



## Candidate Questionnaire for San Francisco Board of Education

Name: **Matt Haney**

### **1. Why are you running for the Board of Education in the City and County of San Francisco?**

Public education is the most essential institution in our society. There is nothing more critical than ensuring that every young person receives a high-quality education that allows them to pursue their dreams and realize their potential. Growing up in a middle class single parent family in the Bay Area, I attended public schools all my life. I understand firsthand how essential our public schools are in providing equal opportunity for our young people.

San Francisco public schools have made great strides in recent years, and there has been a lot of progress and exciting reforms and opportunities. Still, as one of the most innovative and progressive cities in the country, we know that we can and should do better. We still have one of the largest achievement gaps in the state, and many of our schools are not provide the level of education that we know all of our students deserve. Too many children are being left behind, especially our African American, Latino, and Pacific Islander students, and we can do a better job of accelerating learning for all of our students. The future of our society, economy and city depends largely on whether we re-commit and double down on providing the educational opportunities for our young people that they need and deserve. That is a fight that I have been a part of, and want to continue to be a part of. I bring the background, skills, experience and knowledge to provide the innovative, proactive, energetic leadership that our schools need.

As a Commissioner, I hope to bring my experience as a student advocate, policy analyst, organizer and advocate to help bring new partnerships and resources to our schools, provide the leadership and oversight on many of the important initiatives SFUSD is engaged with (A-G grad requirements, Prop H reauthorization and oversight, Restorative Practices, transition to Common Core Standards, and assessment of the School Improvement Grant), develop a strategic long-term innovative approach to bringing real world learning into all of our schools and classrooms, create strong connections and pathways to our local higher education institutions, and increase student, parent and community input into decision-making. I will be a proactive, forward thinking Board Member—at a time when public education is under attack, our students need leadership.

### **2. What is your background in Public Education?**

I was raised in a middle class single parent family and attended local Bay Area public schools. I've relied on public education to have the opportunities that I've had in my life, and because of public education I

was ultimately able to graduate from UC Berkeley, obtain an LLM from National University of Ireland Galway where I was a Senator George Mitchell Scholar, and a JD and MA in Education from Stanford University.

Over the past ten years, I have fought for public education as an advocate, educator, organizer and policy analyst. As the Executive Director of the University of California Student Association, I work directly for the over 200,000 students in the UC system, managing a budget of over half a million dollars and a team of dedicated professional staff, to ensure public education is protected for current and future generations. I've had a number of major victories during my time at UCSA, including helping to secure a tuition freeze for the 2012-2013 year and passing the California DREAM Act. I previously served as a Legislative Aide to State Senator Joe Simitian on education issues, an educator/docent at the Museum of Tolerance, a clerk to the War Crimes Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Summer Associate at the Office of the White House Counsel and Morrison Foerster, and a Legislative Advocate for the American Academy of Pediatrics. While at Stanford, I served as part of the legal team in a major school funding equity case in which SFUSD was one of the plaintiffs.

I've spent a great deal of time in schools here in San Francisco, and I've demonstrated tremendous success in bringing in new partnerships and resources. I have been a tutor and mentor at the elementary, middle and high school levels, taught in summer and afterschool programs, and helped bring in hundreds of new volunteers and thousands of dollars to our schools through an organization "Citizen Hope" that I founded (including helping lead the "Great African American Read-In" and "Tools for Schools"). I have extensive and deep involvement both in the education community here in San Francisco, and connections and experience in Sacramento and Washington DC. I served on the Public Education Enrichment Fund Community Advisory Committee for two years where I advised the district on how to spend critical funds on libraries, sports, music, preschool and the arts. I also served on the Restorative Justice Taskforce, and have been actively engaged with the operations of the Board of Education. I'm a member of the Glide Legacy Committee, the Advisory Board for the Mural Music and Arts Project, a former Board Member for Opportunity Impact, and an Appointee to Attorney General Kamala Harris' Education and Truancy Working Group.

**3. If elected to this position, what are your top three priorities for improving public education in the City and County of San Francisco?**

**1. Addressing funding challenges to make sure that our educators have the support and resources they need to be successful**

We can and should be smarter about we prioritize our resources as a district, and ensure that we are innovating and holding the district accountable for our spending choices. But ultimately, if we want to make sure that we invest adequately and bring about the policies that can truly close the achievement gap and ensure success for all of our students, we must increase the revenue streams into SFUSD and make sure that we are squeezing out every bit of waste that might be occurring within the district.

With that, I strongly support taxes on the 1% in San Francisco and beyond. I'll support and campaign

aggressively for progressive taxation that goes to funding our schools, city and neighborhood services, and jobs. We must continue to push for additional funding at the statewide level while we also push for proactive solutions and partnerships locally, including reauthorization of the Public Education Enrichment Fund.

Our Board of Education should be held accountable for putting forward funding alternatives. It is unacceptable for our excuse every year to be that we don't have the money to provide the basic tools that our educators need to be successful—professional development, smaller class sizes, summer and after-school extended learning, instructional coaches, new and innovative materials, and support for counselors, social workers, nurses, librarians and para-professionals in every school. All of these things are so essential that we should be fighting everyday to make sure that we have that funding to make it possible. Our students deserve nothing less, and I'll bring the creative, innovative, energetic leadership to make a difference.

## **2. Ensuring college/career readiness for all, and closing the achievement gap with real world learning skills and curriculum**

SFUSD must offer a curriculum that prepares all of its students for their future. We need to ensure that we set high standards for all of our students while giving them the tools to succeed. I will work with SFUSD educators to establish a high-quality, modern, and engaging curriculum that gives all students a pathway to success. I'll put a strong emphasis on project-based learning, leadership, and the skills needed to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. It is crucial that we bring in the professional development and innovative partnerships, especially drawing on the technology and innovation growth that is taking place in our city, that will allow us to integrate real-world learning into all of the subjects that we teach. I will work with educators to provide close monitoring and oversight of the SFUSD's new "A-G" graduation requirements to help close the opportunity gap, and ensure that we are investing in high-quality academic support, tutoring, mentorship and intervention for students that are struggling.

Two major pieces of this challenge are assessing and maintaining the approaches/programs that were effective or ineffective in the SIG grant process and Superintendent Zone, and also working to provide educators with the support they need for a successful transition to the Common Core. These will be top priorities.

## **3. I'll enhance student, parent and community input in decision making.**

I'll make better use of technology, advocate for Parent and Community Liason positions, and support district institutions that engage students in decision making. As a youth organizer, I will fight for a stronger Student Advisory Council and Youth Commission to ensure that their voice is heard on every important issue that comes to the Board and look for opportunities to expand student voice within the schools

## **4. What is your strategy for reducing, or completely closing the learning gap between students of different ethnicities and income levels?**

The achievement and opportunity gap for our Latino, African American and Pacific Islander students is without a doubt the most urgent and alarming issue facing the district. It will be a top priority for me as a

Board member.

Here are some of the strategies that I would employ immediately as a Board member to close the opportunity gap, particularly as it relates to those students in high school that are not on track to graduate:

- Ensure that the District puts together a strategic plan to address the immediate challenge of the 20% of the class of 2014 that is not on track to graduate, as well as the classes of 2015 and 2016. We need immediate intervention for these students, including expanded in-school, summer school, and Saturday school credit recovery opportunities, counseling and tutoring, and intervention. We need to know what sort of credit recovery options, outreach, and student support are necessary to ensure their success.
- Advocate for a move to a 7-period school day to help address credit recovery needs, and prioritize implementation of 7-period days for students most at risk of not graduating on time. In-school credit recovery and intervention for students that are struggling should be prioritized.
- Prioritize summer and after school opportunities where they are needed the most. We also need to ensure that we have effective outreach and sufficient time to reach out to students most in need of summer school.
- Expand and streamline dual enrollment opportunities at CCSF, SFSU and other institutions for SFUSD students, and determine how these opportunities can assist with credit recovery needs. In addition to CCSF and SFSU, there may be other institutions that would be open to creative ways of providing enrollment opportunities for SFUSD students. Dual enrollment students who take college credits while in high school are much more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to attend and succeed while in college, and less likely to require remediation. We should make every effort to expand these opportunities for our students.
- Fully implement our 9<sup>th</sup> grade “early warning” system, and provide effective intervention for students with one or two “risk factors” (low GPA or high absenteeism) to ensure support for the students that most need it as early as possible.
- Assess whether the A-G courses that are available are engaging, relevant and interesting for our students. We need to make sure that our students are engaged in classroom learning, which will help keep them on track. In order for that to be the case, the course material has to reflect their experience and be relevant to their lives. We should get more courses that fit this description approved as A-G.
- Focus on tutoring and counseling. We should closely assess whether adequate tutoring support is available where needed, and expand where necessary. We need high quality proven intervention support for our students that are falling behind.
- Parent and student engagement and outreach. Our students and parents should have access to all of the information they need to make their decisions. For this reason, we should do more outreach related to A-G requirements as early and often as possible, and this should start before

high school. This should mean additional funding for the Office of Parent Engagement and close coordination with community based organizations.

Funding and consistency of funding is a tremendous barrier to closing the racial achievement and opportunity gap. Now that the School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding is coming to a close, and we face a budget deficit that is either huge or astronomical, we are going to have major challenges continuing some of the efforts that have shown success and expanding particular approaches. Many of our SIG schools saw major progress in closing the achievement gap, in no small part because of targeted professional development, extended school days, more afterschool and summer school opportunities, additional instructional assistance and coaches, community and parent liasons, and new instructional materials—much of which would not have been possible without the additional funding. With additional funding, we could sustain these successful efforts and expand them both at the SIG schools and additional schools. We also have a lot of unpredictability in our funding levels because of disinvestment from Sacramento, and the result of that is major challenges with planning ahead and putting into place long-term strategies.

**5. Do you believe Teacher and Principal Retention is important for student achievement? If so, what will you do to increase the retention of Teachers and Principals in the San Francisco Unified School District, should you be elected to the San Francisco Board of Education?**

Teacher and Principal Retention are absolutely critical for student achievement. In any conversation about cuts, layoffs of teachers and principals should always be the last option considered and we should make every possible effort to prevent it.

In order to retain our teachers and principals, we also need to make sure that SFUSD educators are paid enough to live and stay in San Francisco. There is no doubt in my mind that we do not pay our educators nearly as much as they deserve, and we make it incredibly difficult for them to survive in one of the most expensive cities in the country. The City and County of San Francisco has recognized the need to pay their employees a salary that reflects the cost of living in San Francisco, and it is critical that SFUSD does the same. It is shameful that our educators have not received a salary increase in years, and have been made to take pay cuts through furloughs. City Attorneys, District Attorneys and Public Defenders in San Francisco start in the \$80,000s, while our teachers start at half that; it is disrespectful to the incredibly challenging work that our educators do in our schools, and disrespectful to our children as well.

There is no question that our current budget situation makes it difficult to increase salaries for our educators. With that said, the Board of Education should build into the budget a plan to increase salaries over time, even if it happens gradually. It is critical that the Board and SFUSD leadership make it absolutely clear that the salaries are unacceptable and that we are working towards raising them. We cannot accept the status quo. Another way we can work towards providing educators what they deserve is by prioritizing SFUSD staff over the use of consultants or outside contracts—this would free up more funds to go to our staff who will be staying with us over the long-term. I believe that it is critical that we

start a renewed conversation, in light of the continuous budget cuts from Sacramento in recent years, about bringing in more revenue locally. Any local revenue funding mechanism should include commitments to raise salaries.

In addition to pay, we should make sure that there are opportunities for teacher leadership and teacher professional growth. Teachers should be treated as partners in how we set our priorities both at our sites and districtwide. Treating our educators with respect as professionals is also a way to ensure that they are retained.

**6. Special Education in public schools is essential for students with disabilities to achieve academically. However, most often the program is underfunded, or there is an unwillingness to make the reasonable accommodations needed for the students with disabilities to succeed. What plans do you have to mitigate this inequity in San Francisco's public schools should you be elected to the San Francisco Board of Education?**

It is critical that SFUSD provides sufficient training, staffing and support to ensure that success of the new inclusion approach for our Special Education students. This support should be available for both teachers and paraprofessionals, and others that may need the training and support. We should analyze the appropriate class size limits and ratios of inclusion of general education and special education students. We should also emphasize in-classroom support for the teacher for the majority of the day, and put forward a plan that allows our special education teachers to receive autism credentials.

**7. What role if any, do you believe Charter Schools play in the public educational system of the United States?**

I support public education with democratic accountability and oversight over our schools. For that reason, I generally do not support the idea of having charter schools be a central part of our strategy to deliver high quality education to all of our students. Anything that a charter school does that is effectively serving students, we should be able to do in our district schools. I have concerns about the impact that charter schools have on enrollment in our district, and on creating greater challenges for our district schools. I would only support charter schools in those very rare instances in which they were providing high quality education in some sort of special way with an accompanying justification as to why it is something that we cannot provide in our district run schools. I believe that most of the charter schools that we have in our district currently do fit that description that for that reason I have no desire to see their charters revoked.

In general, I also do not support the privatization of our schools. I am a strong advocate and supporter of public education, and I'd encourage parents in San Francisco to send their kids to SFUSD. I would be deeply concerned about any efforts from outside groups to either encourage privatization or bring in more private or corporate influence into how we set our priorities within our schools or within the district.

**8. The San Francisco Unified School District in recent years has developed policy to ensure a safe environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender students in San Francisco's public schools. Can you summarize your understanding of these policy objectives? What are your plans regarding this policy should you be elected to the San Francisco Board of Education?**

Our LGBT policy in SFUSD sets out the objective of ensuring that every LGBTQ student feels safe, respected and nurtured at SFUSD schools. Even here in San Francisco, we know that LGBTQ students often do not feel safe in our schools. They are much more likely to have lower grades, much more likely to be bullied or threatened, and much more likely to drop out. This is tragic and it is totally unacceptable. We need to fully implement our policies regarding LGBTQ students in our schools, and urgently address this issue and devote the necessary funds and staff to support our LGBTQ students.

I would protect funding not just for the staff and resources at the central office that provide support for LGBT students, but I'd work to expand that capacity to sites. All of our educators, and especially our counselors and student support staff, should receive training on how to support our LGBT students, create safe environments, and stop bullying.

SFUSD currently has an anti-slur policy that asks all of its educators to intervene immediately if they hear an anti-gay slur (or any other kind) being used. As many students report infrequent intervention, this policy should be implemented more often. The same is true of Seth's Law at the statewide level which requires every school district to write antibullying policies that specifically include gay and transgender students, and requires staff to intervene when harassment is reported.

We need to make sure that all of staff receive professional development on how to prevent bullying of LGBTQ youth. We should support curriculum with positive LGBTQ role models from a young age. We should support different awareness events and weeks/months in our schools where we bring in speakers, put on cultural/music/art awareness programs, and other sort of activities to open up conversations about respecting and valuing every person. Restorative practices is also a critical paradigm shift in our schools that will hopefully reduce bullying and harassment in our schools. I also think that we need to continue to collect regular survey data to understand the progress we are making on safety for our LGBTQ youth and hold ourselves accountable for making adequate progress.

I previously worked as an Educator and Docent at the Museum of Tolerance in LA, working with students and young people, teaching a curriculum about respecting and understanding others and not being a bystander to injustice. I would want to bring similar types of curriculum to our schools.

**9. Do you favor the use of Project Labor Agreements in the San Francisco Unified School District?**

Yes.