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Berkeley Federation of Teachers Questionnaire

Name: <i>Laura Babitt</i>	Office sought: <i>BUSD School Director</i>
Occupation: <i>Controller</i>	Employer: <i>REL Acoustics, A Manufacturing/Retail Company</i>
Work Address: <i>Berkeley, CA</i>	Work Phone: <i>510-407-4397</i>
Campaign Address: <i>1623 8th Street Berkeley, CA</i>	Campaign Phone: <i>TBD- Currently using my personal cell- 925-238-5239</i>
Campaign ID Number: <i>TBD</i>	Political Party: <i>Democrat</i>

Background

- Which public offices have you held? *None*
- Briefly describe your educational background. *Bachelors of Science in Accounting with an Emphasis in Finance*
- Please describe your previous experience with and contributions towards educational issues.

Summary Contributions include: Key developer of the BUSD LCAP PLAN, Leader of Parent Engagement, Empowerment, and Activism within BUSD. Spokesperson and advocate for equity focused curricula, policies, and school climates.

- ✓ *BHS African American Studies Dept. Parent Liaison* *2010-2014*
 - *Ensured funding for this department was maintained as declining numbers indicated positions/courses could be cut.*
 - *Increased enrollment in the department's classes through parent engagement, direct student outreach.*
 - *Updated the BHS course catalog so students would be clearly aware of the access they had to these classes depending upon their small school or specialized learning community. Ensured students were aware these classes met A-G requirements and could replace traditional sections for college credit.*
 - *Advocated for honors level courses as many students needed more honors level courses for college acceptance.*
 - *Coordinated student conferences, workshops, and other fundraising activities working closely with the Black Student Union and Parents of Children of African Descent.*
 - *Expanded Black Graduation to include all Black students on campus in addition to those who took the departments' classes. As costs for tickets for the main high school graduation were increased, more families needed an alternative opportunity for a formal graduation celebration.*

- ✓ *Served on Berkeley High School BSEP Committee* *2011-2013*
 - *Reviewed and approved funding for parcel tax supplemented programs at BHS with an*

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emphasis on equity focused initiatives such as RISE, Bridge, and the BHS Parent Liaison.

- *Updated the funding application form to streamline/expedite the process of review and approval.*

- ✓ *Parents of Children of African Descent (PCAD) -Member 2010-2011 Executive Director Fall 2012-Spring 2016*
 - *Advocated for equity in results at the school board level for several initiatives from suspension rates to math curricula, increased teacher pay to Superintendent new hires, family engagement to increased student supports, equity initiatives for all underserved communities to fully funded and well implemented special education services.*
 - *Hosted several meetings with BUSD stakeholders to ensure concerns were addressed with actionable solutions.*
 - *Provided workshops to empower parents for “educational parenting”.*
 - *Hosted a teacher appreciation pancake breakfast for BHS teachers to thank teachers for their hard work, and to build greater partnership with parents and educators.*

- ✓ *Parent Advisory Committee Member -2011-2012 Co-Chair 2012-2015 Member 2016-Current*
 - *Review initiatives funded by LCAP Supplemental fund. Provide advisory council recommendations to the BUSD Board of Directors.*
 - *Ensure funds are spent to reach BUSD’s LCAP and 2020 vision. Ensure funds are used for new or expanded services to the targeted students.*
 - *Advocate heavily when leadership propose cut services to our most vulnerable families. Includes the saving of the Office of Family Engagement and Equity and the McKinney Vento staff in 2019 and as previously proposed in 2020.*

- ✓ *Longfellow (LF) Advocacy/Planning Group 2017-Current*
 - *Stemming from the work began on the Longfellow School Site Council- Continue advocacy efforts to ensure Longfellow’s concentration of high needs students are met*
 - *Highlighted the inequities amount BUSD’s Middle Schools.*
 - *Established a long-term goal to implement a 7 period per day schedule so LF so students will have access to more instructional as well as enrichment opportunities.*

- ✓ *BSEP P&O Committee Member 2013-Current*
 - *Review and approve district wide parcel tax funding.*
 - *Ensure equity focused strategies are included in the services delivered.*
 - *Develop current/future parcel tax measure.*
 - *Offer a bridge between how LCAP supplemental funds and BSEP P&O funds are spent.*

- ✓ *Member of the OFEE sponsored Black Parents Affinity Group 2014-Present (as convened by OFEE)*
 - *Provide information on BUSD offerings and PCAD advocacy issues.*
 - *Attended parent empowerment workshops.*
 - *Lead parent workshops on educational parenting and navigating the BUSD system.*

- ✓ *Leader of the African and African American Advisory Council (ADAC) -Rosa Parks Elementary* *2014-Current*
 - *Provide advisory council recommendations to Rosa Parks School Leadership.*
 - *Implemented school wide black history programs (this was non-existent from 2010 to 2015.)*
 - *Host courageous conversations on race, sexual identity, and other equity concerns for all parents.*
 - *Host several events from Kwanzaa Dinners to joint PTA meetings and other programs to create school community and foster a welcoming school climate.*

- ✓ *Member of Berkeley Advanced Learner Support and Advocacy (BALSA)* *2012-2015*
(formally dissolved in 2015)
 - *Attended informational workshops. Increased the diversity of this group to include Latino and African American families of students considered advanced learners based on academic performance*
 - *Co-Sponsored a meeting with PCAD, BALSA, DELAC, and SPED families to begin needed parent conversations, create unity within our parent organizations, and align advocacy efforts*

- ✓ *Member of the Anti-Racism Task Force* *2016-2017*
 - *Listen to proposed district initiatives to support black students. (This District-led focus group did not include anti-racism strategies as the name would suggest)*

- ✓ *Visionary and Coordinator of the BUSD Black History Oratorical Fest in partnership with OFEE -*
Now considered the “Jewel of the District”. *2018- Current*

- ✓ *Chair of the 50th Anniversary of African American Studies in BUSD Celebration* *2018-2019*
 - *Coordinated three major district wide celebrations including a carnival like kick-off reunion and the final Malcolm X Day Banquet.*
 - *Gained first-hand knowledge of BUSD finance policies and procedural strengths and weaknesses as I was responsible for the \$25,000 budget.*

- ✓ *Superintendent’s Budget Advisory Committee* *2019-2020*
- ✓ *Served on School Site/Governance Council at Elementary and Middle School Sites*

- Briefly describe your work background.

Current Controller of Global Operations with over 25 years of progressive experience including Big 4 Public Accounting and Business Operations Development. Particular strengths combine results-driven financial management, excellent written and oral communication skills, creative thinking, and the leadership ability to foster a team-building environment. Enjoy solving complex problems to create organizational efficiencies. Core Technical Competencies:

Audit, Compliance, & Regulatory Reporting ➤GL Management & Financial Reporting ➤ Budget & Forecast Models ➤ Develop & Strengthen Internal Controls & Reporting Process ➤Asset Management Including Inventory ➤Revenue Recognition ➤ Software Implementation & Integration

Noteworthy entities I've served as an auditor, finance consultant, or employee include: SanDisk Incorporated, Ikos Systems, Mondavi, BB&K, Ocean Colony Partners, AMB Properties, Bon Appetite, Hewlett Packard Foundation, the Department of Transportation, Union Bank, Wells Fargo Bank, Bank of the West, Interactive Data Corp, Central Garden and Pet, Safeway Corporation

Significant Contributions to these organizations include:

- *Directly responsible for Company assets ranging from \$3 million to \$1.5 billion.*
- *Direct annual financial and strategic planning, budgeting, forecasting, and risk assessment.*
- *Interface with all levels of Finance and Operations personnel to consolidate data to provide information for sound decision making. Prepare final proposals and presentations for CEO, COO, Board, and other Senior Management to make informed strategic investments and direct operational initiatives.*
- *Recommend significant organizational changes; strategic and operational initiatives.*
- *Develop complex financial models, challenge financial spending and saving assumptions, analyze results, and make recommendations. Balance investments with appropriate mix of operating necessities, and cost saving/growth projects.*
- *Manage all operations of the finance department with emphasis on efficient, accurate, and timely financial reporting.*
- *Prepare 10-K, 10-Q SEC filings and related external audit review. Prepare quarterly and annual banking regulatory reporting requirements.*
- *Manage quarterly and year-end audits performed by external and lender auditors which consistently resulted in no material adjustments or control weaknesses.*
- *Accelerate month-end financial close process; Converted purchased companies onto SAP accounting software platform.*
- *Reduce obsolete inventory by establishing effective internal controls, enhanced forecast models, increased communication with sales, and preparing cost-benefit analysis for new and existing products.*
- *Initiate consolidation of suppliers that reduced company expenses approx. 35%.*
- *Manage the Capital Acquisition process for 20 Distribution facilities throughout the United States. Total budget for Dist. Centers exceeds \$1.5 billion.*
- *Transition asset-based lending to conventional business loans- Secured venture capitalist and other IPO funds.*
- *Outperformed net working capital year over year by 33% and earnings before interests and taxes by 74%. **Accounts Receivable:** Reduce AR >60 days by 23%. Collect over \$350K of debt previously deemed uncollectible. Net AR improved 32% while net sales increased 4%.*

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- **Inventory:** Reduce purchase price variance activity by 93%; Improved net inventory by \$3M or 23% through monitoring of purchases in relation to sales forecasts, and implementing improved inventory controls.
- **Accounts Payable:** Reduce unvouchered AP from \$3.5M to \$560K through AP/Purchasing/and Whse staff training development. Improve relations with vendors while managing company cash flow.
- Manage a staff as large as 18 employees.
- Report to Company President.

• Are you a union member? *No* To which unions have you belonged? *Unfortunately, my jobs have not had the support of a union*

• Please describe your work with union members in previous positions. *As an education advocate, I've supported the BFT in our shared goals ranging from higher pay, to the development and implementation of the BUSD LCAP Plan which has been favorably recognized state wide.*

• To what fraternal, professional, civic, or social organizations do you belong? *See educational committee listings above.*

• From what other groups are you seeking or have you received endorsements?

As the election is six months away, most organizations have not endorsed. As many organizations have requested that I run for School Board in past election years, I'm looking forward to a wide range of support. I am beginning by seeking BFT endorsement and have not made any formal requests for other organizational endorsements.

• Will you seek higher office? *Currently, I have no interest in a higher office.*

• How much money does your campaign expect to raise? *\$25,000*

• How will you win?

I will win by running the best campaign possible. I plan to run a strong grassroots campaign in which I and my diverse campaign team will personally inform all the people that we have been working with in BUSD over the last 10 plus years. I am confident that as the word spreads that I am finally running, I will have strong voter support. With my volunteer campaign team, we will run a targeted direct voter contact program which includes talking with parents, teachers, and voters throughout the city -- listening to their issues and concerns, discussing our vision of our public schools, and asking for their vote. We will stay tuned to public health advice and will tailor our voter outreach efforts accordingly. Phone, peer-to-peer text messaging, and virtual meetings will play a significant role in our direct voter contact effort given the covid-19 pandemic. We will purchase targeted advertising space via Facebook, Instagram, Google ads, and You-Tube. Social media platforms will play a central role in our campaign throughout the election. In addition, we will consider a direct mail program and a lawn/window sign campaign. Flyering at major events including back to school nights and major Berkeley hotspots (e.g. Berkeley Bowl) would be ideal. I will also seek endorsements from individuals and organizations.

Please attach a complete endorser list. *TBD as my campaign is just beginning with this BFT endorsement process. However, in one email request sent Friday 5/1, sent only to a few easily accessible emails of BUSD constituents, the following people responded to happily endorse my candidacy which I greatly appreciate. I feel very humbled and encouraged by their support:*

Josh Daniels, former School Board Director

Sam Frankel, BFT Union Activist for 19 years, President of Division 49 of the California Teachers Association

Deminika Spears, Current Parent Advisory Chair

Felicia Bellow, BSEP P&O and Parent Advisory Council

Ana Zamost, Rosa Parks PTA President

Dr. Ramona Coates, Vice President of Equity and Inclusion, Berkeley High School PTSA 2018-Present, District PTA Council 2016-2017, Former Parent Advisory Committee Member (PAC), Parents of Children of African Descent

Chris Jourdan/AKA CJ Flash of KBLX- BHS ALUM

Martha Cain, Retired BUSD Teacher, Longfellow SSC 2017-2018, Writer Coach with Writer Coach Connection

Tasha Henneman, Adjunct Faculty, Mills College, and BCC College

Denise Dafflon, Sylvia Mendez SSC, ELAC, PTA, DELAC, and PAC

Crystal L. Paschel, RTI Coordinator/AVID Coordinator, District Math Teacher Leader

Spencer Pritchard, Chair of the African American Studies Department at Berkeley High

Becky Lum, Rosa Parks Teacher

Michelle Reece, Rosa Parks Teacher

Leanna Lewis, Founder of Rosa Parks African and African American Advisory Council, PAC, Longfellow SSC

Darinxoso Oyamasela, PAC

Federico “Tito” Aquino, Family Engagement Specialist OFEE

Ade Villaseñor Melgoza, Parent at Sylvia Mendez Elementary, Former DELAC Rep; Current PAC Rep

Yesenia Moran, Morning RP Coordinator and School Campus Aide

S. Abby Ejigu, Parent Advisory Committee 2017-2018

Pastor Michael McBride, The Way Christian Center

Bishop Woods, Covenant Church

Rhonda Jefferson, BHS Budget Officer

I am confident I will receive many more as I have been a consistent visible agent for educational excellence within BUSD and have not informed at least 200 people within my network that I am finally running.

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Teaching and Learning and Equity

1. Please review the [BFT Quality Education Agenda](#). What are a few sections that stand out to you? What sections do you think are particularly key in closing our equity gaps in BUSD? What is one or more section that you see yourself working on deeply in the next four years as a Board member?

Response:

Reading the opening statement made me feel immediately proud that I am a part of this BUSD community. The last line of this opening statement which says “A quality education is one that we build together” stood out the most. The care to name all communities as important and to include all stakeholders in the process in order to create a quality education reflects the ways in which we have been working to improve educational outcomes for all over so many years.

I appreciate the thoughtfulness of the BFT Quality Education Agenda which recognizes that the achievement gap is an opportunity gap. As each underlying section in the Principles of Education clearly defines the many layers that are important to reach the goals of academic excellence for all, I am thinking that all must be addressed to close the opportunity gap. As such, I plan to work deeply in each area as they are all needed to reach the goal.

Over the past 12 years, my hands-on experience with the BSEP P&O committee, LCAP Parent Advisory Committee, Special Education Families, Parents of Children of African Descent, and School Site Councils/Auxiliaries representing Elementary, Middle, and the High School, has given me intimate knowledge of why each bullet point is critical to achieve our overall “whole child” goals. As a school board director, I want to address what I have not seen over the last 12 years to reach these goals: Detailed Implementation Plans. I would like to see the results of so many of our task force groups, surveys, and other forms of gathering feedback from BUSD constituents actualized through the use of action-oriented timelines. This will not only outline the standards we all want to achieve as noted in the BFT Principles of a Quality Education, but provide a clear roadmap to get there.

2. What do you think are the most important supports for sites with high numbers of EL students? What are your priorities for our ELD and bilingual programs?

Response:

As a key member of the LCAP PAC since the LCAP Plan was written, I’ve seen the improvements in ELL performance which suggested that the direct service to EL students I helped to institute has enabled many students to meet the requirements needed for re-designation. After the adoption of the LCAP plan in 2014-2015, ELL students were to be provided 30 min a day of guaranteed EL services across BUSD. As the co-chair of the PAC then, I advocated for data to ensure these services were delivered by school. The increased re-designation rates, and improved assessment results solidified that these funds were well spent and validated our efforts to support and continue this initiative.

Over the years, we’ve also learned from ELL parents and caregivers that students still need targeted support after re-designation and parents need timely support with translation to partner with our educators and ensure the educational success of their students. My goals would be to ensure the ELL Master Plan is updated to respond to current needs, that BUSD continues the specialized direct service to EL students, and that information is translated for our caregivers in a timely and consistent manner.

In regards to BUSD's Two-Way Immersion program; I am very concerned about the support these programs are being given, especially at the middle school level. One of the anticipated benefits of consolidating this program at the elementary level at one location, was to ensure its specific needs could be met and the program could be fully funded. In reality, this initiative needs critical attention and support. I admire members of the Sylvia Mendez Community who have been great advocates to ensure the needs of their school are met. They also provided Longfellow \$10,000 of their own PTA funds as they continue to see the needs and advocate for them. As a PAC member and advocate for equity in results, I have done what I can to support these initiatives in the spaces provided. As a School Board Director, I would have greater ability to ensure their concerns are properly responded to and would request the Superintendent to provide information which monitors the progress.

For example, one small ask from the community is for the kindergarten enrollment application to add a note indicating that joining the TWI program is a 9-year commitment which currently continues through Longfellow Middle school. This ask would not require a significant expenditure, but would help caregivers understand the commitment upfront so that the limited number of spaces available are filled by families that are thinking of the program as a long-term obligation early on. That's a practical low to no cost need that can be easily filled and has the potential to substantially improve the fidelity of the program. However, without proper monitoring, it will not be completed and we may continue to have families apply that have no intention of going to Longfellow Middle School or staying in Berkeley.

3. What are your ideas around closing our equity gaps for African American students?

Response:

The more I learned of the equity gap for African Americans in Berkeley, the more flabbergasted I became. I began to read research from top Universities on ways to close the achievement gap. I read published findings from other school districts across the nation on initiatives they implemented in response to their gap in educational outcomes. Lastly, I sought out what parents of successful students were doing for their children. At this time, I also became the Executive Director of PCAD, Parents of Children of African Descent. In partnership with the shared lived experience of this community, the shared lived experience of our BUSD educators at every level, the English language learner community, the Latino Community, and published research, the basis of all these findings were summarized and presented to the BUSD for its LCAP Plan.

These findings would continue to be my response to closing the opportunity gap for African American, Latino, and English Language Learners. Listed below in no particular order, they include:

- ✓ *Culturally responsive curricula and teaching pedagogy*
- ✓ *High expectations*
- ✓ *Access to high quality educators, including teachers of color*
- ✓ *Active parent engagement and empowerment*
- ✓ *Welcoming school climates which include restorative practices*

As a school board member, I would continue to focus on these initiatives as foundational building stones, but would also ensure they are implemented with clarity of understanding and fidelity in execution. In

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addition, I would provide access to 2 key initiatives which “successful caregivers” report they provide for their children:

1. *Develop High Self- Esteem and a Growth Mindset. Several educators and researchers reflect that part of why the white students perform so well in school is because they are surrounded with positive images in and outside the home. These images tell them they are great, can and will achieve, and the support they need is and will be readily available to help them as they grow and develop.*

For this reason, I put my then second grade child into a program called Young, Gifted, and Black (YGB) to ensure she also developed high self-esteem in addition to what our family could provide. She also became an educator to others on the beauty and brilliance African Americans offer the world through her YGB performances. It took some time, but I’m proud to say that starting in the 2018-2019 school year, YGB became a program available for all African American students grades 2-6 within BUSD.

2. *Ensure children are involved in high quality educational and other extra-curricular programming after school and over the summer.*
4. **What will you do as a Board Member to further the implementation of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in BUSD? What resources do you think are needed for this to happen?**

Response:

According to the National School Boards Association, the most important responsibility of school boards is to work with their communities to improve student achievement in their local public schools. The more we build relationships between the teacher, student, and at least one caring adult, the more we can identify and properly respond to the needs of the student within each tier. As a school board member, my direct service role would be to provide sound fiscal management, to ensure students within each tier are properly served.

Resources allocated to meet students’ needs should be used. Large variances to expenditures should be analyzed. Teachers and budget managers should know timely what additional resources are available to properly plan and support students at every level.

The unnecessary red tape to access these funds needs to be eliminated. For example, in the private sector, Purchase Orders (PO) are only required when goods are to be received. This is to ensure all goods invoiced were properly received before we pay the invoice. In BUSD, PO’s are required for goods and services. In addition, they require several signatures for approval. I would strive to update this policy so that PO’s would be used to properly provide the financial controls it serves. Service invoices can be processed without the extra layer of PO processing which would save many budget managers the time they spend tracking down the PO in its approval process. This one efficiency would eliminate a lot of time for all involved; the processors, approvers, and those that need the service. As this is one very small example of the work I have done for several million dollar entities, I look forward to combining my private sector experience, with my passion for quality public education.

5. BUSD has the beginnings of a true Restorative Practices structure, especially at the secondary level. What do you think needs to be done next in order to provide alternatives to exclusionary discipline and interrupt the School-to-Prison-Pipeline in BUSD?

Response:

Just to clarify, in order to interrupt the School to Prison Pipeline, I believe students need to graduate high school ready for college or career opportunities. Restorative Practices will aid students in developing a positive relationship with traditional learning environments and making good choices. These two results will help students graduate high school CTE/College ready.

I worked directly with the American Civil Liberties Union when the BUSD LCAP Plan was being established and learned how powerful fully funded, well implemented Restorative Justice programs are in meeting educational excellence goals for all. I advocated to support this work within BUSD and these initiatives were approved by the Board. I believe that BUSD needs to support the fidelity of the Restorative Justice model while at the same time ensuring that systems - especially as it relates to procedures and expectations around discipline - are fairly and consistently implemented..

I appreciate the work that many of our teachers have done to create the true restorative justice environment the pedagogy is designed to create. As a district however, coupled with all of the other actions in BFT's Quality Education Agenda, we need to ensure this pedagogy has been well taught, supported, and implemented to truly interrupt the school-to-prison-pipeline.

6. The BUSD LCAP is our roadmap for closing our opportunity gaps. How will you evaluate the effectiveness of our actions and services?

In the coming year, the LCAP Plan will be updated. I believe that each action/service approved going forward should start with clearly defined measurable outcomes. The method for obtaining comprehensive evaluation information should be clearly identified and supported by those expected to implement them before the plan is approved by the Board. As someone who was a contributor to the current LCAP Plan, it was written with goals in mind, not necessarily the process for reaching them. For example, students would improve reading literacy by XYZ, percent. I remember initially challenging BUSD to increase this goal from its original 5% benchmark. But no one then (or now) talked about how this was going to be measured in a systematic, timely, or comprehensive way. After the LCAP Plan approval, measuring progress became very quickly tied to "waiting to see what the state requires", and not how we are working to ensure we meet our own goals. It has been extremely frustrating to see standardized testing be the sole point of measurement for many of the current LCAP initiatives. As a School Board Director, I would have more influence to ensure the Superintendent directs staff to present plan documents the methods for measuring success included.

7. What would you change in BUSD to increase the recruitment and retention of teachers of color?

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As one who fought hard to ensure this was a clear initiative in our LCAP Plan, one who was proud to see the increase in staffing in subsequent years, and someone who has personally recommended teachers who have been hired within BUSD, I believe that BFT and its Teachers of Color (TOC) network have properly identified the needs BUSD should work on in this area. BUSD hired the National Equity Project to develop strategy for the recruitment and retention of teachers of color. The primary results of their work reflected what the TOC network already identified. I would start there and determine which items we have and have not made progress on.

I also agree that to further this initiative we should automate the application/hiring process, and change our hiring deadlines so that we can post jobs, interview, and hire sooner. As a parent looking in, I have no idea why BUSD has not reached this goal before now and is only starting to make some progress in this area. However, as a Board Member, I will push to get a detailed implementation plan which achieves these goals. While this may help hire TOC, it may also only help increase the number of non-TOC talent hired within BUSD. So, to be more specific to ensure TOC are given equal access for consideration, I would also

- a. Ask for Principals who do the primary hiring to report on how many TOC they interviewed, and why they chose other candidates as the better fit.*
- b. Review why so many credentialed teachers of color are rejected in BUSD during the background check process, but are then accepted by our neighboring school districts.*
- c. I would focus on the retention of teachers of colors by ensuring they have the adequate supports to manage their classrooms. Often, TOC are given the highest needs students of color. These teachers also need the same supports that a teacher of any ethnicity would need to educate high needs students.*
- d. Ensure school climate education and Principal training includes fostering a welcoming school environment for its TOC.*
- e. Continue the work sparked through the LCAP PAC and PCAD to cultivate/support/streamline the process for classified staff to become teachers.*

8(A). What concrete steps do you think can be taken to more actively involve parents of color and low-income parents in district-level decision-making?

Response:

As a parent of color, I have consistently participated in the district level decision making process. I've found that getting us to step up and take part in these decision-making bodies is not as challenging as keeping us involved in these meetings. Parents of color and teachers are often aligned in our thought process/proposed strategies for improvements or other course of action. However, the voices that are responded to promptly are not ours based on the perceived power dynamic. So, to keep parents of color involved in the decision-making process, we need to do the following:

- a. Challenge the thought process that still very much responds to white males and takes pleasure in having parents of color there for the sign-in sheet demographic reporting.*
- b. Make space for all to feel comfortable to speak up for issues that challenge students of color. I've been in several meetings in which white people were glad I attended to guide the discussion towards equity as this was also why they joined the committee.*
- c. Because of the racial isolation, micro and macro aggressions some experience in these meetings, and need for parents to work or be home to support their children, the use of technology for these*

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meetings is long overdue. I was very surprised when I first began attending these meetings, that physical presence was the only real-time way to engage. I was fortunate that I could leave my job early to attend these meetings. Many businesses and non-profit organizations have been very successfully using technology for years for its decision-makers to be well informed and participate in meetings. The town halls that BUSD has had recently proves using technology increases participation. We've never had over 200 people physically attend a town hall meeting since I've been working in BUSD.

- d. *Treat Parents of color that do step up with the same respect given to others. When we push for the discussion to be more equity focused, we should not be perceived as a “trouble-maker”, while others are treated as concerned parents.*

8(B). What outreach, connections, and partnerships have you made in these communities?

Response:

My work with all the various school committees and parent groups that I have led attest to the work I have done to outreach, build connections and partnerships with parents of all diversities. One example includes the town hall I led for the entire Longfellow community as a result of the schools limited resources available to meet the high needs of its student population. As members of the SSC, we knew we were going to be asked to approve a plan that would leave several students educational needs unmet and this was an issue that would take the entire school community's support to fix This positive results are discussed more in question 14. Another town hall I led was for the entire district after a student posted death threat note to the black community on a BHS library computer. This sparked the need for more district wide courageous conversations on race, racism, and the solutions we could provide together.

For all the various workshops I've led or facilitated, I had to repeat that opportunity several times to provide greater access. As years go by, the same information is needed to be presented to new caregivers. Going forward, my focus will be to increase parent engagement through the use of technology to ensure parents are receiving information not just through email, but also through multiple social media/ interactive digital platforms. I envision parents standing in line at a grocery store gathering real-time information needed to support their child's education.

9.

Response:

My youngest daughter attended Franklin as her first “big girl” school. Our time there helped to provide the foundation she needed for Kindergarten. Beyond our first-hand experience, I've learned a lot about our preschools over the years from attending school board meetings in which the focus included the many transitions for Preschool and T-K programming. I was pleased to learn that many of the gaps created by the varied preparedness to Kindergarten can be resolved in Kindergarten. Rosa Parks has a great program in which they immediately add staffing resources to Kindergarten to focus on students who were not supported at the same level as others.

However, I've learned from a Pre-K specialist whose focus was on ensuring students of color receive high quality pre-K services, that if we were to begin special education screening for students earlier, we would

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begin to service them better from T-K to Kindergarten and beyond. As BUSD evaluates its SPED and pre school programming, I would like the opportunity request the Superintendent to review the efficacy of this idea.

10. BUSD's Special Education program has consistently over run its budget allocation. What ideas do you have to contain costs in this program?

Response:

For over 25 years, I have budgeted, forecasted, managed and reported costs for multi million to billion-dollar entities. To contain costs, I would review the budget vs. actual spending report to determine causes for these variances to budget. These variances should be explained in detail with the various sped budget managers/stakeholders and supported by data versus assumptions. This analysis should provide decision makers the ability to identify redundancies, create efficiencies, and/or budget appropriately. I would also ensure that budget managers are seeing their actual versus budget spending report monthly at a minimum.

My first major priority as a School Board Director for SPED funding would be to determine the common areas in which BUSD has lost so many SPED lawsuits. Thus far, I've been able to see how much we have spent in legal fees, outsourcing specific needs/or the entire educational service. In looking at those large expenditures, it seems it would have cost BUSD less money over the years to meet the legal requirements, than to keep working out of compliance hoping to avoid the lawsuit

Finally, to more directly service students, I would like to see better use of the funds currently being spent on SPED to:

- ✓ Ensure in-depth Teacher and Instructional Assistant training to adequately support our Full Inclusion model.*
- ✓ See if BUSD has the appropriate number of special day classrooms vs full inclusion classrooms based on student needs/gaps in learning. I would also want to see that SPED resources are distributed accordingly, i.e. following the students equitably at each school site.*
- ✓ Develop a pool of IA substitutes so teachers and students are not left without support when IA's are off*

11. BUSD has a Full Inclusion model of Special Education. Describe what model inclusive practices look like to you.

Response:

Full inclusion practices look like outcomes that reflect the program is fully funded. This means the teacher is not overwhelmed because the support needed is in their classroom. IA's feel empowered and understand how to properly serve their student/classroom/teacher. Caregivers feel like their student is an added joy to the classroom and not a burden to others. Students feel welcomed and are an integral positive part of the classroom/school community. Thinking of the CEC SPED class at Longfellow, and Rosa Parks for example, attention to the social-emotional needs of SPED students as well as the academic needs - must be part of the equation. The better that systems OVERALL at a school are working, the better the needs of all students will be met.

12. For the past 4 years BUSD has had to make budget cuts to maintain a balanced budget. What factors are important for you to consider when deciding what to cut from the budget?

Response:

- ✓ *Making sure the primary stakeholders: students, teachers, and families, are impacted the least.*
- ✓ *Ensuring funding for teachers is prioritized before funding for consultants or other contractors*
- ✓ *Comprehensive Assessment to determine the efficacy of the achievement results. For example, did the funded program fall short because of hurdles we can or cannot remove? Does the cost of the program match the benefit it provides? Do educators have higher needs that if funded would better service the student?*

Leadership and Priorities

13a. **Incumbents:** What are your accomplishments as a Board member? Explain one goal you have achieved. Citing at least one example, how effective have you been in effecting change in BUSD?

13b. **Non-Incumbents:** Please describe a campaign (not just electoral), initiative **or** issue where you have been a leader and brought change to pass.

Response:

When the LCAP Supplemental plan was introduced by Governor Brown, I became one of the major contributors within BUSD to ensure these funds were used to support Brown and Black students. On Malcolm X Day, 2014, I led a March for Equity in Results. Our goal was to ensure the BUSD LCAP supplemental funds were used for equity goals as listed in question 3. Our major chant was “Turn it around for the black and brown”. We marched from UC Berkeley to the BUSD District office because 51 of 192 African American Students were graduating BUSD eligible to apply to a UC/CSU school.

The march brought statewide attention to ensure that these funds were not brought into any school district to serve the underserved, but then became monopolized to serve the mainstream students. The phrase that I was quoted on the most was by the media, “We just want to ensure that this does not become a Robin Hood in reverse, where the funds are brought to this district to serve the poor, and then are used for students who may not need them.

It was supported by many including representatives from Keith Carson’s office to Nancy Skinner’s office, included resolutions from Congresswoman Barbara Lee, and between 250 to 300 BUSD constituents. The BUSD School Board heard our message loud and clear. The final results of the LCAP plan not only included several of our suggested ideas, but also included our request to name these funds to be used specifically to include all African American and Latino students within BUSD based on the Achievement Gap.

During Superintendent Stephens’ listening campaign upon his arrival to BUSD, I provided him with copies of the LCAP Plan that we as the Teacher and Parent Community of the Brown and Black put together. This was used to guide discussion in his first all hands-on meeting with District Leaders in the 2019-2020 school year. I am pleased that this work has added value in the past, and still has value in shaping the educational experience of our students.

14. Please describe how you have worked collaboratively with BFT or another union to achieve goals.

Response:

BFT has proven that it shares my goals for equity in results. We have worked together through the LCAP Plan to provide funding to increase the number of Teachers of Color hired and then supported and nurtured in efforts to retain them. Many educators supported the Malcolm X Day March for Equity in 2014, and BFT helped to fund the Malcolm X Day Banquet in 2019 for the 50th year Anniversary Celebration of the BUSD African American Studies Department.

Cathy Campbell provided valuable insight when the Longfellow (LF) School Governance Council (now SSC), sought guidance on how to better serve its high concentration of high needs student population. As one of the leaders of this important effort between the parents and teachers of this community, we were able to stop the cut of two teacher positions and obtained an increase in staffing for math support and student welfare. We continue to advocate for the needs of LF to be adequately met and ensure it keeps all the “one-time funding” teacher sources provided from past years. There is much more work to do to see that LF needs are supported at levels other BUSD middle schools enjoy.

Finally, I have always visibly supported increases in teacher pay during each contract negotiation period since I began attending School Board Meetings in 2009. Most recently, as I was working to save the critical staff of the Office of Family Engagement and Equity during the 2018-2019 school year and BFT members were regularly advocating for salary increases, I remember the warm feeling of the parent community supporting our teachers, and the teacher community supporting our parents to ensure the Board understood we were united.

15. BFT has organized several large mobilizations of teachers to Board meetings on issues of importance to our members. Please describe one of these that resonated with you.

Response:

There were many powerful testimonies presented during this time. However, the one that resonated with me the most came from my daughter’s third grade teacher, Ms. Regina Chagolla. I observed how hard this teacher worked to ensure all the students in her class were achieving and felt a strong sense of community. Experiencing the ways she went above and beyond to support not only the Brown and Black students in her class, but throughout our school community, and then seeing her pronounce to the board that as a teacher in BUSD, she also qualified for various low income funding programs jolted me. It was one of those moments in which people may not always remember what you say, but they do remember how you made them feel. I am glad that as a city community, we didn’t wait for more state funding to come to ensure funds for increased teacher pay were obtained and acknowledge we still have a long way to go.

Right to Organize

16. Please describe the actions you have taken to support workers’ right to organize.

Response:

- ✓ I take the time to sign petitions to ensure workers’ rights initiatives can make it to the ballot
- ✓ I vote for initiatives which will implement, increase, or expand union services/initiatives

Public Worker Issues

17. As an elected official, the Brown Act allows you to be accessible to workers and their representatives on work-related issues, including the negotiation process. What do you think the role of Board members should be in the negotiations process?

Response:

As a School Board member, I would want to hear directly from those who are serving our students just as I have consistently sought to hear from and support our educators as an advocate. Board members should ensure the process is moving in a direction that will help reach our shared goals. Contract negotiations must be finalized and should not be delayed based on people conflicts vs. people-based solutions.

18. What should your role be as an elected official in the event of an impasse in negotiations?

Response:

Preventing an impasse would be my first goal as an elected official. We must remember that our constituents elected us to listen, lead, and problem-solve on behalf of our communities; not to simply sit on the sidelines watching. I would proactively utilize my leadership to help move our community forward toward solutions. If that were impossible, I would have to weigh the legal implications of any next steps suggested and balance that with the needs of the community I serve to make the next “best step” call.

Economic Security and Sustainability

19. What is your plan for supporting the recruitment and retention of excellent teachers in BUSD as salaries in neighboring districts have become more competitive? How do you think the cost of living, housing and healthcare affect teachers? Do you support Berkeley measures E, G, and H? Describe the actions you have taken to support these measures?

Response:

The passing of the Berkeley measures E, G, and H have been great for BUSD. as we can greatly leverage these initiatives to compete with other school districts. I believe that we need to follow BFT’s leadership in advocating at the state level to ensure funding for Public Education remains a priority whether state revenues are “good”, or “bad”. We need to hold our city, county, and state legislators accountable for ensuring the needs of public education are fully funded. If elected, I feel the time that I have spent advocating at a local level, can be transitioned into time spent advocating as an elected official at the state level. Having greater access to our city and county officials as a School Board Member should allow me to enable support for increased local resources needed to meet the BFT Quality Education Agenda.

20 (A). How do you place the role of economic inequality in student achievement and in the future of public education in California?

Response:

This is a huge factor impacting the longstanding achievement gap in BUSD given the multitude of economic disparity in Berkeley. More privileged families can pay for academic support needs as they arise.

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Lack of access to high quality summer enrichment programs is one of the main reasons students experience the “summer slide”. Many of these programs require family discretionary funds. When a large percentage of African American and Latino families are socioeconomically disadvantaged, the correlation between the caregivers ability support/ supplement education is limited which is also reflected in or achievement gap data.

The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the existing inequities in our society and our state from access to health care, the digital divide, housing insecurity, the precarious financial and job situations of so many families, nutritional needs, and more. Our schools and communities have stepped up to backstop many basic supports during this public health emergency, but we know more will need to be done during the pandemic and continue beyond it.

We know students are able to learn better when their basic needs are met. So, supporting living wage policies and workers’ rights to form union supports improve household financial well-being for our students’ families. When we support expanding access to affordable health care, we understand that more of our students will be able to get the care they need and won’t be worried about sick loved ones. When we support state measures to improve funding for public education and local public services, we know that the children we teach will have greater opportunities to grow and learn.

20(B). What community initiatives have you been part of that are meant to increase economic equality?

Response:

All the work that I have done as an advocate for equity is based on my first-hand knowledge of the role education plays in creating economic access for students. One of the outcomes of the Malcom X Day march was bringing awareness to the low number of students graduating eligible to apply to a UC/CSU institution. For the next few years subsequent to that march, BHS began to increase its number of students that graduated A-G eligible and this became a more routine data point presented to the Board.

21. The Berkeley Schools Excellence Program is up for renewal in 2024 (BSEP Measure E1). What values are important to consider in BSEP as you think about the new 2024 measure?

Response:

Spending money wisely to ensure the measure is approved, but not being so focused on the measure approval that we neglect the needs of our community until the measure is passed. For example, in 2015-2016 school year, we spent a lot of time and money to essentially create the same BSEP plan. If district leaders know what we have works and is needed, then let’s not waste so much community time, money, and resources focusing on what should be in the measure. Use those funds for the real campaign and continue to keep the focus on what Berkeley voters continue to report is their highest reason for supporting school measures: equity, student supports, and higher pay for teachers and staff.

22. Did you support the May 22nd Day of Action in Sacramento to increase revenues to schools and reform charter schools? Would you endorse and participate in a one-day school strike in the fall of 2020 to support Schools and Community First?

Response:

I was unable to attend the 5/22 Day of Action in Sacramento due to prior work commitments. However, I was pleased by the results of this initiative and grateful to so many of my school’s teachers and other

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stakeholders that were able to ensure our voices were heard.

I do endorse fully funding public school education to meet the needs of all students, and do not support the privatization of public schools.

California is the 5th largest economy in the world, yet we continue to be toward the bottom rankings of states in per-student funding and some of the worst ratios of school counselors, librarians, and nurses per student. Today's students are living the legacy of our state's Prop 13 tax policy implemented decades ago that eroded our collective financial support for our schools, our youth, and families. Ensuring full funding for our schools and the wraparound supports for our communities will continue to require bold action.

23. How will you support Schools and Community First now that it is qualified for the November 2020 ballot?

I will add my voice to stand with educators and other community leaders during the campaign. I will also volunteer in our community's effort to get-out-the vote.

24. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, school districts throughout the state anticipate the need for increased budget cuts. What are your ideas to preserve programs for students and create a balanced budget?

Response:

I would seek to lower our expenditures in areas that impact classrooms the least by:

- ✓ *Detailed review of the business administration services to eliminate unnecessary accounting and finance procedures which unnecessarily increase expenditures and prevent BUSD from proper planning and use of budgeted fund.*
- ✓ *Review in detail a cost benefit analysis of in-house legal council vs. outsourced lawyers.*
- ✓ *Review consulting and other outsourced contracts to ensure only needed agreements continue to be funded.*
- ✓ *Gain a detailed understanding of administrative job duties to eliminate the overlap. Find ways to fill administrative functions at a lower cost.*
- ✓ *Freeze all non-essential hiring.*
- ✓ *Review the feasibility of admin assistants serving more than one district leader.*
- ✓ *Redesign family engagement to leverage the support of city or county social workers. Expand their role in providing parent to teacher support.*
- ✓ *Advocate with City/ County/and State to supplement programs and increase funding to public schools.*
- ✓ *Join with coalition partners for a fully-funded Federal pandemic relief package for public education.*
- ✓ *Ensure BUSD applies for available COVID-19 relief funding sources*
- ✓ *If applicable, review insurance policies to determine if business interruption claims may be filed. Re-couponsing these funds could offset the additional expenditures incurred due to the abrupt remote learning and other social distancing costs.*
- ✓ *Leverage work from remote learning to increase our teachers ability to provide more direct services to students through technology. Identify the pros and cons from all constituents with a focus on overcoming the cons and reinforcing the pros.*

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Most importantly, I would collaborate with Parents, Teachers, and Students to ensure they have identified the items which impact the classroom the least vs. my opinion of what may or may not impact our classrooms.

Principles

25. Have you ever crossed a picket line?

Response:

No, and neither do my school age children.

26. What steps would you take to support a boycott, when sanctioned by the Central Labor Council, California Labor Federation or AFL-CIO? Will your campaign refuse to use restaurants, hotels or other public accommodations on the boycott list (available at www.calaborfed.org).

Response:

As an advocate, I would always support the collective power of the people to allow their voices to be heard and properly responded to by those making decisions. As someone who has benefited greatly from the use of boycotts to end segregation, I would support the people's right to boycott.

27. If endorsed, will you carry the union endorsement on your mail and materials? *I would consider it an honor. I also acknowledge that we would be doing this again, but this time with my name as the candidate* ☺. *(My name was the primary parent name listed on Karen Hemphill, Josh Daniels, and Julie Sinai's mail flyer with BFT when they ran as a slate)*

28. If elected, **how** will you consult with Unions on decisions that affect union members in BUSD? *Over the past years, I've come to deeply respect the power and integrity of BUSD's Teachers, its union, and its union leadership. As such, it would be unwise not to develop close relationships with the union president and other representatives. Ensuring the teachers' perspectives on these important educational issues we face should be reflected in the decisions school board members make. If am elected, that will be a commitment I fulfill to ensure academic excellence is achieved for all.*

SIGNATURE

I attest that these answers represent my actions and beliefs, are not part of my public record, and may be used by the Berkeley Federation of Teachers to keep union members informed about important issues.

LBABITT

5/4/2020

Signature

Date