

2020 Oakland School Board Elections

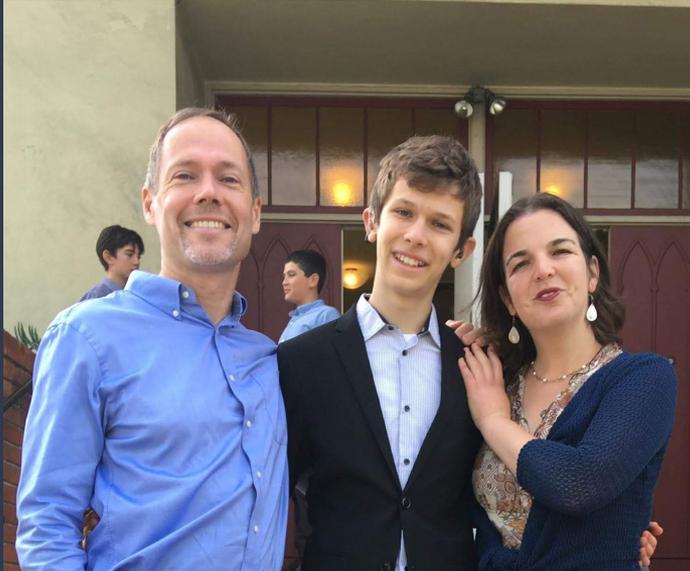
Districts 1, 3, 5, and 7

Presented to Wellstone Democratic Club

Our Recommended Endorsements



District 1: Sam Davis



Strengths:

- Strongly opposes privatization and characterization
- Supports unions generally and specifically in OUSD
- Opposes school closures and consolidations (unless shown to be supported by and benefiting community)
- Supports more equitable distribution of OUSD resources
- Worked with ally (now), Faith in Action formerly OCO.
- Taught in OUSD, was member of union and has child in OUSD.
- Has been very active in and familiar with issues in OUSD

Weaknesses

- Not forceful as speaker, mild and moderate manner.
- Worked with FIA/OCO which has dubious record supporting teachers

Recommendation:

We recommend endorsement as #1 in Ranked Choice Voting

District 1: Stacy Thomas

Strengths:

- Politically progressive (worked on Bernie and Kaplan's campaigns)
- Understands dangers of privatization/charters
- Opposes school closures
- Works with allies, Oakland Not for Sale and Action 2020
- Accountant, understands budgets and skeptical of OUSD staff reports
- Admits when she doesn't know answers to questions (eg Prop 39) but willing to learn.

Weaknesses

- Virtually no background in education
- Surface level knowledge of issues in education both locally and Statewide (eg was not familiar with Prop 39 nor how charters came to proliferate in OUSD)
- Did not express concerns about racial inequities in talking about school closures and consolidations

Recommendation:

We recommend endorsement as #2 in Ranked Choice Voting

District 3: Van Cedric Williams



Strengths

- Opposes charters, closures, co-locations.
- Will not take \$ from privatizers, eg. GO, CCSA.
- Would “prioritize budget transparency and propose OUSD generate a 3-year budget with a racial and social justice lens.”
- 20 year teacher in SF Active in union—has statewide experience in education and electing school board.
- 10 years living in Oakland.
- Endorsed by OEA.

Weaknesses

- Needs to learn about and cite conditions at specific D3 schools and OUSD overall.

Recommendation:

We recommend endorsement as #1 in Ranked Choice Voting

District 3: Cherisse Gash



Strengths

- Opposes charters, closures, co-locations.
- Will not take \$ from privatizers, eg. GO, CCSA.
- Affiliated with Oakland Not For Sale.
- Current OUSD parent involved in the opposition to closing Kaiser.
- Attended OUSD.

Weaknesses

- Lacks experience in education policy. Some answers not specific.
- Some statements unclear—like on relationship of OUSD and charters—“Symbiotic educational experience of inclusion.”

Recommendation:

We recommend endorsement as #2 in Ranked Choice Voting

District 5: Michael Hutchinson



Strengths

- Opposes charters, closures, co-locations and national privatization agenda
- Extremely knowledgeable about School Board role, charter law, Ed Code, history of district.
- Will not take \$ from privatizers, eg. GO, CCSA.
- Strong advocate for social justice issues.
- Consistent presence at BOE meetings as well as active at local, state, and national levels.
- Proposes Sustainable Community School model.
- Endorsed by OEA.

Weaknesses

- Approach is often adversarial. Has a tendency to personalize political differences—how well does he work with others?
- Controversial view that district has no deficit.

Recommendation:

We recommend endorsement as #1 in Ranked Choice Voting

District 7: Victor Valerio



Strengths

- Supports fewer charters.
- Believes budget priorities should change using an equity lens and school sites are prioritized and less money for Central Office and consultants.
- Supports those fighting school closures and consolidations.

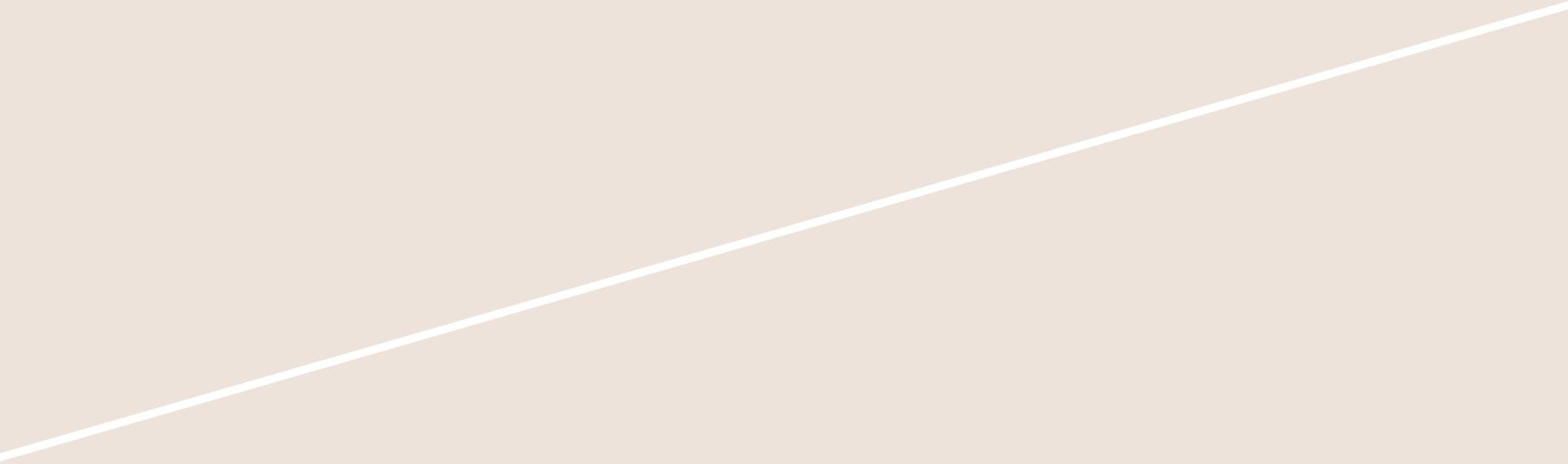
Weaknesses

- Inexperienced and not forceful in his manner.
- Answer on unions was ambiguous even though he was in a union.
- Avoided talking about charters when answering questions of pro-charter organizations like GO.

Recommendation:

We recommend endorsement as #1 in Ranked Choice Voting

Other Candidates



District 1: Austin Dannhaus



Strengths:

- Believes in restorative justice.
- Is committed to helping students learn how to read.

Weaknesses

- Doesn't seem to understand the impact of charters, believes only that there are "some bad apples."
- Is not deeply familiar with Oakland.
- Appears to have taught for one year with Teach for America before moving on to policy work.
- Will probably take money from GO and CCSA.

Recommendation: No

District 3: Maiya Edgerly



Strengths

- Works with disenfranchised youth.
- Earnest and sincerely wants to make things better.

Weaknesses

- Not familiar with issues in OUSD eg. Measure G, Prop 39 (*completely flummoxed by question about Prop 39*)

Recommendation: No

District 3: Mark Hurty



Strengths

- Good grasp of historical problems.
- Clearly spoken.
- Wants better salaries for teachers - clear about the effects of poor teacher pay being destabilizing to the district.

Weaknesses

- Direct relationship with and now endorsed by GO.
- Took issue w/characterization of GO as “privatizing org”; would not pledge not to take their \$.
- Didn’t spend time on strategy to win.
- Didn’t explain view on Black Organizing Project platform.

Recommendation: No

District 3: Maximo Santana



- Filed after all forums and interviews.
- Did not respond to our emailed request for resume, campaign statement and platform.

Recommendation: No

District 5: Leroy Gaines



Strengths

- Recent 9 -year Principal at Acorn Woodland; reputation and record of sound achievement.
- Wants common Theory of Action, strong focus on fixing inequities.
- Worked with UAOS, administrators' union.
- Resigned his position as ED of New Leaders to avoid conflict of interest since they have a contract with OUSD.
- Optimistic about district – cites strength of OUSD teachers and staff.

Weaknesses

- No mention of ill effects of charters on OUSD. Sees charter and public schools as very much the same – both with good and not good schools.
- Unclear relationship with GO; meanders around question of accepting funds; “I can’t run without their [GO] type of money.” Re: billionaires; “I would take their money and use it to strengthen public schools when they want privatizing.”
- Doesn’t know who funds his former employer, New Leaders [Walmart, etc].
- Doesn’t address closures, Blueprint or privatization.

Recommendation: No

District 5: Sheila Lawrence



Strengths

- Pleasant and eager to learn.
- Has worked in OUSD as teacher, counselor, administrator.
- Strong professed connection with students.
- Had been planning to use only own money.

Weaknesses

- Crossed picket line during OEA strike of 2019. “I was inside supporting students and teachers.”
- Feels current OEA leaders not strong enough.
- Scant knowledge about some issues facing OUSD; had trouble with handling several questions.

Recommendation: No

District 5: Jorge Lerma



Strengths

- Long history of working in OUSD.
- Strong opinions on social justice issues, charters and how they shift \$\$ from public schools.
- Proposes serving needs of D5 Central American population.
- Advocate for school site power, parent, community and teacher voice.
- Strong opposition to standardized testing.

Weaknesses

- Plethora of ideas and pledges that align politically, but virtually no specifics as to what he has attempted or achieved.
- We are not clear about recent OUSD work; e.g., says was AP at Highland ES which has been closed since 2006.
- Pro Blueprint: Quality Schools: “totally believe in the potential within the Blueprint for Quality Schools.”
- Apparent inconsistency as he opposes closures, a key element of Blueprint.

Recommendation: Neutral

District 7: Kristina Molina



Strengths

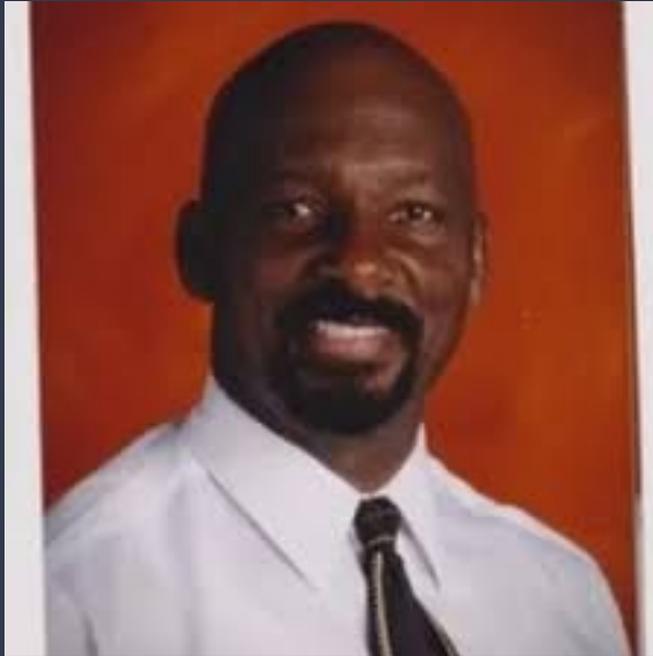
- Seems to be aligned on issue of privatization and charters, as well as school closures.
- Apparently has support in the Latinx community.
- She is highly aware of the problems with Special Ed especially because her child is SpEd.

Weaknesses

- Against government-mandated vaccinations, saying, “I believe that the decision of the health of our children belong to the parent and their doctor, not government bureaucrats.”
- Strongly opposed SB 276 and 714, bills to tighten requirements for medical waivers for vaccinations.
- Seems to view many issues through the lens of personal experience, which narrows her responses.

Recommendation: No

District 7: Clifford Thompson



Strengths

- Has worked in education as teacher and administrator for over 40 years.
- Works on issues affecting African-Americans.

Weaknesses

- Is evasive on whether he will take money from GO and the CCSA. (When asked directly if he would take money he said, "I'm not looking for big organizations to fund my campaign").
- He is a principal of a charter school (COVA). Before he was principal this school was rated so poorly that the district refused to renew its charter. The county did.
- He worked for Hundred Black Men Charter school (closed) and American Indian Charter School. (Renewed by the State over district and county objections.)
- In interviews he generally doesn't answer questions directly and avoids answering any questions that are controversial.

Recommendation: No

District 7: “Coach” Ben Tapscott



Strengths

- Has broad knowledge of district issues.
- Long history of advocacy for West Oakland schools and specifically Black children.
- Aware of need for board oversight.
- Only one who focuses on how school closings affect feeder patterns that deplete enrollment from high schools in poorer neighborhoods.

Weaknesses

- Has difficulty answering interview questions on point.
- Discusses West Oakland issues more than District 7 or OUSD wide issues.
- Unclear how he approaches legislative & policy details. Does not connect the dots between local, state and national issues.
- Is generally oppositional in practice and will ignore facts that are counter to his beliefs.

Recommendation: Neutral

District 7: Bronche Jerard Taylor



Strengths

- Worked in many OUSD schools doing theater
- Engaging and warm
- Interested in issues of equity

Weaknesses

- Unfamiliar with both OUSD and State education issues and policy (eg Prop 39, Charter schools/privatization and Blueprint)
- Vague and vacillating answers to questions on controversial issues like closures and charters. Only solution suggested is more transparency

Recommendation: No