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:

What district seat are you running for: Oakland School Board District 7

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

   As a concerned mother of four OUSD children, activist, and educational youth mentor, I was asked by various residents to run because of my history as a youth mentor and counselor in the anti-violence and anti-exploitation movement, bringing the most bringing effective outcomes and life saving resources to the most vulnerable youth and families of East Oakland. I am honored to have the support of Oakland Rising Action, Planned Parenthood Mar Monte, and various progressive individuals in Oakland.

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

   I am 45 years old and am currently working on a departmental honors degree from the University of California, Berkeley. From 2003 to 2017, I have been a California State Certified Sexual Assault Crisis Intervention advocate and counselor for survivors of sexual assault, and currently work as a Communications Coordinator for the Alameda County Assessor’s office. I am a resident of the Woodland neighborhood of East Oakland in District 7 flatlands below International Blvd.

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

   I attended Melrose Elementary, Calvin Simmons Jr High, Fremont High School, and University of California at Berkeley. My children attend Howard and Thornhill Elementary Schools.
4. What qualifies you to run for the school board?

I am honored to run as the next District 7 Oakland School Board Trustee. I am a proud mother of four OUSD students, two who are special learners, and the daughter of California farmworkers that were unionized by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. As a resident of East Oakland for over 35 years, I attended Melrose Elementary, Calvin Simmons Junior High, and Fremont High School. As a youth mentor, I fought for the well-being of our most vulnerable children, including trafficked and sexually exploited students. I believe that a student's report card is a direct indicator of a child's mental, emotional, and physical well-being. We must begin to see F's and D's as a cry for help. I am calling for full transparency and accountability of the OUSD budget to address the issues of education inequity, racial segregation, privatization, special education, recidivism, sexism, homophobia, immigration status, and teacher attrition.

I was in the 9th grade in Calvin Simmons Junior High when I volunteered to help my math teacher tutor students during class. I was teaching 7 graders how to add fractions, and I loved it. When I was at UC Berkeley, I joined CHALE (Chicanos and Latinos for Empowerment) a student-led organization that tutor high school students in East Oakland. I ran two support groups at Oakland Tech for young girls who had been sexually assaulted. I gave presentations in public schools to children and parents about the techniques that perpetrators use to seduce and sexually abuse and exploit children. I am also an alumna of BAWT (Bay Area Wilderness Training) a nonprofit that creates equitable outdoor experiences for low-income youth of color. Under BAWT’s guidance, I took high school and middle school students who had endured trauma to overnight nature healing-retreats in Yosemite, Mount Shasta, and Black Oak. I also participated in the SSC at Howard Elementary and became a parent organizer and leader for Parent Voices of Oakland (PVO), a grassroots organization fighting to make quality educational child care accessible and affordable for all families. At PVO, I was involved in the campaign to pass Measure C, from collecting signatures, to parent organizing, canvassing, phone banking, and poll counting.

I believe that I am the right person to represent my district at this time because I am a product of the educational system of East Oakland -attending Melrose Elementary School, Calvin Simmons Junior High School, and John C Fremont High School-, and have spent the rest of my life devoted to mentoring the most vulnerable youth of East Oakland and fighting for families to receive the resources needed.

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

www.votekristinamolina.com, https://www.facebook.com/votekmolina,

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

Issue #1 Lack of Budget Transparency
We must train the School Site Committees to discern red flags in their school budget and demand that school sites provide parents with a comprehensive budget that is easy to follow and understand. The school budget also needs to be a public document easily digestible by all school parents, students, and community stakeholders. I want a yearly audit of OUSD financials to ensure that the school administration appropriately allocates resources with set deadlines, measurables, and strong accountability.

**Issue #2** Teacher attrition
Addressing teacher attrition is critical to stemming the OUSD growth of the teacher shortage crisis. Research finds that high-turnover schools harm student learning, as schools end up hiring many inexperienced and underqualified teachers to fill empty spots. To retain teachers, we need to create suitable policies in the area of compensation. We need to pass measures at the local, county, state, and federal levels to fund teachers' salaries. At the local level, we can begin to introduce a luxury home change of ownership property tax and defund the county and city police department; at the state level, we can continue to fight for proposition 15; and at the federal level, we can begin to form a nation-wide coalition to petition congress to invest more funds in public education.

**Issue #3** Lack of wraparound services for students and families
Children in the flatlands of East Oakland continue to be exploited by a racist system that ignores their cries for help. Most of the schools in District 7 are classified as highly stressed or stressed areas, meaning that they are high in environmental stress factors such as violent crime, unemployment, illegal dumping, poor air quality, and food security. In the last 12 months, my family has experienced four drive-by shootings, 350 days of unlawful dumping, four physical assaults, and public defecation. Children come to school with trauma, hungry, beaten, sick, stressed, and contaminated. I plan to establish a First Responders Team at OUSD. The team will have the responsibility to attend to students who are not succeeding academically, who are acting up in class, are inattentive, absent, or harming other peers. The team would be responsible for investigating what or who is hindering the student's success and providing the necessary wrap-around services they need to heal, learn, and thrive

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?
Budget Transparency and generating more revenue is imperative for our schools' economic stability. The following are several progressive policies that I want to propose to generate revenue for OUSD:

- Environmental alternatives to infrastructural change to reduce current costs.
- Stop unnecessary and expensive consulting by engaging with local resources provided by non-profits.
- Vacant OUSD property should generate income by providing low-income housing for unsheltered students in dormitory or family-style housing.
- At the local level, luxury change of homeownership tax and defunding of the both county and local police departments.
- At the state level, I will continue to support prop 15.
- At the federal level, national coalition building to increase funding of public education.

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

Since 1992, as a member of MECHA, I have been active in the Police Free Schools movement. I continue to support the now broader coalition that umbrella’s organizations in the PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Support) movement that seeks practices on restorative justice, violence prevention, and generating more funds to the public school system of Oakland. Based on the fact that students' amygdala does not fully mature until the age of 24, models such as PBIS should always be used as the first line of intervention for mediating a student’s behavior, not the criminalization of a child that is still developing. Studies by academics have shown that early psychological intervention diverts behavioral problems in children. Therefore, I support making a greater investment in counselors and mentors who are trained in PBIS Restorative Justice and creating Police Free Schools. Our children need intervention and advocacy, not cruel and inhumane punishment and imprisonment.

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?

For months now, I have been pushing the following Public Health and Educational Equity petition for the child care and the local educational community during Covid-19, that calls on various community leaders to support CTA’s safe reopening of schools by providing CalOSHA training for teacher and all supporting staff, and also calls on expansion of public health and educational resource equity, and expansion of school spaces for teachers, students, and supporting staff, upon safe reopening of our schools during Covid, not dismantling or merging of school spaces, post distant learning. Aside from this, we are also calling on supplemental income as a para-educator for at least one parent who is homeschooling their children at home while on distant learning. The second petition is asking the Governor and federal government to pass the HEROES ACT and Child Care is Essential Act to provide the additional funds that the
State of California needs in order to meet the educational and child care communities needs during and post Covid-19.

Local Petition
https://forms.gle/h7AeYqpQ68vMy5Mt8

Federal Petition
https://forms.gle/wxFrjY1WsWDeouRw9

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 do not support the closure of schools or mergers. I do support passing progressive tax measures and bonds, as well as building affordable housing and leasing offices to critical services that are needed by our students to generate revenue to keep our schools opened. Also as someone that comes from the nonprofit sector and worked for 12 years in grant writing, I believe that OUSD directors must begin to establish a joint fund developing program to research funding sources, establish strategies to approach funders, and submitting proposals at the local, county, state, and federal level. All federal and State grants that are available for OUSD to apply for, they must be applied for. I am also calling on a parent-led budget oversight committee that will be elected by parents, not school administration, that will provide transparency of the OUSD budget for all parents of the OUSD system.

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

We need to establish a baseline of why parents are leaving OUSD. It is crucial to establish an exit interview process so that we can begin to address the reasons why parents are leaving public education.

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?

One of my largest critiques on charters schools is that when reading both the U.S. Department of Education’s budget and compare it to the OUSD’s budget and statistics on the population of students that charter serves vs non-charter public schools, the educational disparities are clear. Charter gets more funds and serves less students than the public school system. Not all charter schools offer a full curriculum the way that non-charter public schools serve. I am proud to be running a campaign that is community-led, 100% grassroots, zero charter dollars, and zero corporate dollars, that puts the students and teachers before profit. I do
not believe in developing anymore charters. We must address all disparities in the public school system, if we are going to begin to have an equitable budget.

13. How can the district attract and retain quality teachers?
   We need to have transparency in the budget and apply for grants that can help to allocate more funding to our teachers in order to keep them. This also includes working with community-based organizations in housing and in child care to be able to seek incentives in keeping teachers in Oakland. I believe also that the local government should provide tax incentives to any teacher that lives in Oakland or in Alameda County.

14. What policies, if any, should OUSD implement to create more integrated schools?
   We need to honor the struggles of our ancestors like Congressman John Lewis who fought for desegregation. We must never forget the lives that were sacrificed, the children that were left without parents, and the mothers without their sons and daughters. We need to begin to desegregate our schools now. We need to begin to bus children from the hills to the flatlands and vice versa, from West to East Oakland to honor our ancestors who fought to desegregate our country.

15. What needs should Oakland schools fulfill to become quality community schools?
   The majority of the schools in District 7 are classified as stressed or stressed areas meaning that they are high in environmental stress factors such as violent crime, unemployment, residential vacancy, poor air quality, and limited food security. I believe that the community schools model is the right portfolio of services to help D7 students reach their full potential. We need to move from the notion of equality to the social justice platform of equity. We must acknowledge that people of color have endured generational injustices. Not acknowledging the history of our people of color is what continues to fail our Black and Brown children. Students in the flatlands need more resources because they are facing different issues that children in the hills do not. As someone that has lived in the flatlands for 35 years, just in the last 12 months, my children and I have endured 350 days of illegal dumping, incidents of physical assaults, public defecation and urination, and some of the worst economic and environmental degradations done to one of the most impoverished neighborhoods of deep East Oakland.