

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: Maximo Santana

What district seat are you running for: District 3

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

Our school board is in desperate need of an individual who can help us negotiate contracts with educational technology vendors in an effective and transparent manner so that Oakland students are given a modern online schooling environment as soon as possible. Our students need a representative on the school board that is aware of what the technology needs and hurdles are as well as someone who can identify and lead the board in getting to a successful digital solution the first time.

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

29 years old, Bachelor's of Science in Education (FSU'13), Licensed teacher in Florida, California

Currently teaching adults at as a Training and Enablement Specialist at Pandora living in the Old Oakland neighborhood.

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

After I received my education degree at Florida State University, I came to California where I taught English Language Arts at West Oakland Middle School and American Indian Public High School. I do not have any children.

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

I've seen the success and the shortcomings of our public education during my time as an 7th and 8th Grade English teacher at West Oakland Middle School. I've seen the wins and the many losses of our charter school education system during my time as a 9th and 10th grade English teacher at American Indian Public High School. I learned what our students' parents have to go through on a daily basis when I was facilitating resume workshops and teaching digital literacy across the East Bay at Rubicon Programs. Then, I learned about the limits of educational technology as I created training solutions for companies like Facebook and Pandora.

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

<https://www.santanaforoakland2020.com/>

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

Oakland teachers and students need a board that is *equally concerned* with increasing transparency with all financial dealings of OUSD and equipping Oakland students and teachers with the infrastructure to effectively fulfill the promise of a school online whenever necessary. Fulfilling the promise of a school involves providing quality education, supporting all students who need help, and providing a wide set of options for students who want to do more. The biggest issues facing Oakland schools involve a financially insolvent institution leading the conversation on how our schools best serve students online.

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?

We need to put more processes and regulations in place to change the relationship Oakland residents have to the financial decisions of the district. Not only does there need to be more transparency between all of the financial dealings of the district, but there needs to be more attempts to get that information in front of informed citizens and journalists. It's up to the board to find out what information we can share with the public and deliver that information to as many people as we can. Only then can the community be equipped to hold this board, and every future board, accountable.

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

Restorative justice programs are what OUSD needs for all of our students. I saw first hand at West Oakland Middle school the transformation that can occur when you have restorative justice practices in play and when you have a full time practitioner leading a school in restorative justice. Punitive punishments, like suspensions, leave our students behind, missing from school, and academically disadvantage. Instead, restorative justice aims first and foremost to heal. Our students come to school with a lot of trauma and only when we start to address that will we see changes in behavior.

We also need to prioritize establishing a district wide system of justice during distance learning that does not punish students for not having reliable access to technology.

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?

OUSD needs a plan based on science that allows students and educators to know exactly what school will look like depending on local conditions. We should prioritize "essential students" returning first, these are students that are unlikely to have their educational needs met through an online learning environment and children of essential employees. They may depend more on individualized support, specialized equipment or a have lack of access to a stable learning environment. This will allow select students to learn in a socially distant environment until those requirements can be lifted and all students can enter their school.

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?

The district should do everything in its power to maintain all of its current school campuses and prevent closures. While the disruption caused by closing a school is terrible for any community, those actions may keep other schools open and save those from the same fate. The current financial situation that our board is in unfortunately does not leave them in a place to remove school closures from the list of effective actions to save money. Before we can commit to preventing closures and mergers, we may have to make some tough decisions to become financially sound.

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

Consolidating schools and joining schools can work well when there is a plan in place for the success of each school. Two schools sharing a site can be beneficial and I have seen it work. West Oakland Middle School shared a site on 14th and Market with KIPP. At this location, each school had its own entrance and clear signage about which buildings housed which school. On most days, a KIPP teacher would never encounter a WOMS student nor the other way around. Many sites do not offer these advantages, though. Those sites that cannot reasonably accommodate two schools should not be allowed to.

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 need to be willing and able to teach all Oakland students. I believe that we have more work to do when it comes to ensuring charter schools have a commitment to educating all students, including those with any disability. OUSD also needs to guarantee that all students have equal access to any charter school in their district and that charter schools recognize they need to be open to any of the student in their district. We do not need any more of charter schools, and I will continue to support the board in not granting any new charters.

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

Credentialed staff salaries make up approximately 23% of OUSD expenditures. With a starting salary of \$47,967, it is not feasible to attract top talent to work in our schools when they cannot afford to live in Oakland. In order to pay teachers in a more equitable way, I aim to increase the transparency between which students a teacher will be expected to teach. This will lead to teachers being paid similarly to how districts receive money from state, local, and federal sources. General education students, english language learners, and foster youth each have different costs associated with their education. Unless a teacher decides to specialize in teaching one of these groups, they will be paid similarly if they have similar backgrounds. In addition to paying teachers based on experience, I envision an OUSD that pays teachers based on the make up of their students and the challenges presented in facilitating their education.

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

Our charter schools are amongst the most segregated schools in Oakland. We need to rethink the entry practices that charter schools follow and see if there are any biases that lead to schools showing a clear preference towards one group. These schools, who may not be beholden to an elected board, hold lotteries to determine which students it accepts, yet we see many charter schools with single groups overrepresented.

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

Community schools would be beneficial to families all across my district. The resources a community school would need to help out the families of district 3 would include a food pantry with fresh vegetables, primary care physicians, a gym/weight room, a fully functional and open library/media center, and night classes for adults. Everyone in the community should be able to get something from a local school that increases their quality of life.