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San Francisco Parent Action
www.sfparentaction.org

Questions for SFUSD School Board Candidates 2024 SUPRYIA RAY

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

<i>Excellent and Equitable Public Schools</i>	<i>Level of Agreement</i>
1. I SUPPORT the SF Parent Coalition Parent Priorities Platform. 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 2024-25.	4
2. 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.	4
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 adopts a comprehensive and fully funded plan , and makes the necessary changes to our curricula, tools, and instruction methods that will follow an evidence- and standards-based instructional approach.	4
4. 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.	3
5. BUDGET HEALTH: I commit to governing in accordance with nationally-established best financial practices . 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.	4

SFPARENTS

OPEN-ENDED: (all responses should be 250 words or fewer)

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

SFPC Platform: As a parent, I appreciate that SF Parents developed priorities through outreach to families and caregivers across the District. As a result, the priorities reflect widely shared concerns, and we all have a stake in working together to reach effective solutions.

Equity and excellence go hand in hand. For example, the decision to remove algebra from 8th grade, however well-intentioned, harmed many students and the school system more generally. Rather than narrowing the achievement gap, it created more obstacles for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and deprived high achieving students of every background of more rigorous coursework in SFUSD. Many people felt ignored, lost trust in SFUSD, or even left the District.

I'd add safety as a priority: safe schools are a threshold concern for every parent, student, and educator.

Transparency: Without data on how kids and schools are doing, we are all flying blind: parents, teachers, administrators, and other decision-makers. We need quality assessments to know where each child is and what curriculum, programs, and other resources are most effective in improving educational outcomes.

More generally, SFUSD must embrace transparency in all its operations. Everyone struggles to get information, especially from Central Office. For example, it took about 6 months just to find out SFUSD lacks a list of tutoring resources.

Governance: While I recognize that the Board's and Superintendent's roles and responsibilities differ, the Board should be more active, especially on accountability, to ensure the Superintendent and staff adhere to the VVGG and effectively execute their responsibilities.

2) *Why are you running for the Board of Education? Within this response, please describe a) your connection to SFUSD students and families, and b) a description of your leadership style, experience, and/or training.*

I am running for the Board to ensure all kids have the access and opportunity to reach their potential and because the people most affected by SFUSD need to be heard.

As a working parent with two kids in SFUSD, I will listen to you and speak up for students, including the most vulnerable. I've led efforts Districtwide for outdoor learning and have collaborated with many of you on reopening, safety, literacy, math, and better governance. For example, I have:

- Organized advocacy at Board meetings to improve math and literacy curriculum;

SFPARENTS

- Organized community advocacy for outdoor learning through meetings, email campaigns, public comment, and informational materials;
- Advocated for safety improvements districtwide and to address safety breaches at my daughter's school;
- Helped Spanish-speaking mothers advocate for outdoor learning and safety at Everett;
- Led community efforts to obtain bond funding for outdoor spaces districtwide;
- Helped secure grants for outdoor learning at APG, Drew, Jefferson, & Mission Education Center; and
- Organized a Zoom-In when schools were closed.

On a personal note, I am bi-racial, grew up with a single mom, and survived childhood violence and sexual assault. Schools were my refuge and my launchpad—all the way to Harvard Law School; a career as lawyer, writer, and teacher; and a wonderful family today. I am proof of the transformative power of schools and will speak up for kids in dire need of safe spaces and opportunities.

For me, the Board is not a stepping stone. I would be honored to have your support.

3) Do you support the superintendent's [plan](#) to fix SFUSD's budget deficit, including but not limited to classroom consolidations and school closures?

The school district must provide quality education, meet the needs of each student, and pay its bills. While the Superintendent and Board are starting to address these fundamentals, we have a long way to go after years of irresponsible actions and inactions.

I don't flatly support or oppose the Resource Alignment Initiative. I agree on the goals of a consistent school staffing model and Central Office reorganization. We have to attract more students and revenue through a commitment to programs that demonstrably improve student outcomes, consolidate where necessary, and obtain revenue from unused properties. But we have to consider the families and futures affected by every decision.

I will insist on full disclosure and real stakeholder participation before deciding whether to support or oppose particular decisions. We can't just cut our way out of this mess, or we will deprive families of the education children need. Instead, the District should scrutinize every dollar spent for its impact on student well-being and progress, and it should continue to seek funds to support programs that students and families want.

We must close the budget gap, the achievement gap, and the trust gap. Any school closure/consolidation decisions must follow civil rights laws and be fact-based and sensitive to those most affected. In the "after"—whatever that may be—we must support families and teachers whose schools are consolidated and show better outcomes in their new environments. We can't repeat the mistakes, isolation, and learning loss of the pandemic closures.

4) How can SFUSD increase academic [outcomes](#) for the most underserved students and close the racially predictable achievement gap?

To improve academic outcomes and close the achievement gap, SFUSD will need to work closely with educators and families. As a Board member, I will foster inclusivity, involve all key stakeholders, and seek effective solutions. The Board should determine whether the

SFPARENTS

Superintendent and his staff have reviewed school data, called upon experts, and developed evidence-based strategies to teach all student populations, then hold the Superintendent and staff accountable for results and for course correcting as needed.

Drawing on my experience and knowledge regarding literacy and math, I believe early education, reading, and reducing chronic absenteeism will be critical.

First, gaps develop in readiness even before kindergarten. Early education programs should support and empower parents to promote learning.

Second, as Frederick Douglass said, reading is the key to freedom. Children need to understand the curriculum, and to do that they need to be able to read. I will keep a close eye on SFUSD's newly adopted curriculum and prioritize training and support so teachers feel encouraged to have high expectations for students. Alumni and community groups can also step up as tutors in reading and other subjects.

Third, I know from my advocacy during COVID that being out of school often means not learning. Working with city agencies, we should identify why children are not in school and what can be done in school, at home, or in the community to remove obstacles. Some aspects may be beyond SFUSD control, but we can foster community partnerships for regular school attendance.

5) *How can SFUSD challenge and create learning opportunities for higher achieving students?*

Another area where SFUSD's actions don't match its words is on learning opportunities for high-achieving students. Carrying out Vision 2025, which calls for personalized learning and development pathways, should include expanding honors and AP classes to more schools and grade levels and preparing students to be able to take these classes, if they so choose. We need to start early, in kindergarten or before, with curriculum and instruction that combines high expectations with the support each child needs. Then we will have more students who are proficient at grade level, can succeed in advanced classes, and take advantage of dual-enrollment opportunities at CCSF. We should also have a second, more easily accessible school like Lowell elsewhere in the city.

Moving away from a "one-size-fits-all" approach will keep students interested and engaged. Providing more individualized learning opportunities will also enable families to feel confident in their kids' education without having to resort to "workarounds," such as online classes, or leaving SFUSD altogether—options that many families cannot afford.

SFUSD could also help schools offer different environments for learning. Vision 2025 speaks of reimagining the school day, including exploring new ways to use space and time, yet SFUSD remains mostly stuck within the four walls of the classroom. I would look at models in other districts and ideas from the Schools of Education at SF State and USF to incorporate more learning styles and expand the ways to be high achieving, whether through outdoor, project-based, experiential, or other avenues for learning.

6) *What should SFUSD do to increase enrollment and to attract more students and families to the San Francisco Unified School District, at elementary, middle,*

SFPARENTS

and/or high school entry points?

To increase enrollment and attract more families and students, SFUSD needs to get the basics right. We've all heard about SFUSD's financial straits, staffing shortages, and safety issues, so we need to put the District back on secure financial footing and ensure adequate staffing and safety measures.

SFUSD also needs to engage families, teachers, staff, students, and the wider community to build trust and articulate a compelling vision of our public school system as a place of access and opportunity for all children. More people will want to come (and stay) when they see SFUSD as a place where their kids—whatever their needs or circumstances—can grow, get a quality education, and become the best versions of themselves. Welcoming all families, providing information promptly and transparently, embracing our city's diversity, and ensuring that students graduate on time, ready for college or a career, will all help.

SFUSD should also simplify student assignment, facilitate transportation to maximize family choice in enrollment, and ensure quality schools in every part of the city. Lowell's location in a rather remote corner reflects families' willingness to send kids across town for an excellent education, but we shouldn't have to.

In addition, SFUSD should improve collaboration with city agencies, including to promote readiness for early education and kindergarten. Within SFUSD, we need to assure families that closures/consolidations will not be replicated.

7) What do you think of SFUSD's lottery system of enrollment?

San Francisco must have high-quality schools accessible to all communities. The current lottery is a failure that parents dread and that drives families away.

My family's experience is a case in point. For kindergarten, our daughter was placed in a school across town even though our son was enrolled at our neighborhood school. With sibling preference, she should have been placed at the same school as her brother, but we struggled through multiple rounds and proved the algorithm failed. Newcomer and non-English-speaking parents have it even worse.

Frustration with the lottery among parents is rampant throughout the city. The selection process would be less high-stakes if families were confident of safe, supportive, and effective learning environments at every school. Kids' futures should not depend on the luck of the lottery.

On the Board, I will hold Town Hall meetings to hear directly from parents about the factors that are important to them in selecting a school and how to reach out to families and prospective applicants. By providing better and more timely information about the application process, we can reduce confusion and anxiety, help families prepare their children for the next level of education, and learn about the programs and choices available in SFUSD. I will also call on District staff to work closely with MUNI; DCYF (Dept of Children, Youth & Their Families), the Housing Authority, public libraries, and the Youth Commission to enhance coordination and two-way communication to better serve SF families.

SFPARENTS

8) How did you vote on Prop G (8th Grade Algebra) and why? What are the top three areas to focus on in math currently to improve math outcomes for kids at SFUSD?

I not only voted for Prop G, I led a parent ballot argument, raised funds, spoke at debates, and distributed materials in the community. I continue to work collaboratively to promote math opportunities and to engage with the Superintendent to improve math outcomes. Three areas to focus on are: (1) teacher empowerment and training to strengthen teaching techniques; (2) literacy, as solving word problems and understanding foundational concepts require reading proficiency; and (3) high-dosage tutoring for kids who have fallen behind in math.

The lack of challenge for my son in math motivated me to engage with others to improve SFUSD's curriculum and restore algebra in 8th grade. We can revamp our approach to math, and we have examples to draw from—ranging from MLK MS in the 1990s to John Muir ES today—to improve proficiency for our most disadvantaged students.

To be part of the solution, I worked on SF Parents' "Kids Can't Wait" initiative to improve math and literacy, organizing parents to speak at BOE meetings and recognize bright spots in SFUSD. I also worked with educators and advocates to highlight the inequitable effects of removing algebra from 8th grade and to call for changing state law to remedy this issue. Notably, Senator Cory Booker's federal Advanced Coursework Equity Act estimates ~100,000 Black and Brown children nationwide are denied access to 8th grade algebra, which limits their opportunities for advanced math in high school and their access to competitive colleges and STEM careers.

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

Due to the lengthy school closures during the pandemic and the tremendous difficulties so many kids and families experienced, I supported the school board recall. I saw a huge disconnect between the District's stated values, such as being student-centered and focusing on vulnerable populations, and the reality kids and families faced with distance learning. There was also a huge disconnect between the issues the Board focused on, such as renaming schools, and what most kids and families urgently needed, which was to reopen schools.

As a result, I spent countless hours with other parents—including many of you now involved with SF Parents and other organizations—seeking solutions to the Board's inaction. We shared information, workshopped issues, attended Board meetings, circulated petitions, contacted decision-makers, and looked for alternative ways to help kids learn. Even with a massive parent movement, SFUSD was among the last major urban school districts to reopen.

Given my ongoing involvement as an advocate on outdoor learning and other issues at my kids' schools and districtwide, I did not advocate for the recall publicly. I worried about derailing progress on the issues I was working on, and like many other parents, I worried about speaking out too much, especially in an atmosphere of intimidation and silencing dissenting voices.

If I am elected to the Board, I will listen to all voices and work to set a new tone for community respect. I will also stay focused on what we all want: safe schools and quality education.

SFPARENTS

10) Who will you look to as your trusted sources of feedback, information, and advice as you make decisions as a BOE Commissioner? In what ways will you engage with and solicit feedback from community members?

As a Commissioner, I will look to a wide variety of sources for feedback, information, and advice: students and families; teachers, administrators, and other staff; education advocates and community members; government partners; and other Commissioners. Whether or not I agree with a particular viewpoint, I will hear people out, and I will always be open to comments.

Sadly, the voices of students, families, and staff have often been ignored—if they've been consulted at all—and we've all suffered the consequences of poor Board decision-making. The decision not to consult families and staff about changing school start times and the EMPOWER fiasco are just two examples. I will be vigilant in ensuring the District prioritizes community consultation and complies with the guardrail for effective decision-making.

I will proactively engage with and solicit feedback from community members and not just wait for people to reach out to me. For example, I will visit schools formally and informally. I've met many parents at drop-offs, pick-ups, and school socials—all prime times for hearing what's going on at school and what experiences kids and families are having.

In addition, to better address concerns raised in public comment at Board meetings, and given legal limitations on responding to public comment in the moment, I will advocate for a way to follow up on school-specific concerns (e.g., designating a staff member), including with the person who made the comment, if needed.