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Questions for November 2026 SFUSD School Board Candidates
Phil Kim

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

<i>Excellent and Equitable Public Schools</i>	<i>Level of Agreement</i>
<p>1. I SUPPORT the SF Parents Parent Priorities: A focus on equity and excellence going hand-in-hand, improving student outcomes in our district, building 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 2026-27.</p>	4
<p>2. DISTRICT TRANSPARENCY: I support increased transparency of school performance that enables San Francisco to evaluate and improve the quality of our public schools. This should include a public dashboard that shares math and reading assessment data at the school level, updated at least twice a year.</p>	4
<p>3. LITERACY AND MATH: I believe in the urgency of improving student outcomes in literacy and math at SFUSD. I commit to ensuring that SFUSD continues to implement and fully support a comprehensive plan, and makes the necessary adjustments to curricula, tools, and instructional methods that follow an evidence- and standards-based approach.</p>	4
<p>4. EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE: An effective School Board centers on 1) supporting the superintendent and cabinet to ensure student-focused leadership, 2) setting a clear, shared vision, and 3) defining goals rather than managing day-to-day operations or unnecessary interference in implementation or policy execution.</p>	4
<p>5. BUDGET HEALTH: I commit to governing in accordance with nationally-established best financial practice. I will hold District leadership accountable for presenting the budget clearly. When fixing our budget deficit, I support SF Parents' call for minimizing negative impacts to our most vulnerable students while ensuring a baseline of excellence across all schools.</p>	4

1. Optional: Expand on any of your responses to the statements above, in 250 words or fewer.

2. Why are you running for the Board of Education, and why now? Within your response, please describe:

- **Your connection to SFUSD students and families**
- **The leadership experience that prepares you to govern a public education system**
- **Your views on both academic excellence and equity in education**

I began my career in the classroom teaching 7th grade science, eventually working toward supporting STEM instruction and policy nationwide. What has kept me grounded is my experience in the classroom.

I joined SFUSD as staff in 2024, charged with supporting the district and addressing some of our biggest structural challenges. I worked closely with community-based organizations, parent advisory councils and committees, and students. When I joined the Board, I continued that direct engagement: meeting with TK families to problem-solve together, connecting with the Student Advisory Committee, and launching Shadow a Student Day, where Board members spend a full day in classrooms observing instruction.

I'm the only current Board member who has worked inside SFUSD's central office, and the only credentialed teacher. I've led STEM education and policy at the local, state, and national levels—working with teachers and superintendents across 20+ states and 300+ schools. As Board President, I established SFUSD's first-ever short-term Superintendent evaluation metrics, guided our fiscal recovery from "negative" to "qualified" certification, and created our Ad Hoc Committees on Progress Monitoring and Public Engagement.

Academic excellence and equity are inseparable. You cannot deliver genuine excellence if some students are systematically excluded from high-quality instruction. I've seen the real impact of initiatives like the African American Achievement and Leadership Initiative and Matua Advisory, where outcomes for Black and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students are far outpacing district averages. That's what equity-driven excellence looks like in practice.

3. Why do you want the SF Parents endorsement? How will you uplift the voices of parents across SFUSD as a Board of Education decisionmaker?

SF Parents has been one of the most consistent and credible voices for students and families in this district. You ask hard questions, hold the Board accountable, and bring forward the lived experiences of parents in ways that push the work forward. That's exactly the kind of partner a School Board needs, and the kind of partner I've tried to be responsive to throughout my time as Board President. Earning SF Parents' endorsement matters to me because it signals to families across the city that I am oriented toward their priorities, not just institutional ones.

On uplifting parent voices: I believe that meaningful parent engagement has to be built into governance structures, not bolted on when convenient. This is why I established the Ad Hoc Committee on Public Engagement, which is charged with setting baseline expectations for how the Board, both individually and collectively, routinely solicits input from our communities. I also engage deeply with our parent advisory groups and make it a priority to uplift their recommendations to the Superintendent. I'm proud to be endorsed by SF Parents for the June election, and I'm excited to continue engaging with parents and guardians as we tackle some of the district's biggest initiatives together.

4. What's your perspective on the teacher strike that happened in February, including what could have been handled differently by 1) SFUSD leadership, 2) Board of Education, and 3) the Teacher's Union? What can the School Board do to promote a more collaborative relationship between the teacher's union and the district going forward?

The strike was a difficult and disruptive moment for students, families, and educators, and a reflection of the very real tensions that arise when a district is trying to do right by its workforce while operating under significant fiscal constraints. Educators deserve fair compensation and safe working conditions, and I am proud that the agreement preserved and strengthened critical supports, including staff training on Sanctuary District policies.

I also take seriously our obligation to ensure the District can honor its commitments over the life of this agreement. That means continuing the disciplined budget practices we have established: accurate multi-year forecasting, strategic alignment of restricted and unrestricted funds, and avoiding the structural imbalances that created this crisis in the first place. The Board must hold the Superintendent accountable to a financial plan that demonstrates how we will meet our contractual obligations while protecting classroom instruction.

Going forward, I believe the path to fiscal stability and labor stability are interconnected. When educators feel valued, supported, and fairly compensated, they stay in our schools—and that continuity is essential to student outcomes. This is

a shared responsibility that requires collaboration and communication across SFUSD leadership, the Board, and union. I will continue working to build a relationship with our labor partners grounded in transparency and shared commitment to students.

5. What does effective Board governance look like in practice? In your response, describe how you would:

- **Work with the Superintendent while maintaining appropriate oversight**
- **Ensure Board decisions are followed through on, without overstepping into staff work**

The Board has one employee: the Superintendent. The Board's job is to reflect the vision and values of the community articulated through our Goals and Guardrails. The Superintendent's job is to deliver on the day-to-day operations of the district in service of that vision. As a former central office employee who worked in the Office of the Superintendent, I deeply respect that division of responsibilities and believe that our good governance efforts help to create bright lines of ownership.

Working with the Superintendent while maintaining oversight means setting clear expectations and a high bar for evidence that demonstrates progress. That's why I established SFUSD's first-ever short-term Superintendent evaluation metrics—specific, measurable benchmarks for instructional, operational, and financial progress. I meet regularly with Superintendent Su to stay aligned, but I'm equally clear that our Board Workshops are opportunities for the Superintendent to demonstrate that her strategies will lead us to our student outcome goals. We aim to spend at least half of every workshop dedicated to reviewing data and holding the administration accountable to our goals.

Ensuring follow-through without micromanaging requires the right structures. I established our Ad Hoc Committee on Progress Monitoring to improve not just our progress monitoring meetings, but also the relationship between staff and the Board so that we can engage in meaningful dialogue. I'm excited to bring these recommendations to the Board this month, and to continue improving the ways in which we hold ourselves and the Superintendent accountable to our student outcome goals.

6. Board decisions often face strong public criticism. How would you respond if a decision you supported was met with significant pushback from: 1) families? 2) teachers? What would you say, and what would you do next?

I pick up the phone and call people. When families are upset, I want to hear from them directly, not through intermediaries. When teachers raise concerns, I take those concerns seriously and engage them face-to-face.

With families: I start by listening and working with groups like SF Parents to make sure I genuinely understand what's driving the concern. Sometimes criticism reveals information we didn't have, or a communication failure that needs to be corrected. Other times, it reflects genuine disagreement about values. In those cases, I owe families a clear and honest explanation of why the Board made the decision it did, grounded in our Goals and Guardrails and the data we relied on. I will always be transparent about our reasoning, even when the decision remains unpopular.

With teachers: Teachers are experts in what's actually happening in classrooms, and their feedback is often the most operationally precise signal we have about whether a policy is working. I engage UESF leadership directly and also make myself accessible to educators in school communities. If the evidence suggested we got something wrong, I say so and work to correct it. Since I joined the Board, I have set regularly scheduled meetings with teachers and administrators to continue to hear their concerns and priorities.

7. Does the district need to close schools, and if so, why? To what extent should community input, equity, and enrollment demand shape these processes and final decisions?

The conditions driving this conversation have not changed. SFUSD, like most school districts across California, continues to face declining enrollment and rising costs. That combination puts direct pressure on our ability to allocate resources effectively. Continuing to maintain a school portfolio sized for a much larger district isn't instructionally or fiscally sustainable.

I believe the district must responsibly put all options on the table, including school mergers. Avoiding this conversation doesn't make the underlying conditions go away. It just defers harder decisions to a later point when we have even fewer resources and less flexibility.

That said, how we do this matters enormously. Our schools are cornerstones of their communities. Any reorganization strategy must be driven by three things: genuine community engagement that begins early and continues through the process; an equity analysis that examines how proposed changes affect students in historically underserved communities; and clear alignment between our portfolio decisions and our instructional strategy.

8. What are the biggest challenges and opportunities you see with the district's current student assignment ("lottery") system?

Families deserve clarity from their public school system, not an opaque process that parents form Facebook groups just to decode. That's the core problem with the current lottery: it's unnecessarily complex to navigate, and that complexity falls hardest on families without the time, language access, or social networks to work through it. That is a structural inequity we have to own.

San Francisco has one of the highest private school enrollment rates in the country, and this directly impacts our funding. We need to make choosing SFUSD easier, not harder. As Board President, I led the Board in naming zone-based enrollment as a Superintendent priority. Getting this right requires serious community engagement and careful planning. Families across the city have made clear they want change, and they deserve a plan that delivers.

The transition points are where the current system is most painful: Pre-K/TK to 1st grade, 5th to 6th, 8th to high school. These are critical junctures where families need timely, accessible information. We can and should do meaningfully better at each of them. A reformed assignment system isn't just a parent-satisfaction issue; it's directly tied to our fiscal health and to making SFUSD the district of choice for San Francisco families.

9. SFUSD is facing structural budget challenges, including declining enrollment, rising costs, and pressure on reserves. What do you see as the root causes of this situation, and how should the Board respond within its governance role?

Declining enrollment and chronic absenteeism are the most significant drivers of our loss in revenues. Simultaneously, fixed costs in areas like special education, debt service, and facilities continue to rise regardless of enrollment. For years, the district also relied on one-time federal COVID relief funds to cover ongoing operating expenses, which created a structural deficit that became fully visible when those funds ran out.

Compounding this were budget forecasting practices that were not rigorous enough. We were not accurately projecting multi-year revenues and expenditures, which meant we were regularly surprised by deficits rather than planning ahead to address them. Within our governance role, the Board's response has to be disciplined and forward-looking. We cannot direct day-to-day budget management—that's the Superintendent's job. But we can and must set clear financial guardrails, hold the Superintendent accountable to a credible multi-year fiscal plan, and ensure that one-time funds are used for one-time purposes.

Additionally, through our effective governance efforts, we must ensure the district has a clear vision, clearly defines the strategies used to realize that vision, and

resource those strategies appropriately and adequately. This ensures that our resources are most focused on the strategies we believe will help us reach our student outcome goals.

I'm proud that we moved from a "negative" to "qualified" fiscal certification, and that our December 2025 interim report was unanimously approved by the Board. That progress reflects difficult decisions made over the past year. The short-term Superintendent evaluation metrics I established hold her accountable to sustaining that trajectory. Long-term stability requires continued discipline in forecasting, spending within our means, and ensuring we align resources with where students actually are.

10. The Board's 2014 decision to change 8th grade algebra policy did not produce the intended results, and the current Board's recent revisions have drawn mixed reactions from teachers and families. What does this case reveal about how the San Francisco Board of Education should handle decisions around academic policy? If elected, what specific, measurable actions would you take to: 1) expand access to advanced coursework, and 2) improve outcomes for historically underserved students?

Under my leadership as Board President, I am proud that algebra has returned to 8th grade. We now need to turn our attention to the implementation of this work, including ensuring families and students are well informed on their choices, and that educators are getting the resources and training they need.

Expanding access to advanced coursework requires us to ensure we not only provide the course offerings across our schools (access), but that we equip our students (scaffolding and differentiation) and teachers (coaching) with the resources to succeed. My background in education is mostly in Curriculum & Instruction. I think deeply about how we can support teachers with internalization, feedback, and data-driven instruction through the implementation of high quality curricular materials. I'm excited to build on this experience to improve our progress monitoring and policies to bring rigorous coursework across all of SFUSD.

To improve outcomes for historically underserved students, I will continue championing initiatives like the African American Achievement and Leadership Initiative and Matua Advisory, which have demonstrated measurable above-average growth for Black and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students. I will push for full implementation of our multi-tiered system of support so that every student who needs intervention gets it before they fall significantly behind. And I will ensure that the Board's progress monitoring includes disaggregated outcome data because districtwide averages can mask disparities that require urgent attention.