?

Yes

No

Do you support Resolution 206-23A3 In Support of Black Lives and the Abolition of Armed Law Enforcement in Schools?

Yes

No

Do you support a moratorium on charter school co-location in our public schools?

Yes

No

Do you think that all SF charter schools should join SFUSD?

Yes

No

Have you ever had a role at a charter school in SF (including parent, staff, volunteer or paid organizer)?

Yes

No

Have you received support from San Francisco Parent PAC?

Yes

No

How would you approach the question of reopening schools in the Fall if you were on the Board of Education? (If you are on the Board, how are you approaching it?)

I agree with the District's Distance Learning Plan that was approved at the July 28 Board of Education meeting. There are many factors that are outside of the control of SFUSD that make it impossible to plan for a return to in-person learning at this time. Supporting educators as they prepare for fall distance learning will be critical. The move to hybrid learning should be considered only when it is safe to do so.

Once it is safe to return to in person learning, I believe we should implement a tiered school return system that prioritizes the return to school for students who have not been able to access distance learning at home. Statewide data shows us that the three focal populations that didn't engage in distance learning were students who speak languages other than English, foster youth, and students receiving special education services. SFUSD's youngest students (grades PK-2) weren't engaged in digital learning in the spring. The Reopening Task Force has recommended prioritizing our PK-2 students, special education students who are in Moderate/Severe Special Day Classes, students who are experiencing homelessness or are in foster care, and students who demonstrated limited online engagement as we develop our approach for learning in the fall.

I am hopeful that fall distance learning will be much different than the spring. I am very encouraged by what I am hearing from my educator friends. Most if not all of them have been spending their summer vacations learning more about digital platforms, taking virtual training classes, and developing or modifying lesson plans. They have created professional learning communities and book clubs to learn from and with each other. Teachers are making the pivot to distance learning, and I can't wait to see how their in-person creativity will be manifested online. They can't do it alone, though. To further support educators, more professional development, co-planning time, and ongoing coaching surrounding technology platforms would alleviate the stress of leading a digital classroom. We need to engage community partners who have strong relationships with the families who have not been able to engage in distance learning so far.

As we reopen to in-person learning, we should consider school staff essential workers, particularly in the priority scheduling of day care options. Students who have thrived during distance learning should have the opportunity to continue to implement the portions of distance learning that have been successful.

We should benchmark existing programs such as Independence High School. Their hybrid of online and in person instruction and support has been very successful for many students who have struggled at our traditional comprehensive high schools. What lessons can be shared and scaled to the larger district?

I'm looking forward to the DCYF partnership and investment in Community Learning Hubs, as they could be an effective means of engaging students who were not able to participate in spring distance learning. The Park School at McLaren sounds like a transformative new outdoor school. The silver lining to this pandemic is that it's forcing us to think creatively and develop new programs that may actually bring us closer to realizing the goals of Vision 2025.

What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of remote education / distance learning?

Distance learning shined a huge spotlight on the inequities within our district and city. I commend the hard work that SFUSD employees have done to continue to educate our students during this unprecedented pandemic. The pivot to distance learning was amazingly fast for a district of 56,000 students and 5,000 teachers, paras, and support staff. We provided students with technology, learning packets, and meals in record time. Teachers reimagined classrooms by building online environments for their students. The burden placed on teachers was immense.

I think what we experienced in the spring was more of a crisis management situation than online learning. Many families were concerned with the lack of academic rigor in the spring. Others struggled to even engage. Many students whose families speak languages other than English at home found it difficult to engage in distance learning. Students receiving special education services saw their services drastically reduced, and supports such as occupational and physical therapy have been difficult to implement online. Students requiring high levels of adult support and prompting have struggled to attend online classes. However, there have been bright spots. Many students with anxiety, slower processing speeds, and students who experienced bullying are reporting more success in distance learning. I have talked to families who appreciate that their children can go at their own pace during distance learning. For example, my oldest daughter has very severe ADHD. She likes being able to pause, take breaks as necessary, and review concepts multiple times.

One of our takeaways from this spring was the importance of ongoing communication. As we're seeing now in the conversation surrounding pandemic pods, distance learning was hard for everyone. Parents are very worried about their ability to work while they support their student's learning. Parents of younger students are nervous about the amount of time their children may be expected to spend online. Increased communication about fall planning is necessary to keep families engaged in SFUSD.

How do you propose tackling SFUSD's budget crisis? What bold solutions and new funding sources are you willing to consider?

To partially address the current budget crisis, I wholeheartedly support defunding the police and redirecting those funds into education, specifically to fund RP, implicit bias training, de-escalation training, UDL training, mental health supports, and academic reading interventions. We need more government stimulus money, more funding from the state, and the City and County of San Francisco needs to allocate all ERAF (Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund) funding to SFUSD rather than syphoning it off to other city projects.

Describe your current engagement with SFUSD. How often do you participate in BOE meetings (in person or online)? Which school sites are you familiar with?

I have been an active member in school site and district level governance for 15 years. Currently, I am the Advocacy Chair for the Community Advisory Committee for Special Education and an active member of the African American Parent Advisory Committee. I also sit on the School's Reopening Task Force, Equity Task Force, and the Charter Oversight Committee. I've participated in PTAs, SSCs, and PTA boards at seven different schools: Miraloma Elementary School, Lakeshore Elementary School, Robert Louis Stevenson Elementary School, James Lick Middle School, Denman Middle School, Everett Middle School, and Mission High School. As a special education advocate, I have attended IEP and 504 Plan meetings as well as restorative and collaborative meetings at dozens of other schools. I have only missed a few in person BOE meetings over the past three years (and even the ones I missed I watched on SFGovTV). I have participated in every virtual BOE meeting since March, either via public comment or by presenting to the Board in the capacity of committee member. I also attend many BOE committee meetings.

How would you modify SFUSD's school assignment policy?

As the aligned advisory committees have pointed out, the student assignment system redesign must address the current inequities in school programming, staffing, and facilities in various parts of the city in order to have the desired impact. Back in 2018, when Resolution 189-25A1 was initially introduced, I raised questions that have still gone unanswered today: How are we going to ensure the quality of the educational experience in schools across the district? What is the plan to make sure all SF public schools have the necessary resources to serve their students? What is being done to renovate the existing under-enrolled and under-requested schools? I tend to agree with Kevin Costner's character in Field of Dreams: "if you build it, they will come." If we provide the programming and resources that our families have prioritized (language pathways, STEM programs, inclusion, etc) at under-enrolled schools, families will be more likely to consider these schools.

The assignment process is very manual. Families complete paper applications which are manually entered into the computer system that runs the algorithm. This leaves lots of room for error and is very time consuming. With a more automated system, many of our EPC staff could shift their spring focus from data entry to planning and building new and equitable schools.

Now that SFUSD will not renew its MOU with the SFPD, how would you revise SFUSD's District School Safety Plan?

We need to identify first responders and crisis intervention personnel other than police officers. Depending on the emergency, different response levels are appropriate. Various SFUSD safety and emergency preparedness plans call for differing responses depending on the severity of the emergency. I believe that all school staff should be trained in de-escalation strategies, emergency first aid, and basic disaster preparedness.

If you're elected, what racial justice policies will you push for?

We need to address the systemic and institutional barriers in public education. As commissioner, I will begin by implementing an equitable budget. Our budget is a value statement; for too long, students learning English, Black and Brown students, and students with learning disabilities have been disenfranchised and deprioritized. Even this year, when we are working implementing anti-racist practices in SFUSD, the Superintendent's June budget contained a 38% cut to the African American Achievement and Leadership Initiative. We need to reinstate full funding to AAALI.

By investing in professional development opportunities for educators, we provide them with the skillset to address the needs of a diverse classroom. As an African American parent stated during the 2017-2018 LCAP stakeholder engagement process, "it's not an achievement gap for our Black kids. It's a love gap." It's critical to recognize the various levels of cultural competency and humility amongst SFUSD staff and families. We must address our shortcomings by providing more implicit bias training and implement trauma-informed practices. All school personnel should be trained in universal design for learning, positive behavior interventions, and de-escalation strategies to fully support and engage our students and their very diverse needs. Everyone needs to understand that behavior is a form of communication. If students are "disruptive", it's because we haven't their needs in the classroom. We need to look at root causes and address those with appropriate supports rather than punishing or criminalizing the outcome. First responders in schools need to show up with cultural competence and love, not handcuffs and guns. One additional point across all of these focal populations is that there are not enough educators, administrators, and school staff that reflect the students' experience. We need to hire more teachers of color, and bilingual teachers in particular. I appreciate SFUSD's pathway and teacher development programs, particularly the effort to recruit and train bilingual and special education professionals.

Last Question

Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Now more than ever, we need someone on the Board of Education who understands special education. Special education costs make up approximately one third of SFUSD's unrestricted general fund expenditures. As a special education advocate, I collaborate with district staff and families to develop special education plans for students with unique needs. Every day, I work with teams to implement inclusive supports and robust interventions. Here's the thing: when we make the classroom more accessible to those who need it most, the entire class benefits. Think about curb cuts on the sidewalk. They were implemented after the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed 30 years ago. Curb cuts were meant to make sidewalks more accessible to people in wheelchairs and with other mobility challenges. However, they also benefit skateboarders, parents pushing strollers, and many other able-bodied members of the community. When we think and act inclusively, the entire community benefits. I will bring this inclusive and proactive mentality to my work as Board of Education Commissioner. I will focus on reading intervention and mental health supports as well as robust implementation of restorative practices.

Google Forms