

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: Maiya Edgerly

What district seat are you running for: District #3

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

I am motivated to run for school board because I was once a homeless student trying to make my college dreams into a reality. Once I earned my college degree at Texas Southern University, I was truly inspired to bring the HBCU opportunity back to District 3 (D3). Through founding and serving as Executive Director of a non-profit that provided direct service to students and families in District 3 helping them to navigate the college application process, Onyx Scholars provided me with entrepreneurial and Executive Director experience that is needed to govern our district. As a result, I will utilize my Executive Director skill set and successful experiences in closing the access gap for underserved students, to the school district. I am passionate about addressing racial disparity within our educational system as well as closing the digital divide. Particularly during the Covad epidemic. I am also an advocate of public policy that gives youth as young as the age of 16, the right to vote, so that they also have a voice in educational policy and leadership choices.

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

I am 31 years old and I earned my B.A. in Broadcast Journalism at Texas Southern University. Currently, I am the Executive Director of Onyx Scholars and I reside in West Oakland.

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

I attended El Cerrito High School, Stege Elementary, St. Cornelius Catholic School, Portola Middle School., I also participated in Frick Middle School's Summer Art Program and Manzanita Community School. I don't have any children of my own.

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

As a community leader, I have a proven track record of producing fresh, innovative strategies that close the access and economic gap for underserved students and middle-class families in Oakland. The OUSD school desperately needs authentic leadership that will bring fresh ideas to break the cycle of mismanagement. As a former community organizer, I have built powerful grassroots connections and won the respect of local residents and notable community leaders. As your District 3 trustee, I am committed to reestablishing the trust of the community and building policies that reflect our needs and voices.

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

Voters can visit my official campaign website at www.maiyaforoakland.com and follow me on twitter and facebook @maiyaforokland.

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

Some of the issues facing Oakland schools and students include, racial disparities, charter vs public school, childhood poverty, school closures, mismanagement of funding, resegregation of schools, lack of quality schools, digital divide, learning loss and teacher shortages.

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?

This is a really important issue and example of how OUSD has broken the trust of the community. This is why we need to rebuild our relationship and demonstrate our ability to fulfill our bond obligations. We must fully address the mismanagement that has been documented in the Oakland school district. We must own it, and transparently share what we are doing to address each of the mismanagement charges. In D3 Marcus Foster site is an example of the bond mismanagement,

where there are soaring costs to complete a project. We need to collaborate with the community and be transparent about our priorities and how we are executing on them. We need to address the management issues identified in the Grand Jury report and build systems so there are checks and balances in expenditures and transparency. As an OUSD Director, I would audit frequently and share out transparently the progress and the gaps.

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

The board must encourage and support collaboration among community agencies and organizations to support the needs of all children, particularly those most at risk of perpetrating or being the victim of harassment, discrimination and violence. We must mandate parent education programs and parent involvement in efforts to develop and implement school safety strategies. Our board may want to hold a board dialogue session(s) to explore existing research on safety and to discuss any available student and staff data and data trends, including reports of violence, crime, harassment and discrimination as well as health and safety survey results. Also, continuing strengthening OUSD's Restorative Justice model of discipline. We should utilize technology to ensure student safety, (i.e. video surveillance like Ring and other devices and recruit and encourage more parent involvement as volunteers to monitor and provide private security.

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?

My #1 priority is that students and families voices are being taken into account in implementing distance learning under COVID. This is critical because given the fact that parents are now playing a critical in distance learning instruction, we need to hear their needs so they and their children can be successful. I believe schools should continue distance learning and follow state health official's guidelines for gradual re-openings at safe levels and with proper staffing. If this can not be achieved, we should continue distant learning until the epidemic status of Covid has subsided or reached lower levels. As a board member, I would administer an assessment during the 1st month of school, by sending a progress report to OUSD families. The progress report will identify grade level readiness gaps and additional support. As a board leader, I will make sure the distance learning curriculum will build digital literacy among students and ensure our educators/staff receive the assistance and support regarding instructional design.

We must ensure that we go beyond broadcasting face-face lectures, it's engagement that strengthens student impact.

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?

I agree, there are schools that are under-enrolled and I believe the district will have to make tough decisions regarding school closures. As a result, I am an advocate for student achievement, but if schools are under-enrolled, it is most likely that those particular schools are not receiving the proper resources or funding. At this point, Oakland can not afford to jeopardize the future of local students. If our only option is to merge a school, so that we can create a good quality educational environment, then we must follow suit. Also, I believe we can prevent some school closures, if the Board is willing to identify private funding or build strong partnerships donors, creating a more aggressive approach to creative resource development. This is a skill that charter and private schools have mastered. Oakland Public Schools will need to catch up to this model if we are to survive.

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

I would mandate strategic conversations about enrollment that include how to win students and families back who've decamped for the suburbs or private schools. After applying the voices of OUSD families and students, I would encourage the OUSD board to adopt a competitive strategy to win students back.

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 should still continue to exist as a choice for families to address the diverse needs of students. Both choices should be available as a resource for families and students' education. I oppose a moratorium on new charter schools, but also feel they should be properly established, monitored and reviewed by Oakland Public Schools for effectiveness and relevance.

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

The District will need to be proactive in developing partnerships with new pipelines of college graduates.

As a district director, I will create a HBCU (Historical Black Colleges and Universities) Teacher's Pipeline Program. This program will recruit and attract HBCU graduates to teach and give back in their communities. Ultimately, this effort will create a win-win solution for both the district and Oakland's minority students. We must have strong partnership with Teach America and close ties with various colleges and universities, so we can offer incentives to college graduates who align with our student population, such as relief from college loan debt after teaching for a given amount of time.

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

OUSD should monitor many of the "school within schools" models that often segregate students by race, rather than potential or ability. These programs disguise themselves as learning groups within a school based on interest, but the model often results in racial segregation. Also, OUSD should also closely monitor its enrollment policies for students who wish to attend a school that is not assigned to their neighborhood. If a majority of a certain race are systematically admitted to a "premiere" school while students of color are systematically denied admission to the same school, the district is promoting discrimination and I would actively monitor and review these policies and occurrences.

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

Oakland schools must attract a diverse and talented pool of teachers, and a talented pool of substitute staffing to provide a high quality environment for students. The OUSD must also form corporate partnerships that will provide in-kind and financial support to schools. We must also provide a safe and caring environment for students by encouraging parent involvement and a stronger relationship between parents, students and the District. We must reestablish trust in the Oakland community, so we can collectively