

Bayside Council of PTAs

WCCUSD Candidate Questions

Alphabetical Order Mostly

1. *Achievement.* There are many different kinds of students in the District in terms of achievement. To simplify things, let's say there are high-achieving, middle-achieving, and low-achieving students. How do you think the District is meeting the needs of each type of student? What changes, if any, do you think should be done to meet these needs?
2. *Charter Schools.* In recent years, charter school applications have not been successful in the District. Do you think charter schools have a positive or a negative role to play in WCCUSD? Do you believe the District should be more accommodating to charter school applications, should be even more scrutinizing, or should maintain the current approach?
3. *Equity.* Our schools are part of a society based on a significant amount of inequality, yet at the same time our schools are widely expected to reduce or eliminate the effect of the social background of students on their chances for success in life. These differences are reflected in both the individual students and in the schools in different neighborhoods. How far do you think the educational system can and should go in remedying these differences? Where do you think this District is in terms of meeting your expectations in this area? If there is a mismatch, what do you propose to do about it as a Board member?
4. *K-8.* Most students in WCCUSD go to middle schools for 7th and 8th grade and many for 6th grade. There is currently one K-8 school (Stewart). At the instigation of a group of parents, the Board asked for an official study involving community participation to research the desirability and feasibility of using a K-8 configuration for all or some of the elementary schools in the District. This K-8 committee recommended a pilot plan for K-8 at some schools. This plan was rejected by the Board. What do you think of this plan and, generally, what do you think of the adoption of a K-8 grade configuration for some or all the elementary schools in the District?
5. *Middle School Improvements.* Part of the impetus for K-8 is the idea that the District's middle schools are deficient in terms of safety and in terms of the academic program of the schools. Do you agree with this assessment? If so, what improvements do you think should be made in our middle schools?
6. *Operating Budget.* The determination of how much money can be added or should be subtracted from the operations budget (separate from bond/construction budget) will vary from year-to-year, but, for any given level of funding, decisions need be made about allocating resources. What areas do you think the District should spend more on? In what areas should funding be cut? Do you think the whole process should be overhauled? For example, should we adopt a site-based budgeting system like in Oakland?
7. *Proper Role of School Board.*
 - a. The School Board is an elected body of part-time trustees who have

no dedicated staff except a Counsel. It operates subject to State authority and under a Fiscal Trustee who still has a budgetary veto. It also has a Superintendent reporting to it who manages most of the business of the District. It's always possible to go too far in either the direction of micromanagement or the opposite direction of negligence. How would you characterize the proper level of involvement for the Board in the running of the District and do you think the current Board is at that level?

- b. The School Board often takes positions on different general education issues like State propositions. Recently the Board considered granting diplomas to students who did not pass the State-required High School Exit Exam. Would you have voted for this act of opposition to the State if you disagreed with the High School Exit Exam itself? In general, how much should the Board be involved in advocacy over education issues?
8. *Role of Teachers.* One of the recent controversies in the District involved a group of mostly experienced teachers known as the "Downer 5" who were disciplined (including forcible transfers and reprimands) after they expressed their opposition to how certain changes in teaching practices were being implemented. These teaching practices involved using a much more scripted closely regulated approach overseen by District mentors. What do you think the Board should do, if anything, to ensure that teachers are not being disciplined for their opinions about policies at their schools? Also, how much control should teachers have over how they teach in their classrooms and how much oversight should there be?
9. *Safety and Order.* Everyone would probably agree that schools should be places where everyone should be safe from physical threats and where education can proceed in a reasonably orderly fashion in the classroom, in the hallways, and throughout the school and school grounds. Do you think WCCUSD schools are safe and orderly? If not, what do you think should be done to make them safer and more orderly?
10. *School Building Program.* WCCUSD is in the midst of the second largest school construction program in the State. How successful do you think the program has been? Are there any changes in approach you would make for the program? Are you satisfied with the roles that have been played by the Board, the staff, the Facilities Subcommittee, and the Bond Oversight Committee?
11. *Uniforms.* In the past, individual schools within the District have been allowed to adopt mandatory school uniforms. Only a few had done this. For this year, mandatory school uniforms have been extended by the Board to all elementary and middle schools in the District. Do you approve of this change, do you want a return to the previous school "opt-in" system, or do you support some modification like extending uniforms further to high schools or establishing a school "opt-out" procedure?
12. **Additional Issue.** There are many more issues for this District, but we need to stop somewhere. Please address one question that you feel was left out that you think is important.

Return to charley@cowens.net by September 23d.