

Santa Monica Democratic Club
2022 School Board Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in the Santa Monica Democratic Club endorsement. Candidates seeking the endorsement of our Club must complete and return the following questionnaire. Note that only registered Democrats are eligible for our consideration. **Please send the completed questionnaire to smdemocrats@gmail.com by 11:59pm on August 26, 2022.** Interview appointment times with our Executive Committee will be scheduled on a first come first served basis as the questionnaires are returned. Submitting this questionnaire constitutes acknowledgment that its contents are now part of the public record and may be reproduced and distributed by the Santa Monica Democratic Club.

General Information

Candidate Name: Stacy Rouse

Email Address: vote4stacyrouse@gmail.org

Phone Number: 424-234-0939

Candidate's Current Occupation: Director of Operations

Candidate's Employer: Dynamic Team Solutions

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate): Karla Salazar, Pink Wave Campaigns | (310) 429-6919 cell | karla@pinkwavecampaigns.com

What qualifications do you bring to this office? Why are you running?

I have a strong commitment to public education. I grew up attending public schools and my two children were part of the Malibu Pathway in SMMUSD from Kindergarten to graduation. My kids are successful young adults, my oldest is beginning his first career and my youngest is beginning his first year in college full time. I believe access to a high-quality and free education is the key for people to grow in opportunity and, ultimately, success for their families. I am committed to the power and potential of public education.

I am demonstrably committed to this district. In addition to participating at the local level in my children's schools, I have been working closely with the larger district as a whole. I have worked with schools, paraschool organizations like the Malibu Boys and Girls Club, and parent leadership since 2012 when I served as Webster's PTA President. As that was a transitional year from school site fundraising to district-wide fundraising, I was immediately a part of the Superintendent's Advisory Council (SAG) and many Board of Education meetings making public comments to request that the district and the board take a different approach to the implementation of the needed changes.

Since that time I have had leadership and involvement with our broader communities. I have served in multiple capacities that support not just the schools where my children attend, but the broader community where all SMMUSD students attend.

I have leadership, service, and education experience in SMMUSD in the following ways:

- SMMUSD Malibu Pathway Parent, 2004-present (children attended Webster Elementary, Malibu Middle School, and Malibu High School)
- Parent Classroom Volunteer, Webster School 2004-2010
- Webster PTA Board, VP of Administration 2010-2012
- Webster PTA Board, President 2012-2013
- Webster School Site Council, member 2011-2012
- Superintendent's Advisory Council, member 2012-2015
- Malibu FDAC, member 2016-present, applied and approved by the SMMUSD Board of Education
- Malibu Schools Leadership Council, president 2016-present
- Level One Restorative Justice Training, participant February 2018
- Superintendent's Feasibility Committee, member March-July 2018
- Measure M Co-Chair July-November 2018
- Malibu Middle and High Steering Committee, member August 2018-present,
- Malibu Middle and High Planning Committee, member August 2018-present
- Level Two Restorative Justice Training, participant February 2019
- Superintendent's Budget Advisory Committee, member January 2020-2021

Until May of this year I served as a program manager for a service organization that provides a pre-literacy and socio-emotional curriculum for preschoolers in underfunded classrooms. For the past three years I have developed relationships with 12 preschool classrooms and their site directors each year across the LA area including SMMUSD, LAUSD, and privately-funded preschools in Mar Vista and in Malibu. I worked directly for racial and educational justice through early childhood education to narrow the vocabulary gap between children who have access to well-funded schools and children who do not have access.

Being part of SMMUSD through this program has been important to reveal the necessity of early childhood education and the impact it has on reducing gaps, such as the one we have in our school system. Changing our system and budget to invest in early childhood education and educators has massive impacts down the line and is better than trying to make amends further down the line. While multiple approaches need to be implemented so all children have support and access regardless of their educational journeys, investing on the front end in our youngest and most vulnerable children is a key component. This is an area where SMMUSD could be leading the state and the nation because of our stated goals of providing "safe, socially responsive, and academically-rigorous learning" that closes our own achievement gap.

I am trained in public service and view this position as a public servant who serves the entire community, not just those in my neighborhood or town or demographics. I also have training and experience and the ability to create trust-building, empathy building, and a new set of conflict engagement skills to the forefront of how the board operates. I bring collaborative processes to change how decisions are made and bring experience with the facilitation of stakeholder groups that will increase positive and meaningful interfaces with constituents (children, families/caregivers, employees, staff, administration, and contract and MOU holders, etc.), and the public (residents and businesses within SMMUSD who are not part of SMMUSD, city governments, etc.).

My educational experiences demonstrate a life-long interest in and commitment to communication, education, and the power of collective/collaborative efforts in communities. My Bachelor's degree in Broadcast Journalism honed my communication skills including listening, making meaning from hearing different perspectives, verbal and writing skills. Additionally, with a minor in Public Service, I was exposed to how political systems are built, maintained, sustained, and changed.

My pursuit and completion of my Master's degree in Dispute Resolution was wholly informed by my work in the school system. While my interests and skills led me to love the idea of this line of study, I was reluctant to pursue a degree solely out of a desire to learn. Through working with the people and systems of SMMUSD, over and over again I observed a system of silos that operate independently. I also found a sincere desire on everyone's part to be heard and their perspective and their work to be better be integrated as part of the whole. I took on graduate school with a full-time job after 20 years of being out of formal education. I did so because I saw the practical applications this type of work could provide me in the various roles I play throughout my other work as well as those I hold in SMMUSD. Dispute Resolution skills can be used anywhere, but I see their particular strength in working within a school district.

What are the top issues of your campaign?

I want to serve on the school board for four primary reasons. First, I want to contribute to the vision-making and the decision-making for our district. I have been contributing as a parent and involved community member and leader since 2010, but I'm ready to participate and serve in new ways. Second, I would like to be a more direct part of decisions including the current move to change educational practices, budgetary practices, and focus and to bring improved methods of local representation, not just for Malibu, but across the district. Third, I bring with me practices of healthy conflict engagement, strong collaboration skills, warmth and empathy, and good communication skills that I think would be valuable in the work our Board carries out. Fourth, I am committed to be able to join in representing unheard or misheard voices within our district. Reinvigorating focus to further reduce SMMUSD's persistent "education debt" (as named by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings, commonly referred to as the "achievement gap");

How do you plan to address those issues once elected?

I will work with other board members, teachers, parents, and concerned community leaders across the district. I bring with me practices of healthy conflict engagement, strong collaboration skills, warmth and empathy, and good communication skills that I think would be valuable in the work our Board carries out.

Please list all of your individual and/or organizational endorsements.

- Craig Foster, SMMUSD Board of Education Member 2014-present

How long have you lived in Santa Monica? I live in Malibu and have lived there since 2002.

Where else have you lived, and why did you live there?

Prior to that I have lived in:

Agoura Hills 1999-2002, Malibu 1998-1999, and earlier Texas, Minnesota, Colorado, and Oklahoma. I have lived in these places because that is where my family lived when I was a dependent, where I went for higher education, and to pursue job opportunities.

Will you pledge to serve on City Council for your entire four year term?

Yes, I pledge to serve on the School Board for my entire four year term.

Party / Activism

How long have you been a registered Democrat? Since 1992

Have you ever been registered as a member of another political party, or as

Decline To State? If so, which party and why? I don't remember how I was registered in 1988 - either Independent or Democrat. If I was Independent, it was mirroring my parents' political party preferences.

What is your experience with political activism? I have a history of local involvement. In Minneapolis I joined our Neighborhood Action group. I'm a shameless clicktivist, give small amounts of money to different people and organizations.

Have you ever volunteered or worked for a political campaign other than your own, and if so, in what capacity were you involved? Yes, I was co-chair of Measure M for SMMUSD in 2018, I have volunteered as a phone caller and canvasser for Craig Foster for School Board, Carl Randall for Malibu City Council, and Karen Farrer for Malibu City Council.

Which political candidates have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past?

Please list as many as possible. Craig Foster, Karen Farrer, Jen Smith, Carl Randall, Richard Tahvildarin-Jesswein, Keith Coleman, Hillary Clinton, Dave Jones (CA Insurance Commissioner), Henry Stern, and Barack Obama.

Have you ever signed for or publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office? No.

If so, please list the name(s) of the officials and why you felt they should be recalled.
N/A

Please list any organizations with which you are a member, including any leadership position you have held in each organization.

International Ombuds Association 2020-present

Please confirm that you have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform, as found here:

<https://cadem.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/CDP-Platform-2022-FINAL-1-1.pdf>

Yes, I confirm

List any items in the CDP Platform with which you disagree. (This is in no way a litmus test for our endorsement; however, because the party delegates have worked so hard on every word of this platform document, we believe it will be a helpful guide to comprehend the policy differences between each candidate.)

I am in agreement with the platform.

Campaign Finance

Please indicate **Yes or No** to the following statements:

1. I pledge not to take contributions from oil, gas, and coal industry executives, lobbyists, and PACs. **Yes**
2. I pledge not to take contributions from police or law enforcement unions, lobbyists, and PACs. **Yes**
3. I pledge not to take contributions from development firms, lobbyists, and PACs. **Yes**

If you answered No to any of the above contribution questions, please explain here:

SMMUSD

What kind of approach should SMMUSD be taking in regard to COVID safety at this point in the pandemic?

Public health is foundational for public life together. COVID has been difficult because socio-emotional health, mental health, and physical health have been affected. Some of the remedies for one area cause greater risk for other areas of health. Balancing the needs and requirements have been difficult and we're learning as we go. At this point in the pandemic, we are coming into endemic status and COVID is becoming more similar to how we now manage influenza and other diseases. General public health education best practices (beyond only COVID) like frequent handwashing and staying home when you are sick should continue to be communicated and supported with the means necessary to implement them well. Making sure there are policies in place with sufficient help to support them (i.e. flexible make up policies for children who are ill, process for working with those who may have conditions that are documented to not be flu or covid, sufficient sick days for employees to utilize necessary sick leave, and sufficient pool of qualified subs for teachers and aides, etc.). Should COVID vaccinations become part of the required vaccinations for students or staff or volunteers in the future, we must ensure that the same protocol is followed for consent and for exceptions as with current vaccination requirements. Masking should continue to be recognized to help slow

spread of germs and be allowed for those who wish to wear them. We must be ready to adjust as we learn more.

What are your top priorities for SMMUSD which you plan to address in this four year term?

- Reinvigorating focus to further reduce SMMUSD's persistent "education debt" (as named by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings, commonly referred to as the "achievement gap");
- Bringing improved practices of local engagement, listening, and representation across SMMUSD's district including but not limited to the Malibu community;
- Focused and renewed commitment to join in representing unheard or misheard student voices within our district;
- Strengthening practices of healthy conflict engagement, collaboration skills, warmth and empathy, and proactive communication into all levels of SMMUSD interactions (i.e. board-board, admin, staff, teacher, student, families, community stakeholders, ...; admin to staff, teacher, student, community stakeholders...; etc.)
- Continue to update SMMUSD's educational practices and student outcomes to reflect the mid-21st century our students will be growing into.

Given the district's Basic Aid status, what are the biggest impacts to the district as a result? How does this affect your funding priorities?

Basic Aid is a transition from how SMMUSD was previously funded. On the surface it can feel punitive because Basic Aid means we are above the threshold for minimum per pupil funding so we don't get the same payments. However, we are above those minimums so we have more funding coming in, even though it's less predictable. One of our challenges is how to navigate the new uncertainties as compared to the known uncertainties when the budget was rounded up by the state. We can be fiscally wise and use the other monies, such as funds from city taxes, to assist us in paying what we know and developing a formula to account for funds that may go up and down from year to year. We also can benchmark from other Basic Aid districts to find best practices for how to function in Basic Aid status.

Do you support the petition to transition the SMMUSD Board into districted elections, or do you believe the Board should continue in its current form of seven at-large seats?

Whether at-large or districted, we need to remember that these offices are ones of public service. Those voted in are representing their communities as a whole, not just those who voted for them or agree with them.

That said, districted elections are in line with many important values like local involvement and increased access to representation. They do need to be developed with significant and representative community engagement to build a just and representative structure, district lines that keep together micro-communities and honor neighborhoods, and aren't made to inherently

exclude others or amass unequal representation and need to be redrawn as communities grow, change, and develop.

What can SMMUSD do to further reduce the achievement gap? What can SMMUSD do to better implement social justice instruction and otherwise address equity issues?

For both curriculum and educational practices, it is imperative to continue SMMUSD's journey to educational equity for all students by closing our achievement gap. No one wants this gap to persist, and yet it does. The Noguera reports identified specific ways to tackle issues driving and affecting our SMMUSD achievement gaps, especially for our students that are students of color, and/or part of our English Language Learner (ELL) program, and/or part of our Special Education programs. While we are aware of the Noguera report and it is part of our conversation, we have not fully implemented or followed the recommendations. As a result the changes that have been begun have not resulted in a corresponding reduction in the gaps themselves. This is a complex issue that requires multiple and nuanced ways to address it. School climate is a major underlying factor: when administration and staff and teachers create spaces that support psychological safety, learning is better able to take place. Comprehensive wellness programs, expanding our restorative justice offerings to be proactive for all campus communities, further developing teachers in culturally relevant teaching practices, examining how we fund our students and programs are all contributing ways to address the gap. The district's move to equity is the right call, but the application has largely been dollar-for-dollar equality rather than equity as targeted needs which can result in lopsided funding site-by-site.

What do you believe is the role of the District in providing high quality early childhood education and how will you fund expansion and quality improvement while maintaining accessibility and affordability?

Being part of SMMUSD through my previous role in Jumpstart has been important to reveal the necessity of early childhood education and the impact it has on reducing gaps, such as the one we have in our school system. Changing our system and budget to invest in early childhood education and educators has massive impacts down the line and is better than trying to make amends further down the line. While multiple approaches need to be implemented so all children have support and access regardless of their educational journeys, investing on the front end in our youngest and most vulnerable children is a key component. This is an area where SMMUSD could be leading the state because of our stated goals of providing "safe, socially responsive, and academically-rigorous learning" that closes our own achievement gap.

How do you see your role on the School Board in relationship to different stakeholders: *parents, students, credentialed teachers, classified staff, CTA, LACOE, Sacramento, the City of SM, etc?*

What is your plan to deal with Malibu's petition to unify (ie, separate from) the school district, and what would an equitable solution look like?

It is important that education of all of the kids is front and center, that teachers and staff are considered from the beginning as the unifications occur, and that each community's resources are treated with care in the transition to two school districts. Fair and appropriate means that no student will have less access to funding than they do currently. This assessment should be

made with all assets in mind as each community has both shared and unique sources of support including property taxes, and city taxes, etc.

Student Concerns

What is your idea of the perfect learning environment?

High collaboration between students and teachers, curiosity driven learning that involve real life scenarios and projects, healthy campus climate, high expectations and safe place to learn and fail and try again.

What can SMMUSD do to better address student mental health needs?

More investment in mindfulness practices, services available to all students and families, continued emphasis on proactive teaching around mental health and wellness, reduce stress of inflexibility and build communities of care within campus.

How do you feel about campus surveillance?

Community safety is paramount. It is nuanced and multi-factored. Campus surveillance is a tool that can be used poorly or wisely. If used, it should be part of a larger plan, with highly trained and accountable people and proven processes and protocols, well communicated to the community and constituents affected/involved, and with high accountability for the school and any other organizations of responsibility. If it isn't well thought out and implemented it can be dangerous and ineffective "safety theater".

What is your position on gun safety at school? What steps can the School Board take to prevent violent shootings?

Gun safety is important. It's comprehensive and rooted in a healthy community. We also need practical protective measures like a robust system that identifies visitors and few access points in and out of schools.

Do you support SMPD officers in the schools?

Best practices show other community resources are more likely to be effective for safety, mental health and wellness, drug education, etc over law enforcement and any training officers receive is additional whereas for social workers and medical professionals this is in their field to begin with. If we focused on having a community-centered school model, we wouldn't need to have officers in our schools -- instead, rapid around services that can help out students with their mental health, wellness, emotional and physical well-being.

Do you support legislative efforts to limit unnecessary police involvement in schools?

If it is thoughtful and well written, based on accurate information for the good of students, potentially.

How will you support our students to be critical thinkers, leaders, and activists, starting in elementary school? Would you support student activism such as the student walkouts in support of gun control, racial justice, climate strike, etc.?

An engaged citizenry is vital to maintaining a healthy democracy. My kids at Webster learned to be critical thinkers through things such as the whole class curriculum around "Rain Forests" in 1st grade that incorporated art, science, math, writing, speaking and sharing their discoveries with each other and their parents. There are many examples throughout our schools where our

kids

How can these ideals be incorporated into the curriculum?

Included in the above answer.

Social Justice

In what ways can SMMUSD ensure that, in a real, practical sense, Black Lives Matter in our school community?

By allowing communities most affected to be heard. To listen and learn from people's experiences. To adjust our policies to best serve all of our students and families. If we find policies have differing effects for different populations, we remedy them and make adjustments. In addition, allowing students to have safe spaces to discuss, organize and congregate is a great way to bring different perspectives and communities together.

In what ways can SMMUSD best protect the undocumented residents of Santa Monica? How would you use your position on the School Board to assist BIPOC and other disadvantaged residents of Santa Monica?

I would ensure that our sanctuary policy remain in SMMUSD to protect the rights and privacy of our undocumented students and their families.

How do you plan to (in the moment) counteract any and all observed possible acts of microaggressions towards Women, African Americans, Hispanics, LGBTQ and others of marginalized communities from your fellow Boardmembers or members of the public? What is your experience in dealing with these situations?

To be aware and listen and speak up. I also want to be respectful of the person who may be the target. I don't want to take away anyone's agency, but do want to be someone who is an upstander and not a bystander. Best practices include tending to the person not calling out the aggressor. I have some experience in these situations. I am a learner and am getting better at being aware and responding with care to people affected.

Ballot Measures

Do you support California Proposition 1? Yes.

Do you support the citizens initiative ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue for affordable housing, rent subsidy, and SMMUSD? Why/why not?

N/A - as a Malibu resident I can't vote on this measure.

Do you support the competing council-approved ballot measure which would tax real estate transactions over \$8M and provide revenue into the general fund? Why/why not?

N/A - as a Malibu resident I can't vote on this measure.

Do you support the rent control ballot measure which would permanently lower

the rent control General Adjustment cap from 6% down to 3%?

N/A - as a Malibu resident I can't vote on this measure.

Do you support the SMC bond measure?

Yes

Do you support the 1% transient occupancy tax ballot measure?

N/A - as a Malibu resident I can't vote on this measure.

Do you support the cannabis business tax ballot measure?

N/A - as a Malibu resident I can't vote on this measure.

Additional Questions

What role do you believe the Santa Monica Democratic Club should have in our City?

Ideally, the role is to be a place to gather those who identify to work together from the democratic platform to collectively listen to and enhance the Santa Monica community. While it comes from a certain viewpoint, that viewpoint can become a point of genuine conversation and learning with anyone, regardless of others' political views. A diversity of viewpoint is also a vital democratic function.

If elected, how would you attempt to interact with the Santa Monica Democratic Club and other political organizations to ensure community buy-in on new proposals?

If elected, I will listen, work together with constituents to problem solve for the interests of those involved and to collaborate together for fitting solutions. Coalitions and community input are vital. I look forward to having an open-door policy with SMDC board members, members, and community leaders.