



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 .	3
Research shows 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 primary focus to expand access to these four resources to students who have been historically denied access.	4

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.	3
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.

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?

Remote learning and sheltering-in-place has placed unprecedented strains on student learning and achievement. In many ways, it further exposed the inequities in our system. Student, teacher, and staff health and safety is the top priority. After basic necessities are met and programs in-place, I will focus on providing high-quality distance learning. First, we must have an online infrastructure that is accessible to all students, teachers, and parents/guardians to participate. Secondly, the district must have a plan to monitor every student, school staff, and community member to track symptoms, temperature, and cleanliness of the classroom that is practical and safe. Thirdly, the district must assure that the school sites can accommodate the promise of a small classroom with a fair teacher to student ratio utilizing every available square-foot for social distancing practices during the 'Shelter-in-Place' mandate. We should also create and promote computer centers for subject-matter tutoring, for families in need of reliable access.

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?

Anyone who disagrees with the Mission and Vision in this document does not understand the fundamental purpose of public education.

I agree on the end result, but we must be clear, transparent, and accountable to and with the community about decisions and direction of school policy. Often the community feels like decisions come 'from the top' and that engagement lacks authenticity or is limited to only 'community stakeholders'. The Blueprint for Quality Schools was adopted before the current pandemic and needs an update or be suspended until we get back to 'normal' times. Based on this document, most schools in East Oakland are under enrolled. It's no question that OUSD has an enrollment issue that spans decades and, subsequently, resulted in properties being under-utilized or completely vacant. The open

campus policy has not helped the situation either as it has flocked students to a few “best” schools and weakened the appeal of their neighborhood schools. We must develop a plan to optimize the use of these resources for current and future students.

I would re-evaluate the rubric and measurement for assessment of our schools. Top priority will be improved communication and engagement with community campuses for planning on their success. Every campus is different, as are our communities, where needs will differ that require different solutions and investments. I would prioritize comprehensive support for students in the classroom and campus to increase their success in graduating with preparation and neighborhood schools become a parents’ first choice for their child’s education.

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)

OUSD’s financial crisis did not happen overnight and it existed before COVID-19. Since the passage of Proposition 13 (1978), California divested from public education and became the wealthiest state with the lowest per-pupil spending in the nation. Locally, the District has suffered from a lack of consistent leadership, lack of collective accountability, and an unwillingness to restructure implementing internal controls and oversight. Fiscal solvency is following the mathematical equation of revenue and expenses. It is a vision to increase revenue to improve dilapidating infrastructure, provide student resources as clinics, tutoring, and mental health services. And, an extensive collaborative network and investment by local industries for developing job placement programs for students.

As a board member, it is necessary to reevaluate the basis of budgetary items that are not restricted and assure the expenditure is working for students by establishing an oversight rubric on its impact. First, avoid school closures and divesting from our district-run neighborhood schools by any means. Reevaluate and find revenue sources to increase funding and investment in student programs. Create an office for student enrollment that provides campus support to increase feeder patterns to district-run

neighborhood schools. And, Strengthen and Establish oversight bodies within the school district that engages with community, students, and parents in the decision-making process.

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)

Currently, I am Project Engineer on transportation projects. This work consists of technical management on engineering projects and assisting on budgeting, personnel, and project planning. Additionally, I must earn the trust and buy-in from community stakeholders about significant and controversial community investments.

Since 2018, I have served as a member for the Independent Citizen Oversight Committee for Measures A, B, and J. Considering recent history, it is necessary to reevaluate the budget and revise revenue numbers to identify expenditures that are necessary and non-essential. It is important to identify resources that can help increase revenue to provide betterment to the learning environment and a rainy-day fund. The ultimate goal is to avoid further school closures and layoffs that in the past has proven detrimental to the quality in students' learning.

As a board member, I will work with board directors to organize workshops to provide breakdown of the budget, the history, and the items that have been added in recent years. These workshops can be led by former board members and superintendents who have experienced crises in the past and are willing to volunteer their time on lesson sharing and expert opinion. Every stakeholder must have ownership in the decision-making process where information was researched diligently and shared for input. This means that decisions will not be rushed until everyone has had an opportunity to read and perform due diligence on items in question and hold public discussions and accessible meetings that do not impede participation in working class neighborhoods.

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 makes decisions based on information provided by the district's staff that is expected to have been diligently reviewed and directed by the Superintendent. It is also the Board's expectation to engage with the community on reviewing potential impacts and establish (alongside with the Superintendent) the evaluation on success of programs, expenditures or policy. It is the Superintendent's job to track the evaluation and to review the findings with the Board. The function is clearly set: The Superintendent is the executive officer who works for the Board (and community) who is provided with policy directives and objectives. The Board establishes the evaluation and review of performance of the acting Superintendent. It is also the Board's responsibility to hold community dialogues and inform the public on the reason for their decision-making with a vision of strengthening the classroom environment and student performance.

As a board member, it is necessary to evaluate the expenditures being made and the direct impact in the classroom and on students' success. It is critical that the community, as parents, teachers, and students are engaged in these budget discussions to re-evaluate purpose, understand with clarity, and share information plus history. It is necessary that the district staff inform, categorically, what the budgetary items are for with explanation of its history. In addition, what has been the oversight and evaluation implemented to measure its success.

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 current school board struggles with honest communication and transparency to the greater community. These are essential features that build trust and honest engagement in the democratic process (and informed decision-making) board members are expected to achieve.

Additionally, the board struggles with collective accountability. There are too many convenient villains and not everyone understands their role in creating better student achievement and conditions. We are always fixing the present crisis and not thinking long-term.

These features will be exercised by two changes: I will be attentive to parents, teachers and students who voice concerns on issues and hold, per semester, town hall meetings at school sites.

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)

Community trust is hard to build and twice as hard to keep. OUSD struggles to maintain open and authentic engagement in the community and yet is fortunate that the greater Oakland community decides to invest time and again in its success. As an elected board director, I will actively and continuously communicate upcoming issues and decisions through a newsletter. Additionally, I will work closely with the new East Oakland councilmember to help promote these events and spread the word.

I hope it goes without saying, but I will also maintain strong relationships with school site leaders and school communities making personal visits as often as time allows.

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 am running a grassroots, community-centered campaign. My initial fundraising has been built on early contributions by family and friends. I have built trust and maintained relationships with the teachers and school staff I met growing up in OUSD.

I have no paid campaign staff. Friends and family are volunteering for various tasks. I have endorsements of two current Oakland school board directors, as well as a former school board director and superintendent, former teachers, teachers, and community members.

As soon as feasibly possible, I hope to canvass neighborhoods and/or call District 7 voters directly to earn their trust and their vote. Since digital is safe, I have built [a campaign website](#), a campaign [Facebook page](#), and a [Twitter account](#).

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

My ballot designation will be Project Engineer as that is my current profession. As a project engineer, it is my practice to be diligent in decision-making and cohesive with stakeholders on the shared goal of a project. I believe these are aspects desired for the position that requires collaboration.