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Questions for November 2026 SFUSD School Board Candidates
Ryan Hazelton

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***

At Mariposa Kids, I work with families from Flynn and Huerta Elementary Schools serving 65 children a year in our after-school program. What I hear consistently from our parents is that they love their school community. Their teachers are dedicated and the school is a real community anchor. What they also tell me is that the system surrounding that school feels consistently challenging. That gap between a strong school community and a difficult system is exactly why I am running.

For fifteen years, I have dedicated my career and volunteer time to children and families in San Francisco including early childhood education, strengthening families, healthy childhoods, quality education, and out-of-school time programming. Outside of Mariposa Kids, I have served on the boards of four child/family serving nonprofits building skills in organizational governance, fiduciary responsibility, and strategy. This includes serving as President of the Board of SF's Thomas Edison Charter Academy where I oversaw policy development, superintendent hiring, and HR practices for educators.

Children are naturally curious and their desire to learn is innate. How each child best learns is broad and unique. Equity in education means building systems that support that diversity by empowering educators with the resources and time to meet each child where they are. Allowing teachers the time, space, and tools to address individual learning needs is vital to academic excellence, including real opportunities for teachers and families to work together so that a child's home and school experience grow in the same direction.

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?*

I share with SF Parents a fundamental commitment: families who rely on our public schools deserve a meaningful voice in how those schools operate, and that commitment must extend to every family regardless of language, income, or

background.

Running a nonprofit serving children at SFUSD schools, I speak with parents every day and engage our parent community in feedback opportunities to improve our programming. I believe that when families are strong and communities are safe, each child can prosper. The school system and the home life of a child cannot be so disconnected that a child cannot learn.

Similar to my roles on the board of TECA and the SF Childcare Planning and Advisory Council, I believe bringing parent voices to the decision-making table is not optional. It is the work. The idea that you can build something and families will come works only when you have engaged parents in the building. If elected, the question "What have we heard from parents?" will be one I ask consistently in every significant board discussion. This was the approach I used when Mariposa Kids expanded programming and community reach, and it is the approach I would bring to the board.

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 February strike created real hardship for thousands of San Francisco families. Parents scrambled for childcare. Working families faced impossible choices. Our school year is extended into summer. At Mariposa Kids, we kept our doors open at no cost during the strike so that families in our programs would have a safe and supervised place for their children. I saw firsthand what families were navigating.

My father was a United Food and Commercial Workers union member who retired on his union pension. I watched him participate in the UFCW strike in 2003 that lasted 141 days. The decision to strike is not taken lightly. When 97% of UESF educators approved the strike vote, that told me they felt they had no other option.

What could each party have done differently? SFUSD leadership allowed negotiations to drag on for months before urgency arrived. The Board of Education did not hold the district to a realistic negotiating timeline, and recent financial disclosures suggest honest budget projections were not clearly communicated, which eroded trust on all sides. All parties allowed the situation to escalate longer than necessary given the impact on families.

Going forward, the board must require early and sustained contract engagement rather than crisis negotiations. There is also broad agreement that California's

attendance based funding model is outdated. A unified advocacy effort bringing together families, educators, and city partners to push Sacramento toward enrollment based funding can ease the resource constraints that fuel so many of these conflicts.

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**

Effective board governance begins with accountability and continues through sound practices including carefully crafted agendas that prioritize needs correctly and consistently ensuring the right voices are in the room for thoughtful decisions. The Vision, Values, Goals and Guardrails model the board currently uses supports effective governance by maintaining a framework that prevents the board from being derailed by the many competing political and interpersonal forces that can throw a governing body off course. I look forward to continuing that model.

A board governs while staff execute. The board employs the superintendent to carry out the mission, vision, values, and operations of the organization on its behalf. It is important that the superintendent feels empowered to lead without the micromanaging that slows progress. As an executive director of a non-profit who reports to a board of directors, I understand this firsthand and would carry that value onto the board.

Empowering the superintendent is not the same as giving them a pass. The superintendent must set realistic and measurable goals that the board reviews, agrees to, and holds to with regular and transparent progress reporting. I know from my own experience leading a non-profit that being held accountable by a board that clear expectations honestly reported are how institutional trust is built. When goals are not met, the board's job is to ask why and require a credible path forward rather than accepting reassurance in place of results.

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?

A key factor in responding to pushback on a board decision is holding the value that it is a board decision and the board speaks as one rather than as individuals. This matters because it prevents discourse from becoming about interpersonal conflict rather than substantive resolution. The integrity of the governing process breaks

down when individual board members capitalize on the criticism for personal gain or utilize the moment to advance individual aspirations or grievances with others.

Any significant pushback begins with active listening. Refusing to provide spaces for community members to air their concerns only allows discontent to grow and pushes everyone further from resolution. Researching the opinions expressed allows the board to understand how the impact of a decision may differ from its intended outcome.

I will also commit to this: if that active listening process reveals we got the decision wrong, I will say so clearly and without excessive delay. Boards that allow a failed policy to persist because revisiting it feels politically awkward do lasting damage to community trust. Efficient and honest course correction is not weakness. It is governance.

Real transparency requires a response to stakeholders on whether a decision will stand or whether revisions are being proposed. When feedback loops are not closed, tensions continue and separate stakeholders further apart for every future decision.

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?

Based on the numbers and future outlook, some school consolidations are likely necessary in the upcoming years. It is the sequence and conditions that matter enormously.

Superintendent Su's plan takes us through 2030 and appropriately connects enrollment assignment changes to any closure conversations. We cannot responsibly close schools before we change our assignment processes and understand their outcomes. Doing so risks decisions being based on enrollment patterns a reformed system may fundamentally change. This requires that assignment system changes are held to their proposed timeline and not further delayed.

The district's school properties currently have capacity far higher than the number of students enrolled. That gap will not fully close through assignment reform, which is why a handful of consolidations are likely in the future. When they happen, they must meet a clear standard: genuine community engagement before decisions are made rather than after; an equity impact analysis for every consolidation to ensure closures do not disproportionately affect schools serving vulnerable students; and a commitment that consolidated schools are better resourced as a result rather than

simply combined and left at the same level of service.

We have learned from recent closure conversations what not to do, which is to conduct these discussions behind closed doors. The uncertainty communities feel during these conversations must be held with care. Schools are communities. Any changes also cannot be concentrated in particular neighborhoods or driven by which communities have enough private resources to more effectively advocate for their schools.

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

The biggest challenge with our lottery system is the real anxiety it creates for families who cannot predict where their child will land. We continually lose families to private schools because of the system's complexity and unpredictable results.

I see this effect in a place that is often overlooked. As an after-school program provider, I see how programs cannot properly enroll and staff programs until school waiting lists sort themselves out, creating uncertainty for families trying to plan their child's full day. When private schools can offer guaranteed after-school programming alongside guaranteed enrollment, SFUSD loses families who might otherwise stay. I hear this from families every academic year.

With changes to the current assignment system, we can create the predictability families need. I also believe neighborhood assignments have the power to deepen community investment in schools by anchoring them more directly in the lives of nearby families.

There is also a real opportunity for our early childhood education providers to better partner with elementary schools in a neighborhood based system. When families choose preschools near their home and their child's likely elementary school is also nearby, warm handoffs between the preschool and elementary system become possible and improve outcomes at the moment of transition that matters most.

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?

SFUSD's structural budget challenges have several root causes: enrollment decline driven in part by a confusing assignment system and insufficient after-school options; a state funding model based on attendance rather than enrollment that punishes the district for every absence; and a central office that independent analysis has documented costs significantly more than peer districts.

On administrative spending: the City's Budget and Legislative Analyst has found SFUSD's central office spending is 83% above peer district median. Every dollar maintaining an oversized administrative structure is a dollar not reaching a classroom. The superintendent must provide the board with a substantive budget narrative justifying the continued need for each area of district overhead, not a line item list but a real analysis of what each function costs and what it produces. Classroom and teacher reductions cannot be the mechanism for balancing this budget. Administrative structure must be addressed first.

I have advocated consistently through my work on the SF Childcare Planning and Advisory Council against balancing city budgets on the backs of our youngest children. Pulling funds from early childhood programs and the Department of Early Childhood to close budget gaps creates long term costs that far exceed the short term savings. Children who enter kindergarten unprepared cost more to serve throughout their school careers.

The board can also lead a coalition to push Sacramento toward enrollment based funding, which would ease the structural constraints that drive so many of these pressures.

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?

I greatly benefited from having access to Algebra in 8th grade. It set me up for advanced coursework in high school and made college math significantly more manageable. Access to advanced math also expands a student's ability to take science classes that require those skills. These two subjects are deeply interconnected.

The 2014 algebra decision and its reversal reveal something important: curriculum decisions cannot be made without a concrete implementation plan. Approving a new course is the easy part. The board's responsibility is to understand how that change will be resourced, how teachers will be trained, and how outcomes will be measured before the vote rather than after. We are also introducing a great deal of new curriculum at once, which is hard for already stretched site administrators and educators to absorb.

Specific actions I would take: I would require the superintendent to produce a quarterly algebra enrollment report broken out by middle school and by race and ethnicity, paired with semester performance data. If access is concentrated in some schools and absent in others, or if enrollment rates differ significantly by student group, the board needs to see that and act on it. Access on paper is not the same as access in practice.

To improve outcomes for historically underserved students, I would look to ways we can expand community partnerships similar to Chapter One's literacy support in elementary schools to provide additional scaffolding in math for students who have the potential and simply need the tools.