



## School Board questionnaire Fall 2008

### 1. Why do you want to be on the School Board?

I am running for school board to promote positive change and restore trust in our schools. We need a school board that values parent participation, respects teachers and support staff, and will unite the community in support of our schools.

### 2. What relevant achievements in the last five years qualify you for this position?

I have been an active parent and supporter of our schools. My commitment to youth and our community includes:

- President, English Learner Advisory Committee, San Leandro High School, 2007-Present.
- School Site Council, San Leandro High School, 2005 - 2006.
- E-scrip Coordinator, United Parents of San Leandro High-School, 2006 - Present.
- Advisor, Leo Service Club, San Leandro High School, 2007- Present.
- Member, Lions Club of San Leandro, 2007 - Present.
- Volunteer, Measure B campaign committee.
- Member-at-Large, Alameda County Consumer Affairs Commission, 2006 - Present.

### 3. In your opinion what are the three most pressing issues facing our District?

1. Lack of leadership by the Superintendent and School Board.

2. School safety.
3. Preserving our art, music and vocational education programs from cuts due to the state budget crisis.
4. For each issue identified in your response to Question 3, what strategies would you take to address the issues?

1. We need a School Board and Superintendent that listens to parents, teachers and staff.

School Board members must start by ending their infighting and petty politics. My opponent sought to remove then-Board President Pauline Cutter in the middle of her term as Board President simply because he wanted to be Board President himself.

I propose that the district conduct regular workshops and community forums, inviting parents, teachers and the community to comment on the district's performance and answer questions and address issues. The district must do a better job communicating with the public. The district-wide parent bulletin and community newsletters should be restored. Finally, the district should develop an annual parent survey on our schools and district.

These are all ways the district can involve the community in developing solutions to the key issues facing our students.

It must also be recognized that the Superintendent has lost the respect of teachers and support staff and driven employee morale to an all-time low.

My opponent recently voted to give the Superintendent a pay raise and new contract. The Superintendent now earns more than the Governor. I would not have voted to give the Superintendent a pay raise or new contract.

2. The school board must focus on school safety and not treat it as a topic to be considered only after an incident occurs. We need to keep kids off drugs and stay away from gangs and violence. This means having students know that there will be zero tolerance for unacceptable behavior, and it means supporting effective prevention programs that help kids stay on the right track.

One simple, no-cost step that can be immediately undertaken is to treat parents as valued partners and welcome them onto our campuses. Particularly at the secondary level, many parents feel unwelcome, and

only step on campus during registration and back to school nights. Having parents on campus is one of the most effective ways to deter gang recruitment, curb students fights and misbehavior.

Finally, our middle and high schools are critically overcrowded. This creates ongoing safety issues. That is why I will vote to reverse my opponent's decision to weaken the district's residency verification standards.

3. San Leandro's schools rank at the bottom of school districts in Alameda County in revenue per student. Our schools are underfunded by hundreds to thousands of dollars per student compared to other districts in the county. This means valuable programs such as art, music and vocational education are at risk of being cut due to the state's budget crisis.

I am committed to seeing that we adopt a parcel tax for our schools to preserve and enhance our arts, music and vocational education programs.

5. Describe your recent involvement with San Leandro school campuses?

Please see my answer to question two. I served on the school site council at San Leandro High School and am currently the President of the English Language Advisory Committee.

6. How would you work with families to increase parental involvement in our schools?

As I noted earlier, I propose that the district conduct regular workshops and create an annual parent survey. The Superintendent and School Board should not assume they know the top concerns of parents. The Superintendent and School Board must actively solicit the parents' input.

As other districts do, we should publish a district-wide parent newsletter. Right now each school has its own newsletter. But information on district-wide issues is not conveyed to all parents.

The school district's parent volunteer procedures should be streamlined. It is too detailed and operates to discourage parent involvement. Further, the School Board should direct the Superintendent to set goals for parent volunteers at each school site and hold her responsible for seeing that the principals meet these goals.

Finally, we need to appreciate that parents in San Leandro do not speak English as their primary language. We must have materials for these parents in their

native languages and have translators available in the schools to assist these parents.

7. List specific ways you would work to improve teacher morale.

We must improve the salaries of teachers and support staff so that our district attracts and retains the best educators for our children. If we can enact a parcel tax to protect our art, music and vocational education programs, that will free up money in the district's general fund to improve teacher salaries.

The low morale of our teachers and other employees is not solely due to our low ranking on county pay schedules. The School Board must take action to resolve the contentious relationship between the Superintendent and our teachers and staff.

I advocate we undertake an annual survey of teachers and staff as to the key issues in the district. The School Board and Superintendent must have accurate and timely information on what the district's employees feel must be addressed. I will insist that the Superintendent work in a collaborative manner. She must treat our teachers and staff as the responsible, dedicated professionals they are.

8. Do you believe that a change in the District administrative leadership is necessary? Please state the facts/reasons that support your response.

Yes. As I noted above, our teacher and support staff lack confidence in the leadership of the Superintendent. Employee morale is at an all-time low.

The need for a change in district leadership is clear. Just look at the latest press articles on the district's legal fees. I am outraged that the district spent \$833,000 on lawyers. Our schools will never have the support of the community if the Superintendent and School Board does not treat every dollar as precious.

Our district is spending more on legal fees in one year than the San Lorenzo school district spends in 7 years. San Lorenzo has a Superintendent that watches legal bills like a hawk. He makes decisions in a collaborative manner and resolves disputes on his own. In San Leandro, it appears our Superintendent can not make a decision without first calling a lawyer.

We should be investing in our students, not law firms.

My opponent chairs the district's Finance Committee. He has done nothing to stop the Superintendent's obscene spending on lawyers. Instead, he voted to renew the district's contract with its law firm without even examining the billing records. In the middle of the state budget crisis, he voted to give the Superintendent a pay raise and new contract. The Superintendent now earns

more than the Governor.

I would not have voted to give the Superintendent a pay raise or new contract. I will hold the Superintendent accountable and end the district's wasteful spending.

9. If you are not currently on the Board, how many school board meetings have you attended in the past two years? If you are currently on the Board, how many school board meetings have you missed in the last two years.

Four. I will attend more meeting prior to the election. I have also attended numerous meetings at San Leandro High School over the past two years in my capacity as President of the English Language Advisory Committee and member of the school site council.