



**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:

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
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)
<b>Quality Public Schools</b>	
I support the <a href="#">#SchoolAfterCOVID Family Demands</a> . 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.	4
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.	4
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 <a href="#">School Performance Analysis (SPA)</a> , and the <a href="#">School Quality Review Rubric</a> .	4
<a href="#">Research shows</a> that four key resources have a dramatic impact on 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	4

primary focus to expand access to these four resources to students who have been historically denied access.	
I support the <a href="#">articulated vision</a> of our current superintendent, Kyla Johnson-Tramell.	4
<b>Statement</b>	<b>Level of Agreement (Rank from 1-4)</b>
<b>Financial Sustainability</b>	
I commit to governing and voting in accordance with nationally established best financial practices, including those in the <a href="#">Smarter School Spending Framework</a> put forward by the Government Finance Officers Association, and adopted in <a href="#">Board Resolution 18-0127</a> .	4
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 <a href="#">GO's Sunshine budget Presentation Rubric</a> . You can find a sample rating <a href="#">here</a> .	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.

In addition to the four key resources that have a positive impact on student achievement I will advance a board resolution that holds the district accountable for improving literacy rates across all grade levels, and establishing a goal that by 2024 every third grader in the district is reading at grade level. Reading is the foundational skill for all learning. For too many decades, OUSD has not satisfied its obligation to the children of this city by teaching them all to read. Reading at grade level by the third grade is also significantly correlated with high school graduation. I have high expectations! I believe that district and charter leaders and teachers can meet this goal.

**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?**

First and foremost, I believe that the district (in partnership with the City of Oakland) has an obligation to provide equitable access to distance learning. (My current work at EducationSuperHighway is focused on this problem at a national scale, so I understand the challenges first-hand.) Limited access to technology and the internet is not just a problem during a pandemic – children who do not have access to technology at home have always been at a significant disadvantage when doing homework or accessing resources for other personal learning opportunities. The pandemic just put a spotlight on this extreme dis-equity. The board must establish a policy that provides guidance to the administration for addressing the digital divide.

Groups like The Oakland Reach have taken significant steps during this pandemic and are putting the power of community to work to address an array of challenges. We need to listen and learn from these community leaders and help to foster other community groups who will implement their best practices for addressing the needs of students during the crisis.

And, of course, I support the four key instructional expectations articulated in the #SchoolAfterCOVID findings: More instructional time; small-group instruction for every child, and more for those who are most behind; formative assessments to measure and communicate student progress; and feedback on student work.

**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?**

I applaud Superintendent Johnson-Trammel for having the courage to articulate an honest assessment of the current state of OUSD and to lay out an ambitious plan for change. The OUSD Blueprint brings together ideas from across the community, and lays out clear goals. I support this plan and the board policy that requested the plan.

Fiscal responsibility paired with a vision for more equitable allocation of scarce resources is the challenge that our school board will grapple with for several years to come, and it isn't helpful or realistic to simply make broad sweeping generalizations like "we can't consolidate any schools or close any buildings" or "we must eliminate charter schools in oakland." Working to support the best academic outcomes for **students** may require making difficult choices that disrupt historical dis-equity and will mean making changes that have an impact on the status quo. School Board members need to view the challenges facing the district through the lens of what is best for all students in the district, with special

attention focused on the needs of students who have been traditionally disenfranchised. This Blueprint lays out a path forward that will improve the quality of education provided for every student in the district.

### 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)**

The district has had several annual financial audits in a row that have had flagged "qualifications" noted by the auditors. These qualifications are indications that the district is not following standard accounting procedure in about a dozen areas. That the same issues were flagged year over year and not corrected indicates a serious failure in the finance department. As a board member I will seek a timely report from the district audit committee and establish a policy that our accounting procedures are updated to the highest standards.

The Alameda County Grand Jury report also noted that OUSD significantly outspends what neighboring districts spend on classified administration and underspends what those districts on teachers. This is likely a factor driven by too many schools with too few students that is articulated in the Blueprint. Bringing these spending factors into alignment is critical to the district's financial health, and to the quality of education students in the district experience.

When we have cleared the backlog of these failures we can turn our focus to the proactive work of making the district's budgeting process transparent and accessible to the board and the community. Budgeting across the district's schools should be managed and reported in per-student dollars, so that the community and board are able to clearly see that resources are being equitably allocated. Equitable funding takes into account historical dis-equity that has allowed schools in socio-economically challenged neighborhoods to consistently fail to provide a quality education.

**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)**

This spring I enrolled in and completed the Certification In Education Finance offered by Georgetown University. Through this course I learned about best practices and strategies for supervising a school district's budget. Smart spending starts with a clear financial picture and the course taught about the need for clear and transparent budgeting reported in per-student spending across all school sites. In addition, the course provided background on the funding models that are most effective for promoting equity across a district, especially in districts like OUSD where there are significant socioeconomic gaps between families served by the district.

As a graduate of this program I have continuing access to the resources and faculty of the program. I intend to continue to take advantage of these resources and continue my personal education on this topic.

I will, of course, collaborate with the other members of the board in any and all financial training provided as a part of our tenure on the board. And I will work to make sure that the resources available to me through my connection with Georgetown and also shared with my colleagues on the board.

**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)**

The board establishes the policies that determine the actions taken by the district staff to shape the actual budget. The board, through its approval process of that budget, has the opportunity to request changes if the district staff does not adequately meet the goals established in the board policies.

As a board member I would work with others on the board to establish policies that focus on smart spending designed to serve the needs of our students. When necessary, cuts should be made to district expenditures that do not have a direct impact on student learning. As a board member I would require that the district staff identify cuts in per-student dollars, and report those cuts as either direct support of student learning or not a direct support of student learning.

### 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)**

I think the board has struggled to maintain a positive relationship with the community, and that relationship has been especially strained as confrontation at board meetings flared into violence. Of course I would work with my colleagues on the board to develop better strategies for addressing community concerns, and to have a plan to defuse violent confrontation so that it does not escalate to the point that it has in the past.

I would also work proactively with other members of the board to establish as quickly as possible, guiding policies around the development of budgets that are aligned to the principles I have discussed above. Making the budgeting process transparent and understandable is critical to the district's success.

**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)**

I would actively seek engagement through town hall type meetings either digitally or in person. I would engage in conversation with school site councils, with school leaders, and parent led community organizations. I would also seek advice and counsel from trusted community leaders who have demonstrated a concern for families in the district.

**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 have a small team of committed advisors and volunteers who are helping with communication strategies and data analysis. In addition, I have leveraged my own technology experience to do direct email fundraising with family and friends. With the help of my data team (two former colleagues from EducationSuperHighway) I am developing a direct email campaign for both communication and fundraising. I'm also working with a colleague who is running for school board in Los Angeles and holding a joint online Fundraiser on July 30 in conjunction with **Allies for Education**. The **Allies** have already donated generously to my campaign and through this fundraiser we hope to attract further donations from individual members of their organization. And, of course, I am extremely eager to win the endorsement of GO!

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

I expect to use this designation: **education non-profit senior manager**. I believe this conveys that I am an experienced leader with the management experience and skills to take on the responsibility as a member of the OUSD Board of Education.