

SFLCV November 2020 Election Board of Education Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in the San Francisco League of Conservation Voters endorsement process. Please limit answers to the below questions to 2-3 paragraphs at most (250 words). We are accepting responses until Friday August 28, 2020 at midnight. Please note that your responses will be posted publicly on our website at www.sflcv.org.

Please enter your contact info here (Name, District, Campaign contact, Phone, Email, FPPC#) *

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What are your qualifications for Board of Education? *

I have 20 years of experience working in SF public schools, including a decade as a teacher and a decade as a high school principal. I have a track record of leading innovation, facilitating democratic decision-making, and organizing for real change.

Some of my accomplishments include:

- In the late 1990s I worked with parents, youth and educators in a multi-racial movement for small, community-based schools, which led to the founding of June Jordan School for Equity.
- At JJSE, I led a student body that was more than 80% low-income and nearly 30% special education students, and Black and Latino students graduated and were accepted to college at rates exceeding most other schools in SFUSD.
- In 2017, I worked with youth from high schools across SFUSD to push the School Board to pass the Undocumented, Unafraid, and United Resolution, which significantly strengthened protections for undocumented students.
- At Faith in Action Bay Area, I have organized citywide campaigns to get immigrants released from ICE detention, for housing subsidies for low-income seniors at risk of losing their homes, and to protect our unhoused neighbors during the COVID-19 crisis.

I'm proud that I've been endorsed by United Educators of San Francisco, SEIU 1021, the SF Democratic Party, all of the returning members of the School Board, and a majority of the Board of Supervisors. I would be honored to earn the support of the SF League of Conservation Voters.

Given the constraints posed by the COVID-19 crisis, both financial and operational, how would you integrate environmental imperatives with this new reality? *

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated opportunity gaps that already existed within SFUSD and increased strain on the district's already challenging finances. To address this crisis and create a public school system that provides an excellent education for all children, we should:

1. Increase revenue, and spend our money where the children are. SFUSD spends about half what New York City public schools spend per student. No matter how bad the economy is, we're still living in one of the wealthiest cities in the world: we must increase both local and state revenue. This will allow us to pursue environmental as well as educational priorities.
2. Listen to the people doing the work. Parents, students, teachers, and paraprofessionals must be central to our decision-making. Democracy begins by listening to the people--and our schools need to reflect and nurture our democratic values.
3. Lead San Francisco into the future. SFUSD is a powerful civic institution and the second-largest landowner in the city. We must increase our engagement to address the housing crisis that is destroying the soul of San Francisco, and we must become a model of an environmentally sustainable public institution.

What should the School District do to improve its environmental and climate justice practices? *

SFUSD currently has sustainability targets, but they call for carbon neutrality only by 2050. I believe we need a San Francisco Green New Deal that includes a more rapid transition to carbon neutrality, coupled with guaranteed housing, jobs, and health care; the City needs to lead on this but SFUSD can play a key role as a large public institution, employer, and landowner.

In the shorter term, we can create environmental justice by prioritizing the right of all children to attend school in environmentally healthy spaces. This includes proactively addressing ongoing challenges such as mold, vermin, and pollutants on campuses; expanding the Green Schoolyard program so that students have equitable opportunities to spend time in nature; and increasing partnerships with parks and expanding opportunities for field trips that allow all students to experience the healthy benefits of the Bay Area's natural environments.

What is your opinion of the School District's current environmental education curriculum?
How can it be improved? *

For the past several years, SFUSD has invested heavily in science education, with a focus on integrating the Next Generation Science Standards across grade levels. As part of this effort, I have seen some effective work in environmental education curriculum, particularly around the issue of climate change, which gets integrated into middle school science as well as biology and chemistry. I've also participated in and witnessed multiple successful garden education programs, helping students make connections between the natural world and language arts, the social sciences, science, and math.

While these steps are important, I believe the district could do a better job of focusing on environmental education. In 2016, the state of California integrated the California Environmental Principles and Concepts into both the revised California History-Social Sciences Framework as well as the new California Science Framework, but these changes have not adequately reached SFUSD classrooms. There has not been enough professional development to support teachers in integrating the Environmental Principles and Concepts, not just in science classes but across the curriculum.

How could school district policies encourage the most environmentally-beneficial use of school property surrounding its buildings? *

When I was principal at June Jordan School for Equity, we used the land between our building and McLaren Park to develop one of the largest school gardens in the city (including chickens and a fruit tree orchard), in partnership with the local nonprofit Urban Sprouts and their youth leaders. We also removed a huge portion of blacktop and replaced it with a wetlands, in a project that was led by science teachers and their students. These are just two examples of innovative, community-led, environmentally-beneficial use of SFUSD land. I will encourage and support efforts like these across the district.

Why should the San Francisco League of Conservation Voters endorse you? *

As an educator, I have a long track record of promoting your priorities of conservation and protection of natural resources, environmental justice, and sustainability-- and I will bring those same values to the Board of Education. Let me give a few examples spanning the past 25 years: When I was a social studies teacher at Balboa High School in the late 1990s, I took my students on field trips led by Literacy for Environmental Justice in the Bayview. As a teacher at June Jordan School for Equity in 2006, I developed and taught an innovative course on food policy and the environment, where students read and analyzed texts on topics including industrial vs. small-scale farming, and also grew, harvested, and cooked food in our school garden. When I was principal at June Jordan School for Equity, in 2015 I supported our teaching staff to develop and implement a school-wide, interdisciplinary, project-based unit on climate change. This was the first time all classrooms in the school had engaged in studying the same topic at the same time, and we did it because we knew that climate justice was the biggest collective challenge facing our society--and that we needed the youth to lead us all to a better future.



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