



Oakland Unified School District Board of Education
 Candidate Questionnaire, Policies and Issues

Section 1: For each of the following statements, please rank your level of agreement on the following scale:

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

At the conclusion of this section, you will have a total of 250 words to expand upon any of your responses. This exercise will help our network better understand your positions on a wide range of issues.

Statement	Level of Agreement (Rank from 1-4)
Quality Public Schools	
I support the #SchoolAfterCOVID Family Demands . Family voices, especially those historically marginalized, should be centered and part of the decision-making process as they have become experts on what it takes to get distance learning right and they have the most at stake. We must follow their lead.	3
District and charter schools can both be part of a successful community of schools in Oakland, but there needs to be equity between systems and fairness in how we hold schools accountable to serving students. The Board of Education has responsibility for the success of all students attending Oakland public schools.	3
I support a system for evaluating the quality of our public schools, both district and charter, that is primarily based on their results for students based on qualitative and quantitative measures such as the School Performance Analysis (SPA) , and the School Quality Review Rubric .	4
Research shows that four key resources have a dramatic impact on	3



student achievement (grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement in what they're learning, and teachers who hold high expectations). As a board member, it would be my primary focus to expand access to these four resources to students who have been historically denied access.	
I support the articulated vision of our current superintendent, Kyla Johnson-Tramell.	3
Statement	Level of Agreement (Rank from 1-4)
Financial Sustainability	
I commit to governing and voting in accordance with nationally established best financial practices, including those in the Smarter School Spending Framework put forward by the Government Finance Officers Association, and adopted in Board Resolution 18-0127 .	3
I would give more funding to support students most likely to have suffered significant learning loss due to COVID school closures, in excess of Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) supplemental and concentration grants.	4
District leadership should be held accountable for presenting their budget in a clear, student-centered way at public board meetings that allows parents, community members, and board members alike to understand and engage. As a board member I will demand this level of transparency from district staff and use GO's Sunshine budget Presentation Rubric . You can find a sample rating here .	4
To increase state education funding, I support Proposition 15 on the November 2020 ballot, also known as Schools and Communities First, and believe that Proposition 13 should be modified to tax commercial and industrial property owners at their properties' current market rates.	4

Section 1 Response (OPTIONAL): In 250 words or fewer (in total, not 250 per statement), expand on any of your responses to the statements above. You might use this section to add nuance to one of your positions or to provide additional context on your opinions. You may

address as many statements from the above section as you would like, so long as your response falls within the 250-word limit.

- RE: charter schools, I believe in the original intent of charter schools to be hubs of innovation with the obligation share what they learn with the district for the purpose of improving district practice. I believe they should be transparent, accountable, and a net asset – not a liability – to the district. I support effective, collaborative, open charters that accept all students and will work to eliminate “bad actors.” I do not support unchecked growth of charters and believe the board – not the country or the state – should have control over approval and reauthorization.
- RE: school evaluation, I believe we should use multiple measures to evaluate school quality and not rely solely on so-called “high-stake testing.” Summative assessments should be one of many data points that offer a complete picture of a school’s effectiveness.
- RE: the 4 most important factors for student success, we must acknowledge the non-academic factors affecting students’ lives and work to create schools that support the whole child. I will prioritize investments in the physical, mental, and socio-emotional health of students.
- RE: the superintendent’s vision, I will work with district leaders to expand that vision to focus on reforming the structure and function of the central administrative office.

Section 2: Please answer each of the following questions in 250 words or fewer.

Quality of Public Schools

Review the [#SchoolAfterCOVID findings](#) about family and student experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and extended school closures. As a board member overseeing the district’s recovery, what would your top 2-3 priorities in this area be?

As a board member, my #1 priority will always be student success. All of our efforts must be directed at ensuring every single child gets a quality, well-rounded education with a particular focus on supporting learners most at risk of falling behind. We know that significant inequities affect the learning experience of black and brown students as a result of racial injustice, and as a result, must prioritize addressing inequities in the way we deploy instructional resources to meet those needs.

We must also balance our focus on student success with a focus on safety for all members of our community. Clear guidelines that protect the health of OUSD teachers, student and families, and supporting staff members should be developed in collaboration between all parties. The toll of COVID-19 extends beyond the physical risks and threatens the mental, emotional, and social health of our community. Our definition of safety should include measures that ensure everyone's well-being – especially our children. While holistic education must be our focus, we must also work to minimize the long-term traumatic effects of COVID-19 so that, as we return to normal, we re-enter our school communities from a place of health and resilience.

Finally, any plans must be defined by clarity and reliability in order to overcome the inevitable logistical challenges faced by teachers and families. This will ensure consistent delivery of quality education and wraparound services, making key features like small group instruction, multiple measure of success, and quality distance learning possible.

Review the [vision and goals](#) the district is currently using to determine the future of Oakland public schools in order to increase quality and be fiscally solvent. To what extent do you support this criteria? What would you change and/or prioritize?

While I support the goals of quality, sustainability, and equity, I am concerned about the lack of focus on reforming the way OUSD's central office supports this vision. In the recent Alameda

Grand Jury Report on the district leadership's broken culture, we have strong evidence of unacceptable practices that prohibit schools, school leaders, teachers, and students from getting the resources they need to be successful. As a school board member, my primary focus will be on moving the center of gravity of the district's resources away from the central office and closer to our schools. Any plan aimed at sustainability should be built around the holistic educational needs of our children; any programs or spending *not* in support of those ends should be given additional scrutiny.

As we work to restructure the district to be more sustainable, we must exhaust every avenue – from advocating for state policy and funding changes to reforming the way we manage the district's resources to reimagining the role of central administration. This will ensure we are making decisions about OUSD's future with a clear view of the resource availability and constraints facing the district.

We must include all members of the community in decisions about reimagining the district, working openly and collaboratively with all stakeholders – especially teachers and families – to make decisions. This process must be bottom-up and not top down.

Financial Sustainability

In your view, what are the most significant drivers of OUSD's current financial crisis? As a board member, what would you do to mitigate these issues? (250-word limit)

We must be honest about the complex nature of the financial challenges facing the district and acknowledge that they are not new. If we misdiagnose the problem, we risk implementing solutions that address the wrong issues. There is no one root cause. Instead, a complex set of factors contribute to the current crisis.

We must start by addressing structural school finance challenges that stem from short-sighted state policy. I fully support the Schools and Communities First Proposition 15 ballot measure as a key first step.

Next, we must change our belief that a large central office means better support for district schools. I trust effective school leaders, teachers, and school communities – working together through mechanisms like our Schools Site Councils – to effectively allocate resources to meet the needs of their schools. District leadership should guide this work and provide adequate training and support for school-based budgeting and decision-making.

Finally, we must reform the budgeting and contracting process used by the district. Millions of dollars are wasted each year. Every dollar lost to mismanagement is a dollar not being spent on our students. I will fight for the needs of our students over the profit margins of contractors and consultants who take advantage of access to public funds.

What in your experience and background prepares you for overseeing the OUSD budget of over \$500M per year? What steps are you willing to take, if elected, to build your own capacity (and the Board's collective capacity) to provide good stewardship and oversight for OUSD's budget? (250-word limit)

Transparency and accountability should be a given as it relates to the district's budget. As a school board member, I will waste no time ensuring that we have a clear understanding of where we stand and communicating our standing to the community. But transparency and accountability are just a starting point. We need experienced leaders with a deep understanding of education finance to evaluate all financial decisions. At every step, we should work with community members to evaluate our priorities and resources and ensure they are aligned to our vision for OUSD's future.

As a business owner and social impact consultant, I have extensive experience managing budgets, aligning spending to desired outcomes, and making difficult decisions about

resource allocation. Through my work, I have advised companies, foundations, non-profits, public agencies, and impact investors on strategy, spending, and organizational effectiveness. This work enables me to go beyond a surface level understanding of the budget process and made decisions from a place of deep understanding.

I also have extensive experience working on federal and state education policy with a focus on supporting large school districts working to improve outcomes for students. I have worked to reform state funding policy, regulation, and district budgeting. I have also evaluated large district contracts with outside services providers, and as a result, can go beyond simple financial analysis to determine the ROI of spending with particular vendors based the evidence of their efficacy.

We know that millions in cuts need to be made in the coming school years to prevent OUSD from being taken over by the state of California. What criteria will you use to determine whether staff is recommending the right cuts, and how do you see the difference between the responsibility of district staff and the Board of Education? (250-word limit)

My first criteria will always be “Do proposed cuts focus on improving student outcomes by eliminating unnecessary waste?” I believe we must avoid cuts that affect the most important factor in a child's education: an effective classroom teacher. I will look for everyone opportunity to eliminate waste and repurpose fund towards schools, school leaders, teacher, educational resources, and holistic supports that make a difference in a child's learning experience.

My second criteria will be equity and justice: “Do these proposed cuts prioritize the needs of marginalized students, families, and communities above all else?” For too long, systemic racism and injustice that led to significant resource and educational inequities for students of color. Our budgets are a reflection of our values, and we must allocate funding and prioritize cuts in a way reflects the values of equity and justice.

My third criteria will be the extent to which proposed cuts fit with a clear strategic plan and vision for the district. Too often, spending is not aligned with strategy. We say we prioritize certain goals and initiatives and yet do not fully fund those initiatives. I will support cuts to non-strategic priorities and reallocate available funds to priorities decided in partnership with the community.

Leadership and Candidacy

What are 1-2 barriers for positive impact of the current board and how would you plan to address those as a board member? (150-word limit)

The leading barrier to positive impact is a lack collaboration with the community. We need a transparent, creative approach to leadership that invests all stakeholders and repairs the lack of trust. I will draw from my experience with workshop facilitation and human-centered design to work with all stakeholders to understand our challenges and co-create innovative, bottom-up solutions.

We also need ensure the board has full control over critical decisions. For example, the OUSD board should control decisions about charter school authorization and renewal without threat of having their decisions changed by the Alameda County Office of Education or the state. I believe we should have local control over local decision-making so we can decide what is best for the district without the risk of having other entities make decisions for us.

As a school board member, how do you plan to engage your community and rebuild trust, especially when making high-stake decisions? (250-word limit)

As a leader, I have always prioritized listening before taking action. I believe that the people closest to the challenges – school leaders, teachers, families, and students – offer the most important perspective in any problem-solving process. In my work creating innovative solutions

to social challenges, I always start with empathy. By working to understand the challenges and co-designing solutions in partnership with communities, we can avoid the missteps that come from top-down leadership.

I also am committed to sustained communication and dialogue with all constituents. I will commit to regular town hall meetings, bi-weekly email newsletter updates, and effective use of social media as a tool for listening to the needs of school leaders, teachers, families, and students.

What have you done to lay a foundation for a successful candidacy? Speak specifically to fundraising, campaign staff, field preparation, campaign infrastructure, and key endorsements. (150-word limit, do not count key endorsements against your word limit)

I believe overcoming division is a key issue in this election, and as a result, am working to build a broad and diverse coalition of community members working together with one goal: the academic and developmental success of every single OUSD student. To date, we have built a core group of campaign volunteers managing fundraising, communications, social media, and virtual town halls. In the lead up to the election, we are mobilizing voters through virtual “in-home conversations” and fundraisers where we will share our vision for OUSD, hear from the community, and discuss in detail how we can build bridges. We are targeting \$50,000 as our fundraising goal and will use those funds to support virtual outreach given the challenges posed to in-person campaigning by COVID-19.

What will your ballot designation be, and why? (50-word limit)

I have not yet decided on my ballot designation. It will speak to my career as a “Public Education Advocate;” experience as a classroom teacher, coach, afterschool coordinator, prison educator, organizer, policy advocate, and social impact strategist – all focused on education, the most important lever for social and economic justice.