

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:

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

I am a twenty year homeowner in North Oakland who loves this city. I know the benefit of a fun, safe, engaging, diverse public school education. I will work to ensure the best use of our funds for kids. And work to stop the closure of our public schools I believe I am the only person running for D1 school board who is adamantly opposed to the charter school proliferation in Oakland and will work with the board, OUSD, parents and teachers and in Sacramento if necessary to return full decision making power of Oakland's schools to the OUSD.

2. Please list your age, education, any professional licenses or other relevant credentials, your current occupation, and your neighborhood of residence.
57, Bachelor's Degree in business and accounting. 30 years of business operations and accounting experience. Self-employed bookkeeper for the last 12 years. Participant of McCullum Youth Court restorative justice and mentoring program. Member of Action2020 for the last year. Resident of North Oakland.

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

I attended public school in the suburbs of Annapolis, MD and high school in the city of Annapolis, MD. Annapolis is a very diverse, racially mixed city similar to Oakland. I attended Frostburg State College in MD and relocated to the bay area after graduation. The young man I mentored since he was 14 and is now 30 and an integral part of my family attended Harriett Tubman preK, Franklin Elementary k-5, Roosevelt 6- 8 and American Indian 8 to 12th.

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

I know the benefit of a fun, safe, engaging, diverse public school education. It is how I got to college and a 4 year degree at a state school. I am a self employed bookkeeper with 30 years of accounting experience. I am familiar with budgeting and helped host a Budgeting by Objectives seminar at Hitachi America Limited where I worked for almost 10 years. I will work very hard to see that the complex finances for a 100 plus school system are allocated in the best, most equitable way possible for our kids. I have mentored a young man as a result of my participation in the McCullum Youth Court project in Oakland and I have seen how restorative justice works. I saw a young man go from nearly incarcerated to a full scholarship at and graduation from Oberlin college.

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

StacyforOaklandPublicSchools.org or email me at stacythomasfordistrict1@gmail.org

6. What do you think are the biggest issues facing Oakland schools and students right now? The biggest, on top of our other already existing challenges, is the pandemic. It sheds the light on the requirement to have equal resources in all schools for the online learning that is now required. And requires OUSD to respond rapidly to getting those resources distributed and provide technical support by a tech support team. It also requires more resources dedicated to the follow up of kids not appearing "in class". The 8/12 school board meeting showed that the staffing was not prepared for those things.

Additionally, keeping specific department heads at OUSD accountable to, and rewarded for, a budget for their department seems critical. I've heard from parents and teachers that the principal makes a significant difference and some are more suitable and responsive than others.

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?

The Alameda county Grand Jury report for 2018/2019 seems a very good place to start. There are recommendations regarding staffing, training, and spending that I would want to revisit. And compare to what is working now and what is not. The report speaks of a culture that does not have accountability as a key feature. I would recommend that 1000

Broadway which houses the current administration be as quickly as the lease allows - or as soon as the pandemic allows with the lease being renegotiated if at all possible - be abandoned and that our administrators find space in current school locations or closed spaces. I am interested in what the plan for the abandoned building at 2nd avenue is. How can we use that for community space and otherwise? What funds can be used to repair it?

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

Safety staff can be appointed that work with teachers and principals who have some experience in some of the following: anger management, social work, de-escalation techniques, speech therapy (I understand from several teachers many behavioral issues are rooted in communication and speech difficulties). Space should be allowed in each location for a cooling off period and incidents should be documented so teachers can understand at the beginning of each semester what kids could use additional resources.

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?

Re allocating staff that exists to the distribution of tech and wifi and tech support that are not teachers. Providing support for teachers with alternatives to being at a computer all day which is hardly ideal for students, parents and teachers. Human resources should be directed to knowing who is "online " and who is not. As well as setting up a database for parents who might be available to volunteer with substitutes or teachers officially employed by OUSD with hours available for outdoor outings in small similarly located groups.

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?

It should maintain its current school sites and prevent closures and mergers. Unless a majority of teachers and parents who represent a school or schools present a signed petition for said closure or merger. Currently empty or underutilized space could be used to house OUSD administration. Or create below rent housing (meaning at least 50% below market rate) for people getting displaced or are homeless. Or provide services for kids and the elderly in one building to bridge some generation gaps. In the specific case of Kaiser elementary in my district, I would like to see that reopened in its original sight. I have talked with many parents who were deeply affected and frustrated by the closure of Kaiser especially given its diversity and position towards lgbt kids and other underrepresented groups. I reviewed the cost savings presented by the board for the closure of Kaiser and they were so small as to be not a justifiable reason to close a beloved school and create the disruption it caused.

11. How would you address under-enrollment across the district? Please see my answer to item 10. I also believe that charter schools should be self-funded rather than receive taxpayer \$ if they do not wish to live by OUSD requirements. I would like to see those schools come back into the realm of OUSD. I don't wish to close them, but hold them to the same standards as OUSD schools and stop this competition of taxpayer resources.

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?
I support a moratorium on charter schools and the gradual requirement for them to come back into the OUSD system or be 100% privately funded.

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

The teachers I have talked with love teaching and love teaching in OUSD. They are very frustrated with limited resources and a school board that does not work closely with our public school teachers and parents and in some cases is dismissive of them. I would need to spend more time interviewing the teachers in my district, but would be a fierce advocate for what we can do to get creative and provide the resources and support they need.

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

Since our neighborhoods can in some cases not be terribly integrated, we would need to start with that. But that's bigger than the school board. It's a huge question that includes the cost of housing, the way tax dollars are allocated, transportation / access to the schools and the desirability of each school. Forced busing is not popular, but it does achieve diversity. I would have to delve into that topic more with the people affected. But it's an even bigger issue if the schools are perceived as unequal. Perhaps we re-allocate people within OUSD and add some parents and teachers to a department / task force called "School equality". It would be responsible for surveying a similar amount of people from each school to get ideas on how to achieve that and come back within 6 months with responses and suggested solutions. I am not advocating for spending more money on that, but finding employees that already exist who could be assisted by teachers, parents, students willing to take a survey.

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

- Diversity of student body
- Restorative justice rather than expulsion or incarceration
- Social services and basics like free meals to support the additional needs of our kids

- Curricula that includes art, music, trades training, education about money issues, tech training, community betterment projects and social justice activities.