

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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Board of Education

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

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in the Bayview. They have a Gospel Mass Sundays at 10:30 with an incredible choir, it's one of the most welcoming communities ever, and it represents the soul of San Francisco. It's what I miss most during the pandemic shelter in place.

Tell us about yourself.

Why are you running for this office?

Let me say up front that I'm not interested in using the Board of Education as a springboard for other office: I'm not a politician, but an educator and an organizer. I have 20 years of experience working in San Francisco public schools, including as a teacher at Balboa High School and as co-founder and principal of June Jordan School for Equity. I know how important public schools are as fundamental democratic institutions in our city.

I'm running for Board of Education because SFUSD has a compelling vision of high-quality learning, but it's not yet a reality for all children: especially Black students, Latinx students, Pacific Islander students, Native/Indigenous students, students with learning differences, as well as Chinese and Filipino immigrant youth.

I have a track record of leading innovation, facilitating democratic decision-making, and organizing for real change. I deeply understand and value the experiences and voices of the people who do the work in schools, including teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and students themselves. I know the strengths and challenges of the bureaucratic system they work in.

If I'm elected, it will be the first time the Board of Education has both an educator majority and a parent majority at the same time in the history of SFUSD. We will have one of the most diverse and strongest Boards ever, and we will fight to make SFUSD's excellent vision a reality for all.

It may seem daunting to take on this challenge in the midst of a global pandemic and the biggest economic crisis in our lifetimes. But I believe this is precisely the moment when real change is possible: Now is the time to think big and be bold, so we can provide the best public education for the future of our children and our city.

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

The League of Pissed Off Voters has solid progressive values and has worked over the past 15 years to build a reputation as the most credible and well-researched voter guide in the City. Pretty much everyone I know uses the guide. I've passed it out many times--most recently before the March primary while campaigning for Jackie Fielder alongside my teenage son--and unlike a lot of campaign material, people actually stop and read it. It's a fantastic public service and an important part of the effort to build a real progressive majority in San Francisco. It would be a real honor for me to earn your endorsement.

What are your values and how did you get them?

I was raised in a racially integrated community by a feminist mother and a working-class Italian father who taught me to work hard and respect the full dignity of every human being.

I graduated from college in 1992, and that spring, in response to the acquittal of the police who beat Rodney King and the uprisings in Los Angeles, I made a decision to commit my life to working for justice.

I started teaching in 1996 at Balboa High School in the Excelsior, just after the Superintendent had fired the school's entire staff without consulting students or families, and I saw first-hand how a top-down approach to change, ignoring community needs, is a recipe for failure.

In the early 2000s, I helped lead a multiracial, grassroots organizing effort which resulted in the founding of June Jordan School for Equity. I learned how ordinary people could build authentic relationships across race, class, and role--and how those relationships could translate into real power to create meaningful change.

After spending 15 years at June Jordan School for Equity, including a decade as principal, I went to work as the San Francisco Lead Organizer at Faith in Action Bay Area. Every day, I have the privilege of living my values, deepening relationships across difference, and building collective leadership to create bottom-up power.

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

First, I represent SFUSD students and their families, especially people of color, working-class people, LGBTQ people, and immigrants. Through my 20 years as a teacher and principal, I have long-standing relationships with many people and groups who hold me accountable. I've been endorsed by the Coleman Action Fund and have asked them to help guide my work on the Board. Through my work at Faith in Action Bay Area, I'm held accountable by Spanish-speaking immigrant families across the city, and through my work with Immigrants Rising, I'm accountable to undocumented young people.

Second, I represent the people who do the work, day in and day out, in our classrooms and schools. I'm proud that I have been endorsed by United Educators of San Francisco and look forward to being held accountable by them as well as the many teachers, paraprofessionals, principals, and other SFUSD staff with whom I have long-standing relationships.

Third, I represent the larger San Francisco community, which deserves excellent and equitable public schools and elected officials who will fight to make our City live up to its progressive values and become a place where everyone truly belongs.

My volunteer campaign team includes students, parents, and educators. Our meetings are led by the people who do the work, and are always bilingual, Spanish and English.

What three endorsements are you most proud of?

I am proud to be endorsed by:

- 1) United Educators of San Francisco and Coleman Action Fund, because they represent the people to whom I am accountable
 - 2) A majority of the members of our current Board of Supervisors, because they are progressive leaders fighting for change
 - 3) All of the returning (and incumbent candidate) members of the Board of Education, because they are a strong, principled team, and I'd be honored to work alongside them
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What for-profit or non-profit boards do you serve on, including political organizations?

I serve on the Leadership Council of Immigrants Rising, a national organization that empowers undocumented young people to achieve educational and career goals.

I serve on the Board of Small Schools for Equity, a small nonprofit that supports youth organizing and programs at June Jordan School for Equity.

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

Steering Committee Member, California Performance Assessment Collaborative, 2015-2018

Superintendent's Leadership Fellow, San Francisco Unified School District, 2014-2016

Educator Excellence Task Force Member, California Department of Education, 2012

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?

Maybe we could pair a repeal of both Costa-Hawkins and the Ellis Act with SB50. I wonder if Senator Wiener would support that deal.

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?

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?

25

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?

.....

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?

Myrna Melgar or Vilaska Nguyen

Who are you supporting for District 9 Supervisor?

Hillary Ronen

Who are you supporting for District 11 Supervisor?

Who are you supporting for Board of Education?

Matt Alexander, Kevine Boggess, Jenny Lam, Mark Sanchez

Who are you supporting for Community College Board?

Aliya Chisti, Anita Martinez, Shanell Williams, 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, Carolyn Gold

Who did you support for DCCC?

(I live in D19) Queena Chen, Leah LaCroix, Mano Raju, Janice Li, Gordon Mar, Faauga Moliga, Kelly Groth, A.J. Thomas, Li Miao Lovett, Keith Baraka

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?

Chesa Boudin

Who did you support for District 5 Supervisor?

Dean Preston

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?

To make our SFUSD public schools excellent for all children, especially Black and Brown students:

1) We need to increase revenue, and spend our money where the children are. SFUSD spends about half what New York City public schools spend per student. No matter how bad the economy is, we're still living in one of the wealthiest cities in the world: we must increase both local and state revenue. Within the district, SFUSD spends the lowest percentage of any large California district on classroom instruction; we need to re-allocate funds directly to schools and classrooms.

2) We need to listen to the people doing the work. Parents, students, teachers, and paraprofessionals must be central to our decision-making. Democracy begins by listening to the people--and our schools need to reflect and nurture our democratic values. I led a democratic decision-making process at June Jordan School for Equity and will work to establish similar processes district-wide.

3) We need to lead San Francisco into the future. SFUSD is a powerful civic institution and the second-largest landowner in the city. We must increase our engagement to address the housing crisis that is destroying the soul of San Francisco, both by using district-owned land for affordable housing and by pushing for tax and policy changes at the City level.

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 would listen to the needs of educators, families, and students, in the context of public health guidelines. State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond recently made recommendations for what it takes to open schools safely, based on an analysis of schools across the globe during COVID-19. I agree with her recommendations as a good starting point:

1. Testing and tracking of cases and quarantining those who exhibit symptoms or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive.
 2. Health checks for all students and staff every day—which require thermometers and staff to conduct checks and follow up when symptoms are reported.
 3. Physical distancing, which requires fewer students in each classroom and on each bus, along with additional staffing for more classrooms and bus runs.
 4. Mandatory face coverings, requiring investments in masks and face shields.
 5. Enhanced hygiene and cleaning, which often requires installing more sinks and hand-washing stations as well as purchasing sanitizers for all classrooms and hiring more custodial staff to disinfect more frequently.
 6. Technology and internet access to close the digital divide so that students who need to be home (because of health considerations or temporary quarantining or social distancing solutions) are able to fully participate in learning.
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What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of remote education / distance learning?

Remote education is hard on everyone. It does not work well for many students, especially for younger children, students with special needs, homeless and foster youth, and others who need extra support from schools. There are ways to make it more engaging, such as by providing students with more open-ended, hands-on projects. At the younger grades, it is much more effective when educators build authentic relationships with parents. But for most students (with some exceptions), distance learning is a poor substitute for in-person learning, and we need to bring resources to bear to find in-person solutions, following the guidelines in the previous answer and keeping everyone's safety paramount.

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

SFUSD faces a deficit for the coming academic year, and potentially greater deficits in future years. Any cuts need to happen from central departments not schools: Not one dollar should be cut from teachers, paraprofessionals, or other spending that directly affects kids in classrooms. Right now, SFUSD spends the lowest percentage of any large California district on classroom instruction. During my time at June Jordan School for Equity, I organized with other principals to increase classroom spending from 41% to 54% of SFUSD's budget, and we need to do even more. Some large districts spend as much as 68% of their budget on instruction; we need to join them.

We also need to increase revenue, from both local and state sources. SFUSD spends about only half of what New York City public schools spend per student. In my role as the SF Lead Organizer for Faith in Action Bay Area, I'm working with community groups around the state to help pass Schools and Communities First this November, which will bring \$800 million a year in new revenue to San Francisco. I'm also supporting the local proposals to tax businesses with disproportionate executive pay, to double the real estate transfer tax, to increase the gross receipts tax, and to establish the stock-based compensation tax. Some of this new local revenue needs to be re-directed from the City to SFUSD to support our public schools.

In the longer term, we need to address the fact that San Francisco county allocates only about 30% of property tax revenue to schools and community colleges, compared to around 55% in most California counties. This imbalance is written into state law as a legacy of Prop 13 and needs to be corrected so SFUSD can provide a quality education for all.

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?

Over a 20-year career in SFUSD, I was a regular attendee at Board of Education meetings, starting back when they were held in the Everett Middle School auditorium. I frequently attend the online meetings now.

During my decade as a high school principal, I visited every SFUSD high school, observing classes and seeing the school in-depth while working with colleagues. I have visited and have relationships with staff and parents at many middle and elementary schools. I am less familiar with our early education sites, and am working with educators and parents to develop more expertise in that area.

How would you modify SFUSD's school assignment policy?

I agree with the Board of Education's 2018 decision to re-design the SFUSD school assignment system for elementary schools, because our current system is not sufficiently transparent or equitable and is not producing integrated schools.

I have seen the three initial concepts that district staff have created, and am not yet convinced that any of them meets our goals. I would like to see more detail and have more communication with parents about the process.

A key question is how much choice families will have. School choice certainly has benefits, such as allowing families to find a school that meets a child's individual needs. But it also gives more power to those parents who have more time and greater access to information. And racist ideas about student groups can influence enrollment patterns; such factors must be mitigated in any truly just choice system.

At the end of the day, if the role of our assignment system is to manage inconsistent school quality, we have already lost the battle. Most parents' priority is a safe, high-quality elementary school near their home--and our job is to make sure that ALL of our schools meet this standard. An enrollment system can help counter neighborhood segregation and create more diverse schools, but it cannot make schools better: That is the job of the educators and the district supporting them.

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

I was honored to contribute to writing the resolution "In Support of Black Lives in SFUSD and the Abolition of Armed Law Enforcement in Schools," which the Board of Education passed unanimously June 23rd. This bold new policy declares schools a sanctuary space from law enforcement and calls for the City to divest from policing and invest in other areas including:

- School-based social workers, psychologists, restorative justice practitioners, and other mental and behavioral health professionals
- Community School Coordinators who help connect schools with the community and bring needed social services to youth and their families
- Community-based violence prevention programs which school administrators can call upon instead of police when situations at schools require a level of intervention and de-escalation beyond the training and capacity of school staff

I have worked as an educator to prioritize restorative practices and a trauma-informed approach to student discipline and student support; I know first-hand how effective these approaches are. The challenge for SFUSD as a whole is that we support these approaches on paper, but have not invested in the necessary staff training and resources to actually implement them effectively. For the sake of all our students, and especially our Black and Brown students, we must make these proven approaches the norm rather than the exception.

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

The biggest single challenge facing Black, Brown, working-class and poor SFUSD students is the housing crisis, which is putting extreme pressure on families, especially now with the massive job loss wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. SFUSD is a powerful civic institution, and I believe it is critical for us to increase our engagement with the housing crisis facing our city.

This issue not only impacts families directly, but also through the displacement of educators. At the 25 southeast schools SFUSD has labelled "high potential" (a term SFUSD uses for schools serving larger populations of Black and Latinx students), nearly a third of teachers leave each year, and a major reason is because they cannot afford to live in San Francisco. This high staff turnover rate makes it impossible to develop teams of strong educators with the skills and long-term community relationships required to teach all children effectively.

SFUSD's current plan to develop 100% educator housing is an important first step in addressing this crisis. As the second-largest landowner in the city, SFUSD should also use district-owned land for truly affordable housing that serves our low-income and working families.

But to actually solve this problem for our educators and the families we serve, SFUSD must work with the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor to address the fact that 70% of the housing built in San Francisco in recent years has been deliberately priced only for people making over \$100,000 a year, and that we allow over 30,000 housing units to sit empty as investment properties. This situation is the result of racist policies that are designed to push poor and working-class people of color out of San Francisco and make the city a center for real estate speculation, commerce, finance, and tourism.

The COVID-19 crisis gives us an opportunity to address this critical racial justice issue by developing tax and budget policies that prioritize housing for ordinary people. The new local tax proposals on the November ballot are a good start, and using that new revenue we need to consider bold short-term steps such as rental subsidies for all poor and working-class people in San Francisco, to keep people in their homes. In the longer term, the City should purchase empty hotels and apartment buildings and use City-owned land to begin creating a publicly-owned system of social housing.

If we believe that Black and Brown lives matter, and we want a City that stands for racial justice, we must make this our #1 priority. For SFUSD, it's critical for us to engage more actively in addressing the housing crisis if we want our educators to be able to live here, and the students we serve to have a future here.

Last Question

Is there anything else you want to tell us?

I moved to San Francisco 25 years ago, drawn by this city's reputation as a place that offered welcome to all--and I've been blessed to find community here, to make this city my home and raise my twin sons here (they are now 17). But over this time, I've also seen how we have allowed inequality to increase, as much of the Black community has been driven out of the city, working families and immigrants face ever more pressure to survive here, educators cannot afford to stay and work here, and most middle-class families do not see a future for their children in this city.

I'm running for school board because I believe that in this moment, there is a real opportunity to reverse these trends. It is time for those of us who believe in justice to step up and be leaders to create the change we want to see in the world.

I believe I will be a strong addition to the current Board because of my 20 years of experience working in SF public schools, including a decade as a teacher and a decade as a high school principal. Here's a bit more about my background:

-- I started teaching social studies at Balboa High School in 1996. I became an elected member of the school's Union Building Committee and later the UESF Executive Board.

-- In the late 1990s, I began organizing with other educators, parents, and youth in a multiracial, grassroots effort around creating better school options, which eventually resulted in the founding of June Jordan School for Equity.

-- From 2001 to 2003, I served as Educator-in-Residence at Linda Darling-Hammond's School Redesign Network at Stanford University.

-- After June Jordan School for Equity opened in 2003, I taught there and later became principal. Our student body at JJSE was more than 80% low-income and nearly 30% special education students, and Black and Latinx and special needs students graduated and were accepted to college at rates exceeding most other schools in SFUSD.

-- JJSE is one of the most innovative schools in the district. Just to give a few examples: Students graduate through a portfolio assessment process, staff use a democratic decision-making process, discipline is done through restorative justice, and teachers get paid time to do parent conferences (a rarity at the high school level) so that families can be included as partners in their children's education.

-- I have written articles and blogs on education issues, including "The Warm Demander: An Equity Approach" and "Who is Your Warm Demander Role Model?" in Edutopia and a chapter on listening to student voice in the 2017 book "The Listening Leader: Creating the Conditions for Equitable School Transformation."

-- In 2016, I organized with other educators to increase classroom spending from 41% to 54% of SFUSD's budget--and we need to do even more, because San Francisco still spends the lowest percentage of our budget on classroom instruction of any large district in the state.

-- In 2017, in the wake of President Trump's election, I worked with a student of mine, Maria Zaragoza, to organize youth from high schools across SFUSD. They pushed the Board of Education to pass the Undocumented, Unafraid, and United Students Resolution, which significantly strengthened the school district's protections and practical support for our undocumented students.

-- I serve on the Leadership Council of Immigrants Rising, a national organization that empowers undocumented young people to achieve educational and career goals.

-- At Faith in Action Bay Area, I facilitate campaigns that bring diverse people together to find common values and create positive change in their communities. I've organized citywide campaigns to get immigrants released from ICE detention (including one campaign led entirely by high school students), to

win housing subsidies for low-income seniors facing eviction, and to protect our homeless neighbors during the COVID-19 crisis.

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