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San Francisco Parent Action Questions for SFUSD School Board Candidates 2022

Karen Fleshman (*Addendum/revised*)

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

Thriving and Equitable Public Schools	Level of Agreement
1. I support the <i>SF Parent Coalition Parent Priorities Platform</i>. 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.	3
2. QUALITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS: 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
3. TRANSPARENCY: 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.	3
4. LITERACY: 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.	DK
5. GOVERNANCE: 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
6. BUDGET HEALTH: 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.	3

Open-Ended:

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

In just a few weeks, SFUSD students will return to the classrooms in the midst of a national youth mental health crisis, while the pandemic, political upheaval, racism, misogyny, xenophobia, transphobia and homophobia, gun violence, recession, inflation, and climate crisis rage on. Schools need to focus on healing, building community and joy. Social-emotional learning is foundational to all other learning, particularly now. Building community supports the development of a healthy positive identity, strong connections between students, their teachers and staff, and joy. While I generally support improving literacy, I believe right now that students need social-emotional support that will prepare them to succeed in new academic programs.

I agree with your vision 100% "We envision a future where San Francisco is one of the best places in the country for children and youth of all races, socioeconomic backgrounds and abilities to grow up and get an excellent public education." Our current two-tier system is unacceptable. In-school experience and outcomes should be the same high quality for students of all races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses and abilities at all schools. People move to San Francisco from all over the country and all over the world for the limitless career opportunities here. Every San Francisco public school graduate deserves to be first in line for those opportunities and thoroughly prepared. Every graduate should leave SFUSD connected to a next step of their choosing, aligned with their passions, skills and purpose.

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

First we need to see all students as our children, all schools as our schools, and want the best for all of them, and be willing to trade some things that are near and dear to us in the interest of what's better for all: high-quality service to all students and families, located in all neighborhoods. Resources for teachers, school staff, principals, retirees, and safe, well-maintained, properly-ventilated schools.

Elizabeth Kelly laid out a very sensible plan in the Examiner, I paraphrase and add my thoughts here:

1. Bring the community, parents, union, and administrators together to understand the

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- current situation and build consensus on priorities, vision, equity
2. Create a multiyear plan so people know what to expect
 3. Protect our former teachers by paying for their pensions and benefits and consider options for current teachers
 4. Encourage teachers' creativity, partnerships with community organizations and evidence-based teaching practices, especially for elementary, so all can advance
 5. Streamline central office, strengthen budget and program oversight and consider the costs and benefits of fewer schools with larger numbers of students in all neighborhoods. Ensure all real estate is used in service of our mission
 6. Draw on San Francisco's tremendous resources to provide excellent afterschool and summer experiences for younger students and connect every high school student to internships, apprenticeships, mentors, jobs and/or college access. Every graduate should leave with a next step.

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

SFUSD offers tremendous value to students and families and we can encourage more families to choose SFUSD by increasing our emphasis on the value of a public education. I am a public school graduate, my mother was a career public school teacher, and I never considered sending my kids to private school.

I am grateful for the excellent education my kids are receiving at SFUSD. They are learning the truth about US history, they love their librarian, they have class in the garden, they are learning another language and culture, and most importantly, they are kind, compassionate, able to relate across differences and empathize with people who are very different from them. They are also independent thinkers with very well-thought-out ideas supporting their beliefs.

By 2040, when my kids are at the peak of their careers, we will be a global majority country. Meaning people of the global majority will make up the majority of people in the United States. SFUSD is preparing my kids to thrive in the society they will mature in. I believe students who are currently isolated with other privileged kids will struggle to even understand that society.

San Francisco is a Sanctuary City. As students and families across the nation come under attack from Republican policies, San Francisco can attract them to move here to freely be who they are.

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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?

1. Student mental health and development interrupted by the pandemic. Sexual assault and harassment and fighting in the schools.

Plan: Slow down, heal, and help students improve their social-emotional health. Provide activities that students most enjoy and supports like social workers, nurses, and librarians. Co-create clear behavior standards and universally uphold them with restorative practices at all schools, beginning in TK through 12. Educate all adults who work in the schools, parents, and students in restorative practices: involving people who have been harmed, people who have caused harm, and upstanders in healing when harm occurs.

2. Teacher, staff, principal burnout.

Plan: Listen to teachers, staff, principals about what they need to feel safe, valued, motivated, and engaged. Draw on the tremendous resources of San Francisco to provide it, including the City government resource fund. Resource teachers, staff, principals financially, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Create exceptional learning experiences for their continued growth so they can pour into our students. You can't give from an empty cup.

3. Inequitable concentration of resources at certain schools.

Plan: Make every San Francisco high school great. Create an individualized pathway plan for every high school student including summer and year-round jobs, internships, apprenticeships, mentors, college access programs. Ensure every student graduates connected to a next step of their choosing: a job, union membership, college, community service.

Draw on the tremendous resources of San Francisco (employers, unions, nonprofit organizations, universities, colleges, government agencies and cultural institutions, DCYF, OEWD) to connect every young person to internships, apprenticeships, mentors, jobs and/or college access.

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

The answer to both is to focus on students' social emotional learning as detailed above and address systemic racism, desegregate schools, address funding disparities.

There is great technology to make it easy for teachers to understand each student's learning style, abilities, and learning edge and differentiate and customize learning for all students that I would like to see SFUSD implement. The pandemic has left students in widely varying developmental stages that are not aligned with their ages and grades and we need to equip teachers with the tools they need to meet students where they are and help all students develop to their full potential.

I strongly support integration of students with disabilities into all schools. I believe it's good for all students to be integrated together.

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

I opposed the School Board recall and all other recalls because I believe recalls are fundamentally undemocratic. The voters decided who they wanted, and elected officials should serve out their term and then compete in an election.

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

I am here to listen. This isn't about me and what I want, I will always consider the students and parents who are most impacted by a problem, and are therefore closest to the solution, and often furthest from the resources and authority to solve the problem. They are often the least likely to attend Board of Education meetings and don't have the loudest voices. I have extensive experience in community outreach, and I will go to them. I want to bring the solutions they desire into the decision-making process. I love talking with young people, parents, teachers, staff and principals. I would love to get more youth voices in decision-making, such as the Youth Council.