

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### GREEN PARTY OF ALAMEDA COUNTY 2014 ENDORSEMENT DECISION

Please email your responses to: [GPAC-VoterGuide@yahoogroups.com](mailto:GPAC-VoterGuide@yahoogroups.com).  
In the subject line, please include "Oakland School Board D6"

If it is not possible for you to email, please mail your responses to:  
Oakland School Board D6  
c/o Green Party of Alameda County ,  
2022A Blake Street \* Berkeley, CA 94704

Please respond by Saturday, August 23, 2014

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1. Motivation -- Why did you choose to run for School Board?

We can do better for our kids. I love Oakland, and I believe in the power of our community. When we invite kids into our schools, we make a promise to provide all of them the quality educational experience they deserve – one that helps them achieve their fullest potential. However, we are facing challenges to our ability to realize this vision. All of our children matter to me. I will ensure that all Oakland children have the educational experience that they deserve. I choose to run for school board to make good on that promise.

2. Program and Priorities -- Elected office provides the opportunity to proactively lead by placing new ideas on the agenda for consideration and development. What are some specific ideas you intend to pursue if elected? What do you believe are the main priorities for the School Board?

I'm committed to what I characterize as the ABC's of a thriving community:

- A. Amazing schools. We must ensure that every third grader is reading at grade level, every sixth grader is recognizes statistical variability, and every graduate is prepared for college, career and community.
- B. Beloved communities. While focusing on students, we must build a community that ensures teachers are supported to be effective and equitable, parents and

families are welcomed and seen as partners in this community, and school neighbors contribute to the well-being of our young people.

- C. Civic and community engagement. It isn't enough to have a caring community, we must have a powerful community – one that deeply engages with leaders at all levels, where we hold each other accountable to the high expectations we should have for each other on behalf of our kids.

3. Qualifications -- Please give a brief summary of your background and qualifications for the office of School Board member. If you are a current School Board member, what issues can you point to in your time as Board member that have had a positive impact? As a Board member what can you tell us about your service on the Board, and share with us the decisions you have made in this capacity that you believe made a difference in the functioning of the School Board?

As a parent, like all parents, I was my son's first teacher. I chaired the school site councils at his elementary, middle and high schools. As an educator, I taught at CSU East Bay, University of San Francisco, Alliant International University, and Argosy University; and served as an administrator at UC Berkeley and Oakland Unified School District. I have a PhD in organizational psychology, an M.S. in counselor education and B.A. in psychology.

I have also chaired boards and commissions including Filipino Advocates for Justice, San Francisco Coalition of Essential Small Schools, and the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth. Currently, I am Director of Programs for a leadership development organization supporting nonprofit executive directors working with low-income communities and communities of color.

4. School Ratings and Evaluations -- How do you rate the Oakland schools? Name the success and shortcomings?

I would rate the schools similarly to how the district rates them on priorities in the Local Control Accountability Plan

- Basic services: I believe there are a lot of students who still don't have standards aligned instructional materials. However, I do believe they've made great strides in this area.
- Implementation of Common Core Standards: too new, but it seems to me that the teachers have been committed to this.
- Parent involvement: I think there's a lot of effort to seek parent input. However, it seems to me that the district could partner more with organizations that can develop parent leadership, especially in the schools that don't have PTAs.
- Student Achievement: 66% graduation rate is horrible. Although we are the most improved district in the state five years in a row, we have a long way to go when it comes to graduates prepared for college, career and community; English learner reclassification rate, and grade-level reading.

- Student engagement: Again, I think the graduation rate is symptomatic of engagement, which contributes to absenteeism and dropout being too high.
- School Climate: I believe there's a lot of work to do, still, when it comes to suspension rates, especially for our Black and Brown boys. While there are significant changes on many school campuses, we have more incidences of violence on our campuses than kids should even experience in a lifetime.
- Course access: I do believe that our high schools are better designed to provide the necessary "A-G" college preparatory course options.
- Other outcomes: the movement to "Linked Learning" is great!!

5. Budget -- What changes to the OUSD budget would you suggest? (include changes to revenue).

- It seems that the trend of diminishing resources and increased need significantly contributes to what could be a financial structural deficit.
  - My plan – I believe that partners and potential partners, such as business, labor, community-based organizations, and philanthropy, could all do better to align our financial, policy and human resources to create greater conditions for our schools. I would rally our board and charge our superintendent to champion increasing state revenue, exploring local revenue sources as parcel taxes, and establish relationships with foundations toward a healthy and equitable community. We have an opportunity with the Local Control Funding Formula to not only create an authentic accountability plan, but to continually engage so that we all understand the relationship of revenue and expenditures as a citizenry.
  - We do need more funding, and still the other important items/priorities are amazing schools, building a beloved community and civic engagement. Greater attendance raises funds. However, we are one of the lowest per pupil resourcing in the country. The easiest way is to increase revenue is to improve attendance and enrollment by making our schools a place where students want to be. I understand that in the Castlemont area there are 3000 high school aged students while only 400 attend Castlemont. In the Fremont Area there are 2100 school aged high school students where there are only 690 students at Fremont. That would be a significant increase of revenue.
  - We also have to be creative and relentless in obtaining funding from other fiscal and tax policies. Oakland's metropolitan economy is ranked in the top 20 nationally. Why aren't our educational system benefiting from the Port, which takes in over \$33 billion annually. We could do something about this.

6. LCFF & LCAP -- How do you see the impact of the new Local Control Funding Formula and the role of staff and parents/community in LCAP?

I believe that this is a great opportunity to engage our community in equitable funding. However, I'm concerned that our district staff has yet to develop the capacity to engage the community authentically and deeply as this might require. It will be up to the district to really work with community partners who can ensure that we have significant and meaningful participation from parents/community in the LCAP AND we hold each other accountable not just for the plan, but also for ensuring that the plan reflects shared contribution for its contents.

7. School Closures -- What is your position on the schools which have been closed over the past several years, and the eviction of the "People's School for Public Education" at Lakeview School? What is your position on future school closures?

It seems to me that we (the community) need to better understand the relationship between enrollment and funding. In 2002 we had over 53,000 students, and in 2014 we had 35,000 students. We have 86 schools (50 elementary, 4 K-8, 13 middle schools, 3 6-12 schools, 7 high schools and 9 alternative /continuation schools). Compared to other school districts with comparable enrollment, we have skewed proportion of students to schools (e.g., Long Beach Unified has 81,000 students and 84 schools – more than double our students and less schools).

In order to be fiscally responsible, we must have the right amount of schools for the number of students we have. If we are to keep all of our current schools, we should ensure that 1) they are high achieving, equitable schools, 2) community/family members and organizations partner with the school community, and 3) the schools are fiscally viable. In the last several years OUSD has closed schools for usually two of the three reasons elements are not occurring (e.g., usually the school is not high achieving, and the school isn't fiscally viable). I believe that the district could do a better job so that such a decision isn't a surprise and that the community is a part of the decision.

I cannot comment on the Lakeview situation with a lot of knowledge. However, I do believe the district acted responsibly even if the decision wasn't welcomed. I also believe that due to the occupation by the "People's school" that a lot of resources were dedicated to ensuring peaceful demonstrations.

8. Other OUSD Properties -- What are your views on the use of the District property at 1025 2nd Ave. and the future location of Dewey HS?

I don't have enough information on this at this time.

9. Truants and Drop-outs -- What do you suggest we do about the truants and those who have dropped out?

Truants and drop-out are only symptoms of a larger issue. For many of these students our schools aren't appropriately rigorous and relevant, nor are there sufficient meaningful relationships between the students and adults. The work is to design our schools so they have the following features:

- Personalization – every student is known well.
- Continuous relationships – every students is part of a cohort with not only other students, but teachers.
- High standards and appropriate evaluations, related to authentic curriculum
- Adaptive pedagogy by knowledgeable and skilled teachers.

10. Charter Schools -- What should Oakland's policy be around charter schools? What would you propose, if anything, in lieu of Charter schools? Do you distinguish between the different types? Would you support putting charter schools under the union contract?

Charter school law puts school boards in a difficult situation in that the board's decision to grant authorization is along certain parameters, not a strategy for charters schools. The growth of charters drains resources from the district. My thoughts on charters are these:

- Charter school growth needs to be carefully monitored for effectiveness at addressing the specific needs of Oakland students and the community as a whole;
- Many charter schools do not significantly improve the learning experiences of our students; those that cannot show how they would and/or do not achieve that improvement should not be allowed to operate in Oakland;
- To operate in Oakland, Charter schools must show that they are serving the students of Oakland equitably and fairly, with regard to admission and retentions of students, and access to a high quality curriculum and to high quality teachers;
- Charter schools in Oakland need in addition to show that they are an environment that provides a sustainable working environment for teachers. I need to look into this more because it seems that too many operate under the model of recruiting young and inexperienced teachers who then work extremely long hours and burn out within a year or so, then leave the profession; this is not a sustainable model of education.
- In a nutshell, we should monitor whether the charters that do exist should continue. I believe we do have too many charters, and that our board has a responsibility to work with the County and State to better manage the vision and eliminating contributing to the financial hardships of the district.
- On a related note, I understand the perspective of parents who really want the best for their child. We need to do a better job of demonstrating, in a compelling way, that we do have quality schools worth attending OR get our schools to be desired alternatives.

As for charter schools being under union contract, I do believe the teachers within the charter school system should design this on their own.

11. Testing and Teacher Evaluations -- What should our policy be around Student Testing and Teacher Evaluation? Do you see alternatives to the use of mandated standardized tests in meeting local, state and national education goals? How much are we teaching to the test now, and what should we be doing different if you feel it should be different?

I scanned the NCTQ study, and one finding was that Oakland currently uses California Standards for the teaching profession, focusing on teacher behavior and not student learning outcomes. However, focusing on standardized test scores in evaluations “has been highly contentious”. In part, I think most would agree that standardized tests reflect only some of the student’s progress toward district standards of expected achievement. Although standardized tests may not be the right measure, I do believe that student learning should be a part of evaluating teacher performance.

12. Common Core -- What are your views on the use of the proposed Common Core curriculum?

I trust the educators and the teachers unions who had a significant role in creating the curriculum. Specifically, I agree with the concept that we should evaluate not only the “answer” the process by which students “answered.”

13. Small Schools -- What do you think of the current Small Schools?

As a disclaimer, I worked with the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) from 2002 – 2007 (they are now the National Equity Project). During that time we supported the district and specific schools to create small, high achieving equitable schools. I still believe that schools should be smaller than large because each student should be known well by at least two adults. Personalization and project-based learning happens better in small schools.

However, the challenge with small schools is that they tend to be more “expensive” than larger schools. The tension is deciding what the right size of a school that supports low-income families and communities of color. The other issue, however, is that what we have in Oakland is a lot more schools than comparable districts, and we do not have the financial capability to keep all of these schools running exceptionally well.

14. Central Resources -- How do you think the allocations of central resources should work and how should that relate to local school funding?

Upon a brief study of the district budgeting, 12% should go to Central Administration and 88% goes to Central services for schools and school budgets, supporting greater school decision-making. One of the areas of confusion seem to be the distinction between central administration and central services budgeting.

To support directing funds where they are needed most, I will take the steps to ensure that the Local Control Accountability Plan is in fact reflective of the priorities toward improving teaching and learning as well as supporting those students in greatest need.

In terms of areas to increase funding and areas to cut funding, I believe it is irresponsible for me at this time to suggest that without be clearer on the data and current practices. However, I'm clear that there is regular data that already identifies the many of the most in need (e.g., English learners, foster children, low-income children, African American). And any increases or cuts has systemic implications and ripple effects, yet I am willing to take responsibility for the consequences of the decisions I make by doing my due diligence.

15. City/Government Relations -- How should the City of Oakland support the OUSD, and education in general?

I believe that there should be a prominent education policy role within the City of Oakland. In addition, City and District should continue to partner on not just the educational experiences of our children, but they should also focus on the relationship/correlation among civic engagement, workforce development and economic development, and safety.

16. Police -- What is your position on Campus police? How would you create an environment where police are not needed?

I do not think we need campus police. However, we do need an environment that fosters what I characterize as a beloved community. This entails residents and school community members understanding the expectation of mutual accountability through civic engagement.

17. Unions -- What do you think of the relationship between the OUSD and the unions? What would you propose it should be and how would you act on that?

I do believe the relationships have significantly improved. I believe that the district and the unions could do better to foster a more trusting environment (not just during negotiation times) toward a shared vision for our children. I also think that OUSD and the unions could do a better job acknowledging shared accomplishments and not just focusing on disagreements in principles and practices.

18. Adult Education -- What is your position on Adult Education?

As I understand it, this is an important contribution to our community, and it's a inexcusable that this isn't an area that is given more resources (especially given the opportunities for resources from the state).

19. Vocational Education -- What is your position Vocational Education?

I have stated publicly that we should graduate students prepared for college, career and community. At a little bit deeper level, I agree with a quote I heard that a vocation is knowing where your greatest passions meet the world's greatest needs. I hope that vocational education isn't simply focusing on helping young people "get a job" but develop their passions toward a vocation. I am supporting the parcel tax that would facilitate "Linked-Learning."

20. 'Academics vs. Electives' -- What is the proper balance between academics and sports, arts and other electives? Do you support using organizations such as Play Works to provide sports, arts and other electives formally provided by staff before the series of cutbacks?

I served on the Planning and Oversight Committee for the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth for eight years, many as co-chair. One of our earlier strategies was to complement the academic program of OUSD with "enrichment" programs provided by community partner organizations. I believe every child begins their formal schooling as a genius. However, their genius area may not be in reading, writing and arithmetic, so we must provide access to celebrate and honor the genius our students might exhibit in sports, arts and other areas. As an educator, I'm committed to a well-ground educational experience that doesn't just address limited competencies (again, reading, writing and arithmetic) but develops our young people to be prepared for college, career and active community engagement.

Current funding doesn't allow for equitable distribution of resources so that our children fairly have access to sports, arts and other electives. Given that, we must partner with the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth so that organizations like Play Works can complement and support the well-being, well-rounded young person.

21. The School Day -- What is your opinion on the length of the school day and the role of before school and after school programs?

I would like to hear more about what our community says about the length of the school day and the role of before school and after school programs. Throughout my son's educational experience at Kaiser elementary, Edna Brewer Middle School and Skyline High school, he had access to programs before and after school that 1) provided continuous support from morning to late afternoon; 2) addressed his broad interests, talents and academic/emotional/physical well-being; and 3) developed a greater connection to the school and neighborhood community so that he honored and respected Oakland and its citizens deploy. These programs would start as early as 7 or 8, and go until 5, sometimes 5:30. As a single father/working parent, I also appreciated the supportive "child-care" the after school programs provided.

22. Accountability -- How do you propose making yourself accountable and accessible to the citizens of Oakland?

I do plan on having regular office hours, regularly attend school meetings (e.g., PTSA, SSC, ELAC), and ensure strong working relationships with other district and city-wide leaders to share our learning of the concerns and commitments of our citizens.

23. Endorsements -- Who has endorsed you so far? Who do you expect to endorse you?

For most of my endorsement, please see [renato4schoolboard.com/endorsements](http://renato4schoolboard.com/endorsements)

I am endorsed by Gary Yee, Jumoke Hinton Hodge, James Harris, Desley Brooks, Great Oakland Public Schools

24. Campaign Funding -- How much money do you currently have for this race? How much money do you plan to raise? Where will the money come from? Describe sources of financial contributions for your campaign that you would refuse to accept (if any).

I have raised approximately \$8000, and will raise approximately \$8000 - \$12000 more through house parties, endorsements, individual contributions.

25. Anything Else? -- Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.