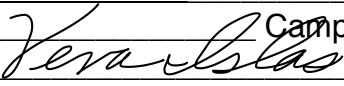


Central Valley Progressive Political Action Committee
Endorsement Questionnaire for FUSD School Board Candidates

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Please limit your responses to no more than 300 words per question.

1. Educational outcomes in the Fresno Unified School District are significantly impacted by poverty, segregation, and school funding inequities. As a school board member, how will you combat these issues to improve public education in Fresno Unified?

Fundamentally I think we start by speaking the truth. I am conscious of the inequity that exists in our school district, but I do not think we are having the needed conversations or strategic actions. I would like to ensure that we are being accountable to all families. Inequities will exist until we dedicate time and attention to resolving them. I would like to start by having a deeper investigation of these issues. We need to better understand what interventions, in the context of Fresno, help to improve academic achievement for children living in poverty. I'd like to see greater community connections to supporting disadvantaged families and supports to help break the cycles of poverty. Equally I think we need to investigate and understand the policies that have created greater segregation in our schools and work to reverse them. Finally, in terms of school funding inequities, I would like to see equity served by driving more resources to struggling schools. An equal distribution of resources does not remedy inequity – we need more resources going to where there is most need.

2. Recent studies conducted by the non-profit organization In the Public Interest have shown that the unrestricted growth of charter schools takes away resources from public schools. As a school board member, what are your solutions to curb charter expansion within Fresno Unified?

I want all children to have the best educational opportunities afforded to them. I understand the need for charter schools however I do not think that the growth of charter schools is a solution. I would like to see a greater focus on driving investments and resources into our public schools to improve them and prevent the continued expansion of charter schools.

3. Evidence-based, comprehensive sex education has been shown to decrease teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection rates. As a school board member, will you support the use of evidence-based sex education in Fresno Unified?

Absolutely! I was a teen mother, I know firsthand the importance of empowering our students with the knowledge and resources to make smart decisions.

4. Go Public Schools Fresno is predominately funded by corporate billionaires who have significant ties to the charter school industry, and a strong history of promoting the privatization of public schools. As a school board member, what will you do to evaluate and limit the influence of such an organization on Fresno Unified?

I believe that we must appreciate that any external organization, Go Public Schools Fresno or otherwise has an agenda. As a school board member, I am committed to assessing all information presented to me in an objective manner. I commit to centering my decision making in the best interests of students and families that I am elected to represent and not the agenda or interests of any external organization or even district administration.

5. Despite the many positive effects they have had on funding and program development, public sector unions have come under attack. What role do you think FTA and other FUSD labor partners has in supporting the growth of students and schools in Fresno Unified?

Unions have a tremendous opportunity to support greater equity in our community they can do so through supporting progressive candidates as well as using their own voice and power to advocate for progressive policies. In addition, Unions are probably the group most well-positioned to help create avenues of employment opportunity through their apprenticeship programs. I would like to support a strengthening of partnerships in this regard.

6. FUSD serves an ethnic student population that is nearly 90%; however, ethnic site principals comprise less than 50% of that workforce. Studies have shown academic achievement improves when students of color see people reflecting their background in leadership positions, like school principals. Will you commit to hiring policies that encourage the appointment of principals who are more representative of FUSD's student population?

As a woman of color, I am a proponent of policies that promote diversity in employment. Yes, I would be very much committed to policies that would help us create a representative workforce.

7. Community based schools that offer wrap-around services, such as health clinics and social workers, have been shown to decrease the achievement gap, especially in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities like Fresno. What will you do to increase the availability of services to students and their families on campuses in Fresno?

I believe there are a number of factors that affect our student's achievement. While these factors might seem as outside of traditional education, they cannot be separated. We do a disservice to our students when we neglect the basic necessities that all human beings need to function, safety, housing, food, clothing, etc.... As a school board member, I would like to create greater partnership with community-based organizations to meet the needs of our disadvantaged students. I would also like to make sure that we are budgeting to hire and preserve the needed positions for supporting our student's socio-emotional needs.

8. FTA and FUSD have recently agreed to create a work team to explore a special tax with the aim of decreasing class sizes in Fresno. Would you support such a tax?

I think smaller classrooms would have an advantageous benefit for our students and our teachers. Yes, I would be in favor of supporting such a tax.

9. What does your dream public high school look like?

My dream public school is one that achieves 100% graduation rates because the obstacles deterring student success have been removed. My dream high school is one that creates pathways of opportunity for all students whether that be to higher education or vocational training. My dream school is where student's dreams are not only ignited but also planned for fulfillment. My dream school is a place where all children, regardless of their sexual or gender identity or immigration status, or religious preference or any other variable that makes them unique, feels welcome and safe.

10. What is the purpose of public education?

The basic purpose of public education is to educate our children on the fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic however I believe that the greater purpose of public education is to prepare our children for life. Our children should be prepared to engage fully in the civics of our society, they should be armed with tools to help them with critical decision making and they should emerge from public education faced by an abundance of choices for their future.

Thank you so much for your time and energy in completing this questionnaire. Your answers will be distributed to our members prior to the September 8 endorsement meeting through the CVPPAC Website.

Please return this questionnaire by email to Mike Rhodes < mikerhodes@comcast.net >. The deadline is Sunday, September 2 at 11:59 p.m. If you have any questions, call CVPPAC president Pam Whalen at (559) 994-9390.