

# SFPARENTS

## San Francisco Parent Action Questions for SFUSD School Board Candidates 2022

### Lisa Weissman-Ward

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree

Thriving and Equitable Public Schools	Level of Agreement
<b>1. I support the <i>SF Parent Coalition Parent Priorities Platform</i>.</b> A focus on equity and excellence going hand-in-hand, improving student outcomes in our district, regaining trust and rebuilding community morale, improving the fiscal health of SFUSD, and overall good governance should be the top priorities of the School Board going into 2022-23.	4
<b>2. QUALITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS:</b> San Francisco should not have two tiers of education quality. We need to hold all SFUSD schools accountable to high-quality instruction and related supports for students. The Board of Education has responsibility for the success of all students attending San Francisco public schools.	4
<b>3. TRANSPARENCY:</b> I support increased transparency of school performance that enables San Francisco to evaluate and improve the quality of our public schools, starting with a public dashboard that shares math and reading assessment data at the school level to be shared publicly, updated at least twice a year.	4
<b>4. LITERACY:</b> I believe in the urgency of improving literacy outcomes for all student demographic populations at SFUSD. I commit to supporting staff's literacy improvement plan and recommendations, and making the necessary changes to our literacy curricula, tools, and instruction methods that will follow an evidence- and standards-based core literacy curriculum.	4
<b>5. GOVERNANCE:</b> An effective School Board follows the lead of and supports the superintendent and staff, letting them be the experts and making recommendations for the direction of the district.	4
<b>6. BUDGET HEALTH:</b> I commit to governing in accordance with nationally-established best financial practices. District leadership should be held accountable for presenting their budget in a clear, student-centered way at public board meetings that allows parents, community members, and board members alike to understand and engage. As a board member I will demand this level of transparency from district staff and follow their lead, supporting their recommendations.	4

## Open-Ended:

### 1. **Optional: Expand on any of your responses to the statements above.**

Over the past two years, the broken trust between the San Francisco School Board and our community drew national attention. I want to thank SF Parent Action's leadership and grassroots membership for its committed and relentless advocacy for change that aligns with the principles outlined above.

Since being appointed to the Board of Education in March, I have been laser focused on student outcomes, transparency, and accountability. In a few short months, my colleagues and I have passed a balanced budget, rescinded teacher and staff layoff notices, hired a new Superintendent, helped bring new revenue to the District, and created a transparent and community-driven framework to advance excellence and equity in our high schools.

And we're just getting started. I would be honored to have San Francisco Parent Action's support to win a four-year term this November.

### 2. **What are your priorities in terms of fixing SFUSD's budget deficit, and how would those priorities impact students, families, and our schools?**

In order to fix the structural budget deficit, we must make smart and transparent decisions about how to spend money. More money coming into SFUSD is only helpful if it is spent in ways that actually improve student outcomes. I believe it is important to ask questions about the budget and that we are sharing budget information in a way that everyone in our community can understand. When the budget numbers do not add up or are not consistent with putting our students first, it is the duty of the BOE commissioners to ask questions, figure out why, and fix it.

My priorities will always center our students and include:

- ensuring that budget decisions always have a direct through line to students and improving student outcomes;
- examining the direct impact on school sites; and
- continuing to look at the central office and ways to make the work of central office staff more efficient.

I was appointed to the Board of Education in March. In just four months, we approved a

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balanced budget and supported the District in raising \$34 million in state grants for Community Schools. The proposed Student Success Fund, which I support for the November 2022 ballot, will raise up to \$70 million in additional funding to support student centered achievements.

### **3. What should SFUSD do to increase enrollment and to attract more students and families to San Francisco Unified School District?**

I want to be SFUSD's hype woman when it comes to our students, educators, and schools. In order to attract more families to our schools, we need to ensure that we are providing phenomenal learning opportunities to all of our students.

First, SFUSD must provide much better transparent and accessible communication to families. As a parent in the District, I have seen how confusing it is to understand processes and decisions. I believe we need to move away from performative adult-driven conversations and focus on our students and their outcomes.

Second, SFUSD must work to recognize and support its brilliant educators at SFUSD. I don't think it is a coincidence that we are seeing elevated rates of both students and educators leaving the district. It is cyclical. When teachers aren't sufficiently supported, the students aren't either. The opposite is also true: when students aren't sufficiently supported, the teachers aren't either. By increasing the rate of teacher retention, we will also increase the enrollment of students.

Third, SFUSD staff and the Board must elevate the quality of all of our schools so that our families do not experience anxiety and uncertainty when it comes to school selection. We must also do a much better job of showcasing and celebrating the amazing programs and schools that we do have. By showcasing the great and turning the "not-so-great" into great, we will attract more students to the district.

### **4. What are your top three concerns on the current state of the district and what do you plan to do as a commissioner to address those concerns?**

One of my biggest concerns is the loss of trust. Here are three specific concerns that I believe have contributed to this. \*I should note that I am thrilled with our selection of Dr. Matt Wayne as Superintendent. I am optimistic that with him at the helm and with a commitment from the Board to turning things around, these concerns will soon be in the rearview mirror!

1. Lack of student-centered focus: We must focus on tools, programs and staff

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that will actually improve student outcomes. We must hold ourselves accountable by using metrics for our goals and measuring our performance. We must work with experts and learn from other school districts that have student-centered strategies which have resulted in improved literacy and math levels.

2. Lack of inclusion of diverse and informed voices: One wonderful thing about SFUSD is that it is made up of diverse communities with incredible knowledge and expertise. As an educator myself, I love to listen and learn. I approach challenging conversations from points of commonality rather than points of difference. I am committed to hearing from all stakeholders. Although I am a full-time working parent in addition to my work on the School Board, I make a point of regularly meeting with and listening to parents.
3. Inadequate Fiscal Leadership: See Question 2. SFUSD has a structural deficit. I will continue to have a watchful eye as we stabilize the budget and prioritize quality education for all kids

## **5. How can SFUSD increase academic outcomes for the most marginalized students? How can SFUSD challenge and create learning opportunities for higher achieving students?**

Excellence and equity in education go hand-in-hand. You can't have one without the other. For far too long, these concepts have been pitted against one another and it has resulted in adults fighting and students getting further harmed. I believe that all students, no matter what their background, have the capacity to be excited and engaged learners who can thrive in school. Students not thriving is not the fault of the students, but is the fault of the systems in place.

As an academic myself, I appreciate research driven solutions where outcomes can be measured. I believe we must listen and learn from experts who have proven strategies about how to improve literacy and math levels. Students must be pushed no matter where they are. In some cases, it means a student advancing from behind grade level to at-grade level and in another case, it might mean advancing from above grade level to even further above grade level.

For example, when it comes to high schools, we must develop opportunities that meet the needs of all our students and ensure they are all productive when they graduate. For some this might be rigorous "traditional" academic programs. For others it may be arts or creative STEM programs. For others it might be trades and apprenticeship focused.

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We must commit resources to all pathways for our students.

## **6. What was your position on the school board recall of February 2022, and why?**

I voted in support of the recall. I did so because I watched how so many students and their families were devastated by the pandemic- emotionally, academically, and physically. At a time when our kids needed the Board of Education to be laser focused on doing everything possible to minimize learning loss and mental health challenges, the District and Board were focused on adult-centered arguments that put students last. These adult-centered performative antics not only failed to protect our kids, but I believe they actually caused additional and significant harm. When it comes to the well-being of our District, we (as adults) must put students first and model constructive discourse, dialogue and consensus building.

## **7. What are some specific ways that you will work with the SFUSD parent community and invite their participation/feedback as a board member?**

Unfortunately, the podium in the Board meeting room at 555 Franklin Street has become one of the only ways for community members to participate and provide input and feedback. Not only is this an inefficient way of engaging, but it is exclusionary and leaves out many members of our SFUSD parent community who likely have thoughtful and brilliant contributions to make. This fall, under the leadership of our new Superintendent Dr. Matt Wayne, I (along with my fellow Commissioners) will embark on strategic and intentional engagement sessions in the community. These won't be focused just on global vision and values conversations, but will also include opportunities for feedback and discussion around what improvements (small or big) the SFUSD parent community (among others) would like to see from District Staff and the members of the Board of Education.

In addition to these community engagement sessions, in the fall I will continue visiting schools and communicating with parents. I will also continue to work with organizations such as SF Parent Action to meet with parents and students to dialoging with our families.