

# Oakland Unified School District director candidate questionnaire

*Thank you for taking the time to complete The Oaklandside's 2020 election questionnaire. Please briefly answer each question using no more than 300 words. Please be as specific as possible when discussing policy ideas or positions you've taken, or would take, on different issues.*

Name: Mike Hutchinson

What district seat are you running for: D5

## 1. Why are you running for Oakland Unified School District's board of education?

Since the takeover in 2003, public education in Oakland has been under attack. This attacks have brought changes to OUSD that the community never asked for and often didn't want. I believe we need a new direction. I believe we as a community must first stabilize OUSD, then we must envision the schools we want, and then we can build those schools. I believe that all of Oakland deserves quality, public, neighborhood schools. To achieve this goal we plan on leading the school board to take four actions.

1. The school board is mismanaging OUSD. If elected I will end the Blueprint and stop the current plans to close public schools, co-locate schools, and sell OUSD property. I will also conduct forensic audit and reprioritize the budget to restore funding to our schools.
2. Oakland has the highest rate of charter schools in California. If elected I will fully implement and enforce AB 1505 which will greatly limit new charters schools and charter school growth and will close underperforming charter schools through a strengthened renewal process.
3. Create authentic community engagement where the community is treated as partners and decision makers.
4. Oakland needs to re-envision public education. If elected I will begin to pilot Sustainable Community Schools. Sustainable Community Schools are an evidence-based school improvement model that offers the whole-child education strategies of a full service community schools; and engages the school community in the process of designing and implementing six key pillars to school success:
  1. Engaging, culturally relevant and challenging curricula
  2. High quality teaching, not high stakes testing

3. Wrap-around supports for every child
4. Student centered climate
5. Authentic parent and community engagement
6. Inclusive school leadership

Together we can reclaim our public education system. We can understand what's happened, collectively decide what's best moving forward, and then begin to build the schools we need and deserve.

2. Please list your age, education, any professional licenses or other relevant credentials, your current occupation, and your neighborhood of residence.

I'm 47 and a lifelong resident of District 5 in Oakland. I attended a couple of years of college. After working directly with for over 20 years, I'm currently a community organizer and advocate around education justice and co-founder of OPEN Oakland Public Education Network.

3. What schools did you attend? What schools do your kids attend?

Crocker Highlands, McChesney, Oakland High, Skyline, UC Berkeley. I don't have children and I have a niece in OUSD.

4. What qualifies you to run for the school board?

I am proud to say that I was born, raised, and educated in Oakland. I attended Crocker Highlands, McChesney Jr. High, Oakland High, and graduated from Skyline, before going on to UC Berkeley. My mother was a teacher in Oakland and an active OEA member for 40 years. My father was an instructor at Laney College for over twenty years. Even my brother was a teacher in Oakland before leaving teaching to become a lawyer. I spent over 20 years working and volunteering in Oakland's schools and with our youth. I have been engaged with OUSD and the school board since I was an OUSD student. In 2011-12 my engagement increased when the two schools that I had worked at since 2001, Maxwell Park and Santa Fe, were two of the five schools that were closed. I became very involved in the fight to stop the school closures. Since 2012 I've worked to save and improve public education in Oakland. I've actively attended nearly every school board meeting, testified at the Department of Education in Washington D.C. about the damage caused by school closures and charter schools in Oakland, co-founded OPEN and became a founding member of the Journey for Justice National Alliance, and ran for school board in 2012 and 2016.

I have lived in District 5 my whole life which gives me a deep knowledge of the issues in our district. I have demonstrated the ability to bring the community together around our common

issues. My experience in district 5 will allow me to hit the ground running as a school board member.

Here is the link to my testimony at the Department of Education: <https://youtu.be/xk0AkSx3HYk>

5. Where can voters get more information about your campaign?

<https://m.facebook.com/MikeHutchinson4SchoolBoard/?ref=bookmarks>

6. What do you think are the biggest issues facing Oakland schools and students right now?

There are lots of problems that OUSD is facing, and even more with the current pandemic. I will stop school closures and end the financial mismanagement, create authentic community engagement, fully enforce AB 1505, and create Sustainable Community Schools to ensure there are quality public schools in every neighborhood. Stabilize, Envision, Build.

7. The district has been plagued by financial problems for years. What do you think should be done to put the district on the right track?

I have been tracking the OUSD budget for years. OUSD does not have a financial crisis, they have a mismanagement crisis. In 2017-18 OUSD had a \$29M surplus and in 2018-19 OUSD had a \$21M surplus and ended the year with over \$70M in the ending fund balance, according to the official budget numbers. I will launch a full forensic audit, reprioritize the \$80M plus OUSD spends on police, consultants and outside contracts, have a community budget process, and prioritize spending to greatly increasing per pupil spending and spending for student services.

8. Earlier this year, the school board voted to eliminate the district's police department. How should the district ensure safety on school campuses?

OUSD should fully implement BOP's People's Plan for Police Free Schools.

9. How would you improve the district's COVID-19 response and distance learning curriculum? How should the district decide when to re-open for in-person learning?

I will prioritize the health and safety of students, families, and staff by following all CDC and California Department of Education guidelines for the reopening of schools. Once the guidelines have been met, there must be full testing and PPE provided to all students and staff and protocols must be in place for if/when a student or staff member tests positive for Covid-19. The school board must ensure that every school has a plan for social distancing, hand washing, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies, and a daily deep cleaning before they are reopened. Any distance learning or hybrid model must be equitable and 100% accessible regardless of income, language, or ability.

10. Does the district have too many school sites for the number of students it serves, and should it close some campuses? Or, should the district maintain all of its current school campuses and prevent closures and mergers?

OUSD does not have too many schools. As the Grand Jury report noted, Oakland has a high number of schools because of the proliferation of charter schools and the community led small school movement. If the small schools we reconstituted into their original school and we lowered our number of charter schools to the state average we'd have roughly the same number of schools as any other district. I will not close public schools and I will fully enforce AB 1505 and use it to close low performing charter schools when they come up for renewal. Just like OUSD does not have a budget crisis, OUSD does not have too many schools. Every neighborhood needs a quality public school.

11. How would you address under-enrollment across the district?

OUSD is not under enrolled. OUSD enrollment is basically flat for the last five years. We need to grow our public education system. The enrollment system in OUSD is also being mismanaged, for example the head of the charter school office has also been the interim head of enrollment for over a year. The most effective way to grow and strengthen OUSD is to authentically engage the community in build the schools we all deserve.

12. What role should charter schools play in Oakland's education landscape? Do you support or oppose the idea of a moratorium on new charter schools?

Charter schools are not public schools. At best charter schools are competing against our public schools. I have been working for a charter moratorium since 2013. I am a founding member of the Journey for Justice National Alliance and we along with the NAACP and BLM are untied as Black and Brown led organizations calling for a moratorium on school privatization. I was also involved in the recent passage of AB 1505, which for the first time allows local school boards to deny charter applications and close low performing charter schools. With these tools

a new elected school board can finally exert local community control over the decisions around who are tax dollars pay to educate our students.

13. How can the district attract and retain quality teachers?

OUSD must be able to attract and retain high quality teachers who are reflective of the students and community. The most effective way to do that is to improve the working conditions for teachers. We also need to be more supportive of new teachers and end the tradition of OUSD training teachers who then leave for a district that has higher pay and better working conditions.

14. What policies, if any, should OUSD implement to create more integrated schools?

We don't need integrated schools, what we want is quality neighborhood public schools. Currently the School Board's Blueprint process closes schools in some neighborhoods to "expand access to quality" in schools in other neighborhoods. These approaches reinforce the idea that there are only a few quality schools, all of which are located in the hills. I would work to expand the number of quality schools by reprioritizing the budget to fully resource our long neglected schools, especially schools below 580.

15. What needs should Oakland schools fulfill to become quality community schools?

Oakland needs to re-envision public education and a school redesign model that does not include privatization is long overdue. If elected I will begin to pilot Sustainable Community Schools, like those in Chicago where schools receive an extra \$500,000 to fund being a Sustainable Community. Sustainable Community Schools are an evidence-based school improvement model that offers the whole-child education strategies of a full service community schools; and engages the school community in the process of designing and implementing six key pillars to school success:

1. Engaging, culturally relevant and challenging curricula
2. High quality teaching, not high stakes testing
3. Wrap-around supports for every child
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