

DRAFT: Santa Monica Democratic Club 2026 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. Only registered Democrats are eligible for our consideration. 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.

Please send the completed questionnaire to smdemocrats@gmail.com by 11:59pm on June 8, 2026. Interview appointment times with our Executive Committee will be scheduled on a first come first served basis for the weekend of June 20/21 as the questionnaires are returned.

None of these questions shall be construed as litmus tests. There are no questions that must be answered a certain way to be considered for our endorsement.

General Information

Candidate Name: Laurie Lieberman

Email Address: laurie.lieberman1@gmail.com

Candidate's Current Occupation: School Board member/Attorney (inactive)

Candidate's Employer: Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District

Campaign Contact Person (if other than candidate): Laurie Lieberman

What qualifications do you bring to this office? I am a passionate supporter of public education and of SMMUSD in particular. I am a hard-working, thoughtful decision-maker. Having served on the School Board for 15+ years, I have unique institutional knowledge of our schools and the workings of the district itself, which is critical as we navigate what seem always to be challenging times. I am an attorney by background and worked for the City of Santa Monica for 13 years, first for the Rent Control Board and then in the City Attorney's Office which afforded me a great deal of insight and understanding about governance and the role of elected officials in public policymaking. At that time, I never contemplated running for an elected office myself. I then had children who attended SMMUSD schools from K-12 (Will Rogers, Lincoln Middle School and Samohi) and I became active in school issues, in PTA, and in school funding campaigns. I have an educational background in law and public policy, my mother was a lifelong and nationally renowned educator, and my daughter became a teacher as well. I am a product of public schools, having attended LAUSD schools growing up and nine years at UCLA, with a BA in Sociology, a JD from UCLA Law School, and completed coursework toward a Master's Degree in urban planning. During my tenure on the Board, I have demonstrated that I am an effective, transparent and collaborative leader.

2. Why are you running?

As I look at the issues confronting our schools in Santa Monica and Malibu, I believe that my lived experience with our schools from elementary through high school and through my service on the School Board, my educational knowledge, legal background, policy-making skills, and institutional memory of our school district continue to be of great value. I am running for re-election to contribute leadership experience, values and integrity to making our schools the best

they can be. I am an honest, curious person and I believe decisions should be grounded in fact-based and civil dialogue. These qualities and commitments allow me to play a key role in working with others to move our District towards ever greater equity and excellence, promoting engaging and rigorous curricular opportunities so that all children are equipped for success upon graduation in the evolving 21st century.

3. What are the top issues of your campaign, and how do they differ from other candidates in this race? How do you plan to address those issues once elected?

1. I will continue to do everything possible to support the District's commitment to equity and excellence, and to serving the needs of ALL students. That commitment undergirds everything I do. It is what SMMUSD stands for. I will continue to promote the District's emphasis on belonging, connection, curiosity and empowerment, and looking for ways to reach all students.
2. Our district, like districts throughout the nation, is grappling with the appropriate role for technology. Regulation of cell phone usage during school time is only the tip of the iceberg. Serious questions abound regarding the role of AI in our schools, how much reliance on educational technologies makes sense, how much screen time is appropriate for what age levels and how should it be regulated? We need to wisely navigate the role that technology, including AI, plays in public education from TK- 12, ensuring that students become learners who are prepared for ever-evolving career opportunities and success in the world in which they will enter when they graduate. Development of a comprehensive approach to this issue will require involvement of teachers, administrators, and parents. It will require evaluating/balancing different perspectives, consideration of evidence and research, and healthy discussion and collaboration. It will require communication and collaboration with the larger community. I have asked to serve as one of the School Board members on the working group the school district is putting together to help guide this process. Coming to terms with how to use or not use technology will require a process that considers many voices, many opinions and is inclusive.
3. As we embrace the addition of a new elementary school grade level -- transitional kindergarten (TK) -- we need to fully develop it, integrate it and align it with what is now a TK-12 system. The introduction of TK has brought about changes to early childhood education in both the public and private arenas, which needs to be understood and considered. In addition, the demand for after-school childcare has also expanded and like other districts, our district has not been able to meet that demand. (An article about this issue in LAUSD and their new approach appeared in the Los Angeles Times today.)
4. I will continue to promote basic reading, writing and STEM skills while simultaneously continuing to pursue innovative instruction at all grade levels that engages students and promotes the joy of learning and hands-on learning that is relevant to students' lives. (Project-based learning, cross-curricular approaches and real-world experiences are among the tools the District uses right now.) I will continue working to ensure that students graduate from SMMUSD with critical thinking and collaboration skills, prepared to take on the issues of the 21st century. I will work closely with teachers and administrators and keep up with current trends in education, as always.

5. I am committed to strengthening the District's communications and interactions with District families and the public. We live in an era of information overload, yet people still feel they do not receive enough timely information or have enough input or opportunity to be part of what they consider important District decisions. I am committed to helping the District do a better job recognizing, anticipating, addressing and improving communications and process concerns. As a School Board member, it is important to represent the District to the community and the community the District. As Board members, it is our responsibility to facilitate a constructive, inclusive, respectful process for decision-making where community members have an opportunity to make their concerns known and heard.

4. Please list all endorsements received to date (individual and organizational).

Local organizations have not yet held their endorsement meetings but in all past elections I have received endorsements from the SMMCTA, SEIU, the Santa Monica Democratic Club, SMRR, CEPS, LACDP and others. However, I have begun to obtain endorsements from individuals and elected leaders.

I am most proud of the fact that all of my current colleagues on the School Board support my candidacy. That includes Jon Kean, Maria Leon-Vazquez, Alicia Mignano, Stacy Rouse, Jennifer Smith and Richard Tahvildaran -Jesswein. I am honored that a new candidate for School Board, Robbie Staenberg, has endorsed my re-election as well.

The following is a list of elected and former elected leaders whose endorsements I have received thus far:

Ben Allen, California State Senate
Rick Zbur, California State Assembly
Tony Vazquez, State Board of Equalization
Ted Lieu, U.S. Congress
Julia Brownley, U.S. Congress
Lindsey Horvath, L.A. County Board of Supervisors

Caroline Torosis, Santa Monica Mayor
Jesse Zwick, Santa Monica Mayor Pro Tem
Ellis Raskin, Santa Monica City Council
Barry Snell, Santa Monica City Council
Natalya Zernitskaya, Santa Monica City Council

Anastasia Foster, SMC Board of Trustees
Nancy Greenstein, SMC Board of Trustees
Tom Peters, SMC Board of Trustees
Margaret Quinones-Perez, SMC Board of Trustees
Rob Rader, SMC Board of Trustees

Sheila Kuehl, Former member of L.A. County Board of Supervisors
Richard Bloom, Former State Assemblymember and Santa Monica Mayor

Judy Abdo, Former Santa Monica Mayor
Rev. Jim Conn, Former Santa Monica Mayor
Gleam Davis, Former Santa Monica Mayor
Kevin McKeown, Former Santa Monica Mayor
Pam O'Connor, Former Santa Monica Mayor
Ted Winterer, Former Santa Monica Mayor
Kristin McCowan, Former Santa Monica Mayor Pro Tem
Terry O'Day, Former Santa Monica Mayor Pro Tem

Louise Jaffe, Former Chair, SMC Board of Trustees
Susan Aminoff Former member, SMC Board of Trustees

Other individual endorsers who have many titles and play many roles in this community include Nicole Faries, Shari Davis, Frank Gruber and Janet Levin, Zakiya, Paula Larmore, Payal Maniyar, Sirinya Matute, Jon Baracy and Kristin Baracy, Sally and Eoin Gubbins, Joe Pertel, Neil Carrey, Area Kramarsky, Daphne Dennis and John Given, Paul Silvern and Judith Meister, Elizabeth and Richard Stearns, Dave Tillipman and Debby Maddis, Lynn Naliboff and David Pettit, Arthur Southam and Beezie Daly, Jay Gordon and Meyera Robbins, Lauri and Dennis Crane, Marilyn Speakman, John Prindle, Kevin Smith, Robbie Black, Harry Keilley, Sarah Braff, Anita Landecker, Joel Koury, Tova Larsen, Carl Hansen and Brad Ewing.

5. How long have you lived in Santa Monica or Malibu? Where else have you lived?

I have lived in Santa Monica for approximately 49 years with brief periods when I lived in West LA or Mar Vista. I grew up in the San Fernando Valley for the most part but lived for several years in New York and a few other places.

6. Will you pledge to serve on the School Board for your entire four-year term? Yes.

7. What is your history of watching, attending, or speaking at SMMUSD School Board meetings? (If incumbent, prior to your own service.) Prior to running for School Board, I attended and spoke at several School Board meetings on issues of concern, including the allocation of early bond monies.

Campaign Finance

1. How much money have you raised for your campaign to date?

\$5,2000

2. How much do you intend to raise by Election Day 2026?

I raised \$77, 937 in 2022. I dearly hope not to have to raise that much again but I will do what is necessary to run a strong campaign.

3. Candidates for local office often choose not to take campaign contributions from particular types of organizations or industries who are out of step with their own values. Are there any such sources from which you would decline donations? If so, which?

Running for School Board, I don't think I need to worry about donations or endorsements from the types of groups about which candidates for higher office have to be concerned (like oil companies, gun manufacturers, or big corporations, for example). I will repeat what I have said when the question was framed a little differently in the past. Any contributions I receive reflect individual support for me because I have lived, worked and been of service in this community for many years. In no case would I ever take any contribution as a quid pro quo for any reason. I do

not receive donations from those who do business with the school district. To the extent I receive organizational endorsements or donations, those are endorsements I have affirmatively sought because they do align with my values (such as the endorsement of this Club).

Unfortunately, it takes a significant amount of money to run a contested campaign, and I must pursue contributions that do not offend my sensibilities and do not depend on quid pro quos. We live in a time where politics has become unbelievably nasty and often not focused on the merits. Those who do not like me will undoubtedly attack my integrity and my work and lie about me as they did when they tried and failed to launch an unfounded recall campaign against me and others of my colleagues a few years ago. I must be able to fund a serious campaign on my own behalf.

Party / Activism

1. How long have you been a registered Democrat? Have you ever been registered as a member of another political party, or as Decline To State? If so, which party and why?

I have been a registered Democrat since I was first able to register to vote when I turned 18.

2. What is your experience with political activism? Have you ever volunteered or worked for a political campaign other than your own, and if so, in what capacity were you involved?

I grew up in a family of political progressives who were activists in a variety of ways. My parents lived their values and were fortunate to be able to work at jobs that aligned with their values. My father was a folk singer who came of age himself working in support of unions, civil rights, and against the Vietnam War. My mother was an education professor who shared the same progressive views and was widely renowned for her work with teachers and schools promoting teacher voice, professional learning communities and continuous change and improvement long before those became buzzwords. My parents took me to civil rights demonstrations when I was a child. I have been politically active since the time I started protesting against the Vietnam War. I was active during law school in various issues including affirmative action, opposition to the death penalty and prison reform. I have participated in various political campaigns and regularly attend No Kings rallies. I consider this part of living in a democracy.

The first campaign I ever worked on was the McGovern campaign against Richard Nixon. I have worked on other Democratic presidential campaigns (more recently, President Obama's campaign and Hillary Clinton's) and on local campaigns throughout the years for progressive candidates I supported. I have also volunteered on school funding measures and other local measures and in support of various local candidates. I am currently working on the local citizens' initiative that would provide a funding source for funding that the City has provided to SMMUSD for over 20 years.

3. Which political candidates and/or ballot measures have you endorsed or supported publicly in the past? Please list as many as possible, especially where you endorsed during a contested primary. There are far too many to name. I supported Sheila Kuehl in every race she ran in; I also supported Richard Bloom, both of whom ran in contested primaries. I have supported Ben Allen (my former colleague and friend, in his races for State Assembly, State Senate and now for Insurance Commissioner.

I have generally supported candidates in local elections who were also supported by the Democratic Club, with a few exceptions.

With respect to ballot measures, I have supported all school funding and school bond

measures and many, though not all, local measures. I have supported statewide bond measures and statewide measures to ensure increased funding for schools.

4. Have you ever signed for or publicly supported efforts to recall a public official from office? If so, please list the name(s) of the officials and why you felt they should be recalled.

No.

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

I have been a member of the Santa Monica Democratic Club, Santa Monicans for Renters Rights, Santa Monica Forward, Community for Excellent Public Schools, and the League of Women Voters of Santa Monica for many years. I have not served in leadership as I have been elected official for 16 years and am not eligible to do so.

6. Please confirm that you have read the latest version of the California Democratic Party Platform, as found below. List any items in the CDP Platform with which you disagree. <https://cadem.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/CDP-Platform-2026-FINAL-Platform-Adopted-2.22.26.pdf>

There are no items in the CDP Platform with which I disagree although I might word certain things differently here and there. I am a Democrat because my values are in alignment with those of the Democratic Party. I believe that public schools are vital to democracy which is why I have chosen to spend my time as a School Board member. I believe in equity and opportunity for all. I believe in economic and social justice. I support inclusion and diversity and believe that public schools are one of the places where those values must be lived and upheld. I believe that climate change is an existential threat to our children and to the planet and that we must find ways to preserve the planet through converting to renewable energy and ensuring jobs for those who will be uprooted. I support workers and unions; I support a woman's right to choose. I support building more housing, with an emphasis on housing affordability. I support free speech but strive for ways to build a more civil dialogue and society. I support the strongest gun control possible. I could go on and on but hopefully this illustrates my commitment to Democratic Party values.

District Governance & Finance

1. What are your top priorities for SMMUSD over the next four years?

- Thoughtfully and comprehensively addressing the use of AI/screens/technology in our schools, following a research-based, inclusive, collaborative process.
- Continuing to focus urgently on closing the achievement/opportunity gap by expanding programs and initiatives that engage all students and improving specialized programs, e.g., the District's English Language Development (ELD) programs. This includes promoting culturally relevant and inquiry-based curriculum, implementing the social justice standards that our district has adopted along with the American cultures/ethnic studies requirement that we have adopted as well. Our goal is to ensure equity and excellence for ALL students, which involves finding ways to promote a love of learning. SMMUSD is a

highly successful district but one of the most important challenges continues to be closing the achievement/opportunity gap and it remains a top priority for me.

- Creating cross-curricular opportunities to help students explore career paths and better prepare them either for college or jobs right after graduation, ensuring that they graduate with academic skills and the ability to think critically, collaborate and contribute positively to an increasingly complex world. At the high school level, our district has created “academies” in various fields that are designed to introduce career pathways while using cross-curricular tools. It is vital to recognize the speed with which the job and career market is changing; we must equip students with the versatility and ability to adapt to those changes as much as possible.
- Ensuring that the introduction of TK is successful and continuing to expand and improve preschools so that students are kindergarten-ready, while doing what we can to increase the availability of childcare.
- Continue to support and monitor modernization of school facilities to ensure that SMMUSD has learning spaces and facilities that are safe and supportive of high-quality learning.
- Having been deeply involved in the effort to find a “fair and equitable” approach to “unification” (separation of SMMUSD into a Santa Monica School District and a Malibu School District, I plan to continue working to complete what we have started. Both the City of Malibu and the SMMUSD School Board have unanimously approved three agreements which will govern the unification, but pushing the unification across the line, whether through legislation or through the County Committee and the State Board of Education, remains our charge.

2. How do you assess SMMUSD’s current approach to public engagement and transparency? What specific steps would you take to strengthen public trust, ensure meaningful community input, and maintain accountability in Board decision-making.

I believe that it is incumbent on school district leaders to ensure that we have solid, inclusive processes for obtaining public input on issues of widespread or serious concern and that we hold ourselves to account for explaining the reasoning behind any ultimate decisions we make. I think the District can do a better job anticipating those issues and seeking additional mechanisms for obtaining community input, both formally and informally. As an example, I served in Board leadership during Covid and I believe we did a very good job of outreach and including community input during a very difficult and novel time. We had impromptu meetings with groups of parents; the District conducted surveys; we obtained and shared health information widely; we worked closely with PTA leaders and school sites. There are lessons to be incorporated from pandemic experiences. The District can and should look to expand processes for obtaining meaningful public input when issues of significant community interest arise.

Recent City polling shows that the public actually has far greater trust and confidence in the school district than in the City. I am proud of that. Still, that does not mean the district cannot do a better job of including District families and even the larger community in important decisions.

The District disseminates a lot of information via emails, press releases, through PeachJar (a parent portal), social media platforms and other means. Individual school sites put out a lot of communication, though the amount and depth vary from school to school. The District works with PTA to communicate about issues of concern as well. The District also maintains a website with a great deal of information as well and is committed to inclusive decision-making and public input. These mechanisms work well for sharing certain types of information but these tools are inadequate when an area of widespread interest or concern is up for discussion and ultimate decision. While individuals can always comment at School Board meetings or send emails about areas of concern that are or are not on a School Board agenda, these vehicles do not provide adequate opportunity for people to feel like they are being heard nor do they offer enough room

to discuss and have a dialogue and ensure that people know that they are being heard, whether their approaches are or are not adopted.

Several issues have arisen in the past year or two where it is clear that some people do not feel they are being listened to or heard. I do believe we need to have a better process for considering certain issues and we need to adopt some better informal and perhaps formal mechanisms for achieving that. I would identify three issues that fall into this category, though they are each quite different: 1) whether to install grass or artificial turf on which school athletic fields and why or why not; 2) whether to make changes in the District's revered music program; and 3) how to regulate the use of technology (including AI) in our schools. I recognize that there are those who do feel that they have not been heard and I believe it is part of our role to ensure that we do listen to, and include, voices of our families and other constituents. I think it is unfortunate that some do not trust our process and I believe it needs to be better. At the same time, anyone who sends emails or comes to speak to the School Board should be aware that School Board members do listen and are attentive to public comments and read emails that are submitted. If someone's strongly held point of view is not ultimately adopted, that does not mean that it hasn't been taken seriously. That said, the existing process for consideration of items of significant interest requires attention, including more opportunities for dialogue with the community and concerned parents.

I support a more inclusive process in coming to certain decisions, where people feel they are heard, whether their positions are adopted or not. At the same time, it is vital that we recognize that school districts have to be able to make decisions that their leaders determine are in the best interests of the majority of its students/constituents. We elect School Board members to do that. I believe that it is incumbent on school district leaders to ensure that we have solid, inclusive processes for obtaining public input and that we hold ourselves to account for explaining the reasoning behind any ultimate decisions we make.

3. How would you approach working with the Superintendent and district staff to effectively implement Board policies?

The Superintendent is the only staff member who is hired by the School Board and technically, all other District staff work for the Superintendent. While that is the formal structure, we are fortunate to work in a District that is small enough and has a culture in which School Board members are able to forge productive relationships with staff members so that concerns, questions, support or lack of support can be shared that will help everyone to be effective in service to the District. When complex issues arise, while complying with the Brown Act, staff members have meetings to share information and respond to Board members so they are prepared for items which will come before the Board. I dare say this does not happen in a lot of districts but it does happen here in SMMUSD. I will continue to promote discussions both informally and at open sessions in School Board meetings with staff who are responsible for implementing policy. I will continue to visit schools to observe the implementation of particular programs or policies. The School Board holds an annual meeting with principals where individual school leaders present their areas of focus covered in their annual School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), which each school is required to have. Each school's SPSA explains how the school will be implementing District and Board policy and goals. Our District takes continuous improvement seriously and focuses intentionally on goals, strategies and evaluation of outcomes. The School Board evaluates the Superintendent on an ongoing basis and annually to ensure that the Superintendent and staff are in fact working to effectively implement Board/District policies and are moving toward meeting goals. The Superintendent

and the School Board look at well-defined rubrics for evaluating progress toward District goals. Thus, there are objective as well as subjective opportunities for ensuring implementation of Board policies.

4. How do you assess the district's current financial position, and what steps would you take to ensure long-term fiscal stability?

Along with my colleagues and District staff, we have worked hard to align our budget and be wise about our expenditures. School district revenues are never entirely predictable, but our staff has done a lot to increase the reliability of projections. When Covid monies were available as with other one-time funds, we were responsible and endeavored not to increase the budget in ways that would not be sustainable once those one-time revenues disappeared. To ensure fiscal responsibility, one-time "surprises" and other one-time monies have to be used wisely and cannot be relied upon to create new permanent positions that then are not sustainable. The District's budget is in very good shape and reflects the educational values of the Board. The District has tried to avoid layoffs as enrollment has declined by offering early retirement incentives and simply not filling positions when staff members leave, if possible, but still, a structural deficit remains. Ultimately, through a process of program evaluation, this deficit will need to be addressed. In the meantime, the District continues to receive positive certifications from the LA County Office of Education. Compared to what is taking place in many districts in California, our budget is stable and reliable. While most districts experienced declining enrollment during the years following Covid, our enrollment seems to have stabilized. This too will contribute to determining how we can address the structural deficit.

Thanks to the good will of local voters, our district receives millions of dollars every year that other districts do not receive. The District has an outstanding Assistant Superintendent of Fiscal Services and the School Board has responsibly managed the district's enhanced revenues. Since the Master Facilities Use Agreement is likely to expire, the District needs the citizen-initiated parcel tax to qualify for the ballot and ultimately pass to maintain the stability of our budget. This tax does not increase revenues at all; it merely maintains funding that has been relied upon for many years.

5. Given the district's Basic Aid status, how should funding priorities be set during periods of economic uncertainty?

Basic Aid districts or "community funded" districts receive most revenues from local property taxes, since those revenues exceed the amount guaranteed by the state of California through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). In practice, this means that often, our district receives fewer categorical, targeted or supplemental grants than those that LCFF districts receive. For instance, Transitional Kindergarten is state-mandated but as a basic aid district, SMMUSD does not receive funding for it.

Since SMMUSD's budget is effectively not backstopped by the state, in the event of economic uncertainty, it is important to maintain larger reserves than LCFF districts. The District adopted a reserve policy last year that ensures that two months' worth of expenses are set aside, though that policy contains some flexibility for addressing the various needs of the District that may arise. If property taxes were to drop, which they did temporarily after the recent fires, the District has to be prepared. In the event that something were to reduce District revenues dramatically, whether we are a Basic Aid district or an LCFF district, we would have to consider layoffs and that would have to be done in a very thoughtful way that did the very

least damage to important programs. For the most part, funding priorities are the same for an LCFF or basic aid district and economic uncertainty has to increase awareness of the threat to those priorities regardless of funding status. As mentioned above, we are fortunate to have the additional support of our community through various ballot measures which helps increase our budget and therefore boosts our ability to provide opportunities for students. But there must be an awareness that one-time monies can be important in stabilizing and enhancing revenues on a short-term basis, they do not offer opportunities to create new programs as they do not constitute permanent revenue sources year over year.

Since basic aid districts do not receive funding based on “average daily attendance,” some basic aid districts (notably Beverly Hills) have chosen to stop accepting permit students because they consider it a drain on their resources. In SMMUSD, accepting permit students allows us to offer a perk to our employees and to those who work in our cities or have long-term connections to the school district. Thus far, we have chosen to continue to accept student permits though we will continue to monitor the financial impact of this policy going forward. I hope we will continue to offer current permitting practices.

6. Do you support the currently proposed parcel tax measure for SMMUSD? Yes. Why or why not? In your answer, please address how you evaluate the measure’s structure, its relationship to the joint use agreement, and how the District should ensure accountability for the use of these funds.

I strongly support it for two reasons. First, it provides a guaranteed and stable funding source for the District of \$11,000,000 annually, which is credited against/replace the \$12,000,000 in funding **currently** provided in accordance with The Master Facilities Use Agreement (MFUA) which will expire on June 30, 2027. If the District were to lose this funding, it would be very damaging and would mean significant layoffs of many teachers and other staff. Second, it is a critical component of the City’s realignment plan insofar as it frees up City funds currently used to fund the MFUA and allows them to be directed toward other City priorities (and address the City’s budget deficit).

As for District accountability, it is important to keep in mind that parcel tax funds will **not** be new funds but rather are a replacement source for existing funds. Accountability is ensured through the school district’s public budgeting process and oversight by the Financial Oversight Committee, which is expressly referenced in the proposed parcel tax measure.

If the question is meant to be asking about the availability of school district fields and other resources after school hours, the School Board recently adopted a resolution confirming that consistent with the District’s practice for many decades and predating the adoption of the MFUA, these resources will continue to be available for community use, regardless of what happens with the Parcel Tax or the expiration of the current JUA/MFUA. The MFUA was structured to ensure that there was legal “consideration” being given to the City in exchange for providing operating monies to the District. However, in reality, the MFUA did not create the District’s longstanding practice of providing community use of school facilities afterschool and on weekends, as is described at greater length in the May 19 presentation to the School Board and the resolution itself which can be found online.

As for the Joint Use Agreement (aka the MFUA), I anticipate that in the event the parcel tax passes, some iteration of the Agreement will be adopted or extended to continue to formalize City and District commitments and practices and joint cooperation and responsibilities.

7. What is your assessment of Malibu unification, and what remains to ensure financial and educational equity for both Santa Monica and Malibu students?

An enormous amount of time and energy has gone into arriving at a “fair and equitable” way to split SMMUSD into two districts – one for Santa Monica schools and the other for Malibu schools. Having been deeply involved in this effort as a Board subcommittee member on the Santa Monica side, I will continue working to finalize “unification” of SMMUSD into separate Malibu and Santa Monica districts. I do not believe the strong desire of those who live in Malibu to have their own independent district will go away. While I did not start off believing this, over time, I have come to believe that separation in accordance with the agreements approved by both the School Board and the City of Santa Monica offers a better approach for students because it will reduce unnecessary distractions and disputes among adults and allow each city to elect school boards that can operate its own schools in ways that it sees fit and according to terms that will not harm Santa Monica schools financially. The formula that was worked through with the help of financial experts will ensure that the revenue of Santa Monica schools continues to grow similarly to the amount by which it grows annually now and Malibu schools will receive what they need on the front end so that they are able to function productively from the start. Malibu schools are more expensive to operate because they are so small; increasingly, that is a drain on the SMMUSD budget, thus ultimately “unification” will help both parts of the District and “local control” of schools will be afforded to both Malibu and Santa Monica..

8. Based on results from the first few years of implementation, do you believe that 2022’s Measure GS should be amended? If so, how and why?

The District is fortunate to be the beneficiary of GS as it provides vital funding for SMMUSD. I support the continuation of GS and would not want to see it amended with respect to the District. When the measure was submitted to the voters in 2022, its proponents stated that they would be open to certain amendments at a later date. One example that was discussed at the time was a non-profit exemption. I am not aware whether this or any other amendments are being considered so I cannot comment at this time.

Students & Learning Climate

1. What specific steps would you take to improve student outcomes across the district? How should success be measured?

SMMUSD continues to promote engaging learning experiences, innovations in education that resonate with students, and differentiated instruction, which means that teachers can address students who are at different levels of proficiency/mastery and they can meet students where they are. I believe strongly that student outcomes can continue to be improved whether a student is already succeeding or a student is behind his/her peers. There are a number of steps that can be taken to continue to improve student outcomes, beginning with a focus on what is called Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), education-ese that is easy to stumble over. MTSS contemplates Tier 1 instruction (when teachers present lessons to the entire class), then adds Tier 2 instruction (more targeted instruction for small groups who require additional attention) and Tier 3 instruction (individualized intervention for students with challenges that require it). The District employs instructional coaches to support teachers as they implement this approach. Post-Covid, the District was able to offer significant amounts of outside-of-class tutoring opportunities and

some of those continue to be available through grants.

Teachers at different schools throughout SMMUSD meet in professional learning communities (PLCs) where they are able to share strategies as well as focus on individual students and groups of students together as a team. Post-Covid, there was a significant decrease in attendance virtually everywhere. All SMMUSD schools continue to work to increase school attendance, since being in school is key for most students to improve, learn and thrive. As mentioned, SMMUSD offers tutoring programs for those who need them; the District continues to monitor and improve programs that are supposed to improve outcomes. Program evaluation continues to lead to improvement or even replacement of certain programs, if they are not meeting their goals.

One program which has been substantially revamped and improved and is leading to measurable better student outcomes is the ELD program which serves English Learners. Last weekend, I attended a celebration of students who have transitioned from English Language Learners (ELL) to Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP) The celebration was a moving and meaningful reminder of how schools can improve student outcomes and how important targeted focus can be for students who need it.

In terms of how success should be measured, multiple measures should be used. Teachers continue to use “formative assessments” (tests that are designed to provide feedback on whether students understand and are mastering the material and where they need more instruction). There is greater and greater use of student portfolios that demonstrate student work in ways that go way beyond their ability to perform on tests. Schools also emphasize making individual and group presentations more and more, which allows students to learn how speak publicly along with doing written work. These approaches also provide students with the opportunity to gain collaboration skills and to learn from and with their peers in small groups. Whether it is in a project-based learning or a more traditional setting, group work and presentations, as well as oral presentations also contribute to measuring success. End-of-year assessments continue to be used. While these are not in any way the only way that success in our District is measured, it does help in determining how our district compares to the rest of the state, the country, and the world. And colleges continue to go back and forth regarding whether to require tests like the SAT or ACT as part of the application process.

2.How should SMMUSD support student mental health and well-being, and what role should schools play in this area?

The most important contribution to student mental health and well-being is to provide safe, supportive environments where students and their families feel welcome, connected and that they belong. Social emotional learning (SEL) is a staple in SMMUSD and is a component of teaching/learning which should have a positive impact on student mental health and well-being. Our schools all have inclusive values and strong anti-bullying policies and programs.

Unfortunately, anxiety, stress and depression were already on the rise pre-pandemic and youth mental health struggles continue to be documented. Attention has been focused on this at the state level so there will hopefully continue be more funding for mental health services. It will continue to be important to focus on early intervention and on identifying and offering mental health services and referrals early on as well as continuing to provide crisis care. The District is about to launch a new in-house mental health program which will be located at the Obama Center (at Lincoln and Ocean Park Blvd). The program is called the STATS program (Short-

Term Academic Therapeutic Supports) and will provide special services to students deemed to be in crisis.

The District continues to make access to mental health resources easier. Samohi, for instance, has a wellness service center; the Venice Family Clinic offers a Teen Clinic on the Samohi campus. Most school campuses have wellness centers of some kind. The District continues to look for potential funding, as there is no doubt that our district and others are in need of more professionals, whether clinical social workers or others, who can help students and also help prevent mental health issues early on. SMMUSD employs a very skilled and knowledgeable mental health coordinator who is a strong advocate for greater resources for mental health. As part of her work, she has been able to secure social work interns to work in the District. The State does provide limited funding for mental health in schools as the mental health issues facing so many students are very real, though this support is still fairly recent. Fortunately, basic aid districts are able to avail themselves of this funding. This is an issue that is definitely on my radar.

3. In light of increasing political pressure on public education nationwide, how should SMMUSD approach decisions around curriculum, instruction, and inclusive learning environments?

I am assuming the political pressure being referred to is the attack on all things DEI. We are fortunate to be in California and in Santa Monica-Malibu where the overwhelming majority of people continue to support diversity, equity and inclusion. SMMUSD decisions regarding curriculum, instruction and inclusive learning environments continue to consider those values and imperatives as it has for a long time, undeterred by political pressures.

Our district has adopted social justice standards and the more deeply these standards are embedded in curriculum and classrooms, the more the values and goals of social equity will be realized. SMMUSD teachers have largely embraced the social justice standards and Board policy requiring that both social justice standards and inquiry-based and relevant curriculum become more deeply embedded in classrooms.

The District continues to promote a climate at every school that welcomes ALL children and families. SMMUSD strives to be a welcoming place where all students and their families feel respected and included. Decisions around curriculum and instruction continue to ensure that changes do not come at the expense of any particular group of students and that the curricular opportunities offered are available to all students.

4. How should the District address persistent disparities in educational outcomes among different student groups? All mechanisms mentioned in my answer to Question #1 in this section apply here as well. The District's approach also includes promoting culturally relevant and inquiry-based curriculum, implementing the social justice standards that our district has adopted along with the American cultures/ethnic studies requirement that we have adopted as well (as mentioned in my answer to Question 3 above.) Our goal is to ensure equity and excellence for ALL students which involves finding ways to promote a love of learning and reaching different students in different ways.

Years ago, we were fortunate to employ Dr. Pedro Noguera to conduct an equity audit and continue to implement many of his recommendations, which are aimed at increasing engagement and closing the achievement/opportunity gap. We have initiated and are in the midst of substantial improvements to our TK/preschools where students now receive free education beginning at age 4 rather than waiting until they are eligible for kindergarten. This

means that the District can play a significant role in ensuring that all students are ready for kindergarten. We continue to add more inquiry-based/project-based/student-centered learning into our curriculum and the District opened and continue to support a small project-based learning high school located on the Samohi campus. Teachers are more and more involved and engaged in concrete ways to support students and are actively engaged in developing projects and ways of involving their students. Teacher involvement and buy-in is key since they are the ones who obviously have the greatest ability to excite students to learn and succeed. The district also has created greater supports for students to prepare for college, including the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) program and Young Collegians (a local partnership between SMMUSD and SMC). Some of the changes we have implemented are clearly bearing fruit. As an example, the number of English Learners who were “reclassified” this past year far exceeded the numbers of students who did so in previous years.

The District needs to continue to meet students where they are, to use culturally relevant materials and curriculum, and to ensure that adult connections are made with each and every child in our district. Our counseling programs need to be evaluated to ensure that they serve the needs of ALL students. And our district needs to continue to affirmatively pursue hiring of staff who are ethnically and racially representative of our student population.

5. What is your approach to school safety, including the role (if any) of law enforcement on campus? Clearly, weapons, including guns, do not ever belong on school campuses. The only true solution to gun violence is to have serious gun control. Absent that, to reduce the possibility of gun or other violence, school districts such as ours must do everything we can to have safe entries and exits to schools including perimeter cameras in appropriate places, safety protocols for allowing visitors –volunteers, parents or others -- onto campuses. We must continue to re-visit our safety protocols, so that while not turning our campuses into armed fortresses or scary places, students feel safe on all school campuses. Our District has a strong partnership with the SMPD to review protocols and safety measures on our campuses. Those protocols do not include allowing guns on school campuses. In Malibu, after much discussion among Malibu families about how to work with either private security or the County Sheriff to provide the kind of security that we are fortunate to have in Santa Monica, an arrangement was made with the Sheriff to provide similar services for Malibu schools. An SRO in Malibu is stationed at Malibu High School and serves all four Malibu schools. I stand behind the overwhelming majority of teachers who are opposed to having guns on campus.

I do not support having armed police on school campuses; I believe this is counter-productive and dangerous. However, SMMUSD works with School Resource Officers (employees of the SMPD) who are on school campuses from time to time, though not on a full-time basis. This is one of the preventive tools available and we are fortunate to have it. As already mentioned, SMMUSD has a good working relationship with the SMPD to address incidents of school violence or drugs or other issues that involve public safety. I believe it is important for our district to cultivate a collaborative relationship with SMPD but that does not include having officers posted at our schools.

6. How should SMMUSD balance the use of screens and digital learning tools with concerns about student attention, social development, mental health, and academic outcomes? What role should technology play in the classroom, and where, if anywhere, should limits be placed?

This is perhaps the most significant and controversial question facing education today, fueled even more so with the advent of AI. SMMUSD’s current approach, which is in the process of expansion and formation, does in fact recognize the need to balance all these concerns. As SMMUSD’s more comprehensive approach is formulated, it will involve robust discussion and deliberation both internally and publicly, research and study, consideration of evidence, consideration of views of teachers, parents, administrators, and

others. It will, of necessity, include data that continues to become available regarding real-world impacts on all of the concerns appropriately identified in this question.

SMMUSD's goal is to support students who will be versatile, creative, lifelong learners and thinkers who graduate high school with the tools necessary to be good citizens in a democracy and to succeed in college or career in a world that is changing all the time. That is the starting point for this discussion. Ultimately, schools have to wrestle with how best and how much to use technology to enhance learning and prepare students for the future while ensuring that students learn how to learn and learn for themselves and preserving the vital connections between teachers and students, students and other students, and the many social experiences that schools offer and must continue to make paramount.

Clearly, technology needs to play much less of a role in lower grades than in upper grades, though the details of that are still being understood, discussed and considered. I believe there should be very little screen time in lower grades, but I am still considering, along with the rest of the School Board and SMMUSD, exactly where the limits should be. Technology is part of our world, and it is not going away. This makes it imperative to get a handle on how and when to introduce it or use it. We need to use technology as a tool, where appropriate, and we need to recognize that students will need to be proficient in its use once they graduate from high school. However, we also need to ensure that technology is not controlling us; we need to control it and its use. There are also equity considerations involved since those with greater resources have access at home to all kinds of technology and we need to consider how that does or does not influence what schools use or offer. The reality that families will make their own choices about what level of technology to expose their children to at home must be understood while decisions are made about what schools will or will not use in the classroom. There are many different views on what is appropriate and there needs to be an airing of those views. In the end, decisions will have to be very deliberate. As this question contemplates, there will most certainly have to be a balance. I would err, if I had to, on the side of caution, as it is much easier to add in technology and much more difficult to go back.

I have read Jonathan Haidt's [The Anxious Generation](#) and am currently reading [The Digital Delusion](#) by Dr. Jared Cooney Horvath along with articles and research that I hope will help inform me and contribute to the discussion. I recommend that all who have time inform themselves for this critical conversation as well.

7. What is your position on the use of artificial intelligence tools in classroom instruction at SMMUSD? What specific guidelines or limitations, if any, should the District adopt to govern their use?

I am humble enough to know my own limits in this arena. I do not feel well-informed enough to give a definitive answer to this question other than to say that clearly, there must be a comprehensive plan developed that has clearly articulated limits and guidance. The District takes this issue seriously and will be addressing it following widespread, well-informed and inclusive discussion both within the District and with our community. A resolution focusing on the issue of AI that emanated from the Malibu PTA, authored by a PTA leader and a teacher, was adopted by the California State PTA last month and will now be proposed for adoption by the National PTA. The resolution identifies a number of areas of concern, calling for student privacy protections, transparency about AI use in classrooms, the need to address equity concerns and the "digital divide," and importantly, keeping teachers at the heart of learning.

The underlying premise of this resolution is that early adoption of technologies such as AI, in the absence of policy limitations and pedagogical support will have adverse consequences. The way to prevent these is for school districts to adopt comprehensive, long-range plans that provide for thoughtful and intentional access to AI. The resolution is more detailed than this but I do think it provides a good start, if not a roadmap to the issues that need to be understood, appreciated and addressed in a plan. Again, I strongly agree that our district and others need to develop and adopt a comprehensive plan that addresses the challenges of which there is awareness and builds limits that make sense and are enforceable. While I recognize the urgency many feel about the need to develop guidelines and limitations, I don't think we should rush to implement a quick fix that leads to confusion, bad policy and unintended consequences.

As I mentioned in an earlier answer, SMMUSD is putting together a working group on technology, which includes the use of AI in classroom instruction. We all need to educate ourselves on this issue before arriving at definitive plans. Undoubtedly, there are many perspectives on this issue and a wealth of information which will test all of our abilities to think critically and to have a healthy dialogue. It is a challenge and a moment we need to meet in our district and everywhere.

8. Do you support a “bell-to-bell” ban on student cell phone use, similar to the policy recently adopted by LAUSD? Why or why not, and what considerations should guide how such a policy is implemented at SMMUSD?

SMMUSD has a policy which was adopted in November 2024 (Board Policy 5131.8), that regulates the presence or usage of cell phones during the day. I am not entirely sure how much it differs from LAUSD's policy but SMMUSD's implementation of the policy is nuanced in that it follows different approaches in elementary, middle and high school. In elementary schools, parents are encouraged to not send phones to school with their children at all but if they insist, the phones must be off and remain put away during the school day. In middle school, students have been issued special pouches in which to store their phones during the day. In high school, students are required to silence mobile phones and to observe whatever approach the teacher adopts in each classroom, which may involve providing pouches or other mechanisms for storing cell phones and accessories. There are emergency and limited permitted exceptions to these rules, as appropriate, for instance, if a student is required to have a phone pursuant to an individualized education program or Section 504 plan. I support the current plan, which was developed with input from teachers, students and parents. I believe we should monitor our policy and improve it if necessary.

9. What is your assessment of how the District handled recent changes to the music education program, and what principles should guide decisions involving arts education, program restructuring, and community engagement moving forward?

First, it is important to start by making clear that there are no changes being made to the music education program this coming year. I have personal experience with the significance of the music program and have immense appreciation for its benefits as well as respect for how and what it has become over the years. I also appreciate that any change to a successful program will need to be part of a process that promotes discussion of pros and cons and achieves buy-in, modifications or at a minimum, understanding.

Recent proposed changes were apparently “leaked” before internal discussions had concluded and prior to obtaining input from families and school sites. Regardless of the

particulars of how this occurred, it is my commitment and belief that changes to a strong, revered program like SMMUSD's music program must be carefully constructed and there must be a process to engage District families and others, including music teachers when changes are considered. The process, for whatever reason, was definitely not what it should have been and needs to be rectified in the future.

Not enough compliments can be paid to those who are responsible for creating and maintaining the music program we are fortunate to have in SMMUSD. With respect to principles that guide decisions, ultimate respect is due to the music program that has been thoughtfully created and supported. That cannot mean, however, that there is never an occasion to make any changes to the program. For instance, the format of Stairway of the Stars this year was changed in some small but very successful and creative ways, which has received largely positive reviews. Stairway (the District's annual showcase of its music programs), was expanded to include all of the arts, addressing programs that had felt undervalued previously. In addition, the newer District programs – mariachi and Ballet Folklórico and other dance components – were included as well, for the first time.

After the longtime Music Director retired last year, SMMUSD appointed a new Music Coordinator who came up through the District, has extensive knowledge of, and a deep commitment to, District programs and a PhD in music education. Whether current proposals are ultimately adopted or not, it is important to understand that the underlying goals of any changes are to expand music instruction and strengthen student participation and success where possible. For instance, one of the proposed changes would expand music instruction to include TK – second grade. A second, and more controversial proposal, involves instrumental music and in what grade students must decide about which instrument to pursue. Unfortunately, the early proposals did not, whatever the reason, undergo the process that I would envision that future proposals (including these) will undergo. A lot of unnecessary confusion and frustration has occurred which I hope can be avoided or at least minimized in the future. The District will undoubtedly contemplate whether to introduce changes that the Music Director and department believe will expand and improve our music program. When changes are proposed, they should be explained and articulated and then inclusive discussions should take place prior to any decisions being made. There are those who feel that no changes should ever be made to a great program and there are others who will want to make it even greater. There is certainly agreement on the goal while there is always room for disagreement about how to best reach it. The District must strive to include stakeholders in decisions that are meaningful to them and which relate to music and arts programs which are so very special and widely respected. I feel confident that the District can conduct a better process when changes to arts programs are contemplated. To reiterate, there must be an understanding to begin with that everyone is dedicated to improvement and expansion of opportunity and not contraction or moving backwards, which will lead to a healthier process and discussion.

Community

1. What role should the District play in providing early childhood education, and how should expansion be funded while maintaining accessibility and quality?

I have long been involved in this issue and believe the District has made great strides in improving the quality of early childhood education the District offers. Ensuring that children are kindergarten-ready has been an articulated goal of the district along with the City for a long time.

Cradle to Career, a creation of the City, brought together SMMUSD, non-profits, and the City of Santa Monica in a partnership whose concerns include advocating for high quality early childhood experiences. The School Board and our community committed to funding pre-school improvement and expansion thanks in part to the passage by voters of a school funding measure that specified early childhood education as a preferred expenditure. The School Board has changed from relying on Head Start funding to other funding sources in an effort to meet the financial and other needs of the residents of this city who make too much money to qualify for Head Start funds but too little to be able to afford full-tuition pre-school. SMMUSD was an early adopter of the concept of TK. The state of California has now mandated “transitional kindergarten,” providing free early childhood for four-year olds, which is a very positive occurrence. Unfortunately, basic aid districts have yet to receive funding for programming for TK and there is no capital funding for the facilities to house these mandated programs. As part of the school district’s bond program, TK and pre-school facilities are being improved and or constructed at every campus with the goal of creating collaboration between pre-school and K-5 teachers and staff. These facilities have been completed at Grant, Will Rogers and the Ocean Park School House; they are under construction at Roosevelt and will soon be under construction at Franklin.

Ultimately, the state and/or the federal government should study the models adopted in Scandinavian countries where universal pre-school and childcare are provided at affordable costs and adjusted in accordance with household income. School districts in the United States do not generally receive funding for preschool or child care, creating significant challenges for public schools.

2. Do you support the [Club’s resolution](#) calling for a citywide ban of artificial turf on locally owned public land?

I am aware of and take seriously the concerns that motivated the presentation and adoption of this resolution. I was unable to attend the meeting where this resolution was discussed because there was a School Board meeting that night, but I watched the presentation later. I do believe the dialogue would have been enhanced if there had been an opportunity on the same night for the District, the City (and even SMC, which ultimately found itself included in the resolution) to explain the situation and considerations facing the institutions and their governing bodies.

Respectfully, I believe that the discussion must be contextualized first by articulating the goals and desires for our community, beginning with young people/students and extending to adults, to have plentiful, safe and attractive recreational and athletics facilities and programming that are available with as little interruption and down time as possible. That is after first recognizing the instructional needs that schools have and how they rely on fields and outdoor spaces more and more.

The discussion also needs to recognize the facts on the ground. Our city has woefully inadequate park space and athletic facilities compared to the needs of its residents. This is a key fact and consideration that must be understood. Unlike in other school districts where schools simply use their facilities to meet the needs of their students, primarily during the day, SMMUSD schools have supplemented the inadequate City athletic and park resources in order to provide athletic fields, gyms and pools for many years. Even with the additional fields provided by our schools, there are not nearly enough fields to accommodate the desired usage of kids and adults in our community. This means that existing fields are subjected to very intense use and are extremely difficult to maintain in safe and decent condition. (I have been involved in trying to rectify this issue for many years, since prior to my service on the School Board.)

The context is important to the framing of this discussion. The District has no overarching commitment to artificial turf; its installation over the years has occurred, primarily on middle school and the high school campus as a way of addressing the District and the City's commitment to providing field space to meet the above-described goal of keeping kids and adults active, a goal that everyone involved in this debate should share. If all things were equal, i.e., the above factual situation did not exist, I believe that most people would prefer grass athletic fields, as would I and as most professional football and soccer players do. The inadequacy of field space in Santa Monica, the overuse to which most fields are subjected, and the inability to maintain grass in any semblance of the condition that professional fields are maintained, renders meeting this goal very challenging, thus the introduction of artificial turf. When replaced, the artificial turf is always updated with the most current, environmentally friendly and safe artificial turf available. There are no artificial turf fields in Santa Monica that use crumb rubber infill and there have not been such fields for years.

The District is currently working with grass experts to identify hearty grass to install this summer at Franklin Elementary School's temporary field. I am hopeful that we can obtain some valuable information and experience if we monitor the usage and maintenance of the temporary field. Meanwhile, I also support a moratorium on installation of new artificial turf fields at elementary schools and exploration with the City and SMC of whether there are any possible sites where additional fields could be located. In addition, I believe we should conduct a serious study of our elementary fields, including collection of data regarding hours of usage, type of usage, injuries, maintenance, etc. We should also compare elementary school field usage data with data regarding usage at middle and high school levels. I also support further dialogue that is grounded in shared information, research and data so that those on all sides and with all perspectives on this issue can work together to seek acceptable solutions to the challenge we face with respect to fields. Health considerations, environmental considerations, field availability, usage demand, maintenance considerations, availability of better and better natural grass and artificial turf products are all among the considerations that must be part of the discussion. As always, I believe in fact-and research-based civil dialogue about this issue, as with other decisions. This is a citywide issue, ultimately, and the District and the City should work together to address this issue.

3. What role should public schools play in preparing students to be engaged, critical thinkers and participants in civic life?

Public schools should play a meaningful and significant role in preparing students to participate in democracy. I was raised by adherents of John Dewey, who believed that students should "learn by doing," believing that learning how to participate in civic life was a responsibility schools needed to offer. Dewey believed that schools needed to help students cultivate democratic habits from the earliest possible age, that students should be exposed to government and political life. In our district, there are more and more opportunities to grapple with real life problems, with the adoption of experiential and project-based learning and our commitment to cross-curricular opportunities in the high school academies. The focus on encouraging more active learning instead of solely passively listening to a teacher all the time also serves the commitment to ensuring that students graduate with critical thinking skills and equipped to take part in civic life. Last month, the District co-sponsored an event put on by SMC's Public Policy Institute featuring Danielle Allen, a leading academic who advocates for education that encourages and places civic and political participation on the agenda, as she promotes

the reinvention of democracy through participation.

Good teaching in combination with social justice standards and a well-developed curriculum should support students in becoming critical thinkers, leaders and activists. From time to time, there are topics of local or national interest that have presented opportunities/teachable moments where teachers have been able to spark the interest of students in researching and sharing their views on various social problems or issues. When we talk about the importance of “relevant” curriculum, inquiry-based, student-centered or project-based learning, critical thinking, hands-on learning, all of these align with preparing students for civic life and for research, problem-solving and activism in areas chosen by students who rightfully are concerned with issues large and small that affect their futures or their current lives. The “pitch space” at the new Exploration Building at Samohi offers an amazing place for students to share their projects, their research and their civic endeavors which their classroom assignments promote in this manner. The District’s new facilities are designed to promote civic participation as this example demonstrates.

Ballot Measures

1. Do you support the California Billionaire Tax Act, which would impose a one-time emergency 5% tax on those worth more than \$1B? Why or why not?

I support taxing billionaires, however, like Xavier Becerra, Katie Porter, Antonio Villaraigosa, Matt Mahan, and Governor Newsom, I do not support the billionaire’s tax. (Even Tom Steyer, who does support it, has all kinds of concerns about it.) It’s a one-time tax which does not help to stabilize the state budget long-term, and it is a risky strategy that will likely lead some of those with great wealth to flee the state, thereby decreasing overall income tax revenue in the long run. It has a lot of populist appeal because most of us are not billionaires and want to believe that if we only captured more taxes from those people, that would solve our budget problems. I trust those with far more expertise than I have who believe there are much better ways to change the tax structure than this one and there are better ways to tax individual and corporate wealth. In addition, if the tax passes, it will likely be tied up in litigation for a long time. Overall, I am a strong supporter of progressive taxation, including workable methods of securing more tax revenue from billionaires. I just do not believe that this measure is the right way to accomplish that.

2. Do you support the state ballot measure which would require voters to present government-issued identification when casting ballots? No, I do not support it. Why or why not?

I share the concerns of those who believe that this measure is unnecessary and anti-democratic. The measure is aimed at a hypothetical problem of voter fraud, including voting by noncitizens, which is not supported by evidence. Sources I trust, including the League of Women Voters, argue that the measure is an attempt to make it harder for people to vote who are seen as a threat to certain interests. It would have particularly adverse impacts on low income and non-white voters.

3. Do you support the proposed state taxpayer initiative which would limit the ability of local governments to raise revenue through certain taxes and fees including real estate transfer taxes? Why or why not?

No, I do not support this initiative.

I believe the threshold for raising taxes and fees should be lower, not higher. I believe new taxes and tax increases should only require a majority vote, regardless of who sponsors them. Raising the voting threshold to 2/3 will undermine progressive local government.

4. Do you support the proposed ballot measure which would set aside 25% of the airport land for 3000 units of affordable housing, in addition to the remainder which would become a Great Park? Why or why not?

My understanding is that this measure is not moving forward. In general, I support the Great Park concept for the airport. Subject to further study, I believe that housing is compatible with the Great Park, if properly planned.

Additional Questions

1. 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?

I regularly initiate communications with leaders in the SMDC and other local organizations and make myself available to discuss issues of importance. As a longtime member of the SMDC and other local political organizations, I welcome the opportunity to develop community buy-in on new proposals and to elicit thoughts and feedback on new or controversial initiatives within the school district or in the larger world of public education. A couple of years ago, I participated in a roundtable discussion with Keith Coleman, Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein and others on issues concerning education. When issues such as the City of Malibu's desire to "unify" (separate) from the SMMUSD have arisen, interaction with the SMDC and other political organizations has been important. As I mentioned earlier, I was unable to attend the meeting when the Club discussed and voted on a resolution calling for a citywide ban on artificial turf on public land since there was a School Board meeting that night. I wish that had worked out differently as that is the very kind of issue where interaction and dialogue with organizations like this Club are invaluable. There are other issues of great importance as well and community discussion, dialogue and buy-in will be important going forward.

2. What is the most important topic that was left off of this questionnaire?

First, I think the question about how the level of discourse in this community about important issues on which people have different points of view can be elevated and nurtured is a critical question for all of us. The premise behind this question is that we can (I hope) build and support civil and respectful dialogue that will contribute to a healthier and stronger sense of community and maybe even better decisions. As I have tried to convey throughout this questionnaire, I am a strong believer in dialogue and yet it seems to be in shorter and shorter supply. While ultimatums, resolutions and petitions do have their place, I feel they have become the default option rather than beginning with a commitment to having fact- and evidence-based, civil dialogue with openness to the good faith points of view of others in our community. As I believe many of us have experienced, even those who agree on so many issues have become victims of a more and more toxic and unwelcoming, anti-collaborative political environment in which we find ourselves. I firmly believe that the technology available to us all has contributed to

fragmentation and frustration and easy demonizing rather than to more plentiful healthy dialogue about areas where we disagree. We need to turn the ship around.

To paraphrase a student's prophetic words at the McKinley Elementary School graduation today (June 8), "Not only do kids still need to learn how to get along, but adults do too."

Second, I don't know if it's **the** most important topic, but a question about commitment to strengthening the relationship between the school district, the City and Santa Monica College could have been asked. I believe the relationship between the institutions is a vital one for our community. While the relationship has come a long way over the years I have been involved, it is important to recognize this relationship as one which should be supported and nurtured. The relationship hasn't always been what it is today and it can be stronger and more productive in ways that support our community. When new staff or elected officials begin their terms in each of these institutions, through no fault of their own, they often are unaware of the history and/or the value of this relationship. SMC, the City and the school district each play an important role in their own spheres, but they also have a lot they can contribute to the City overall when they work together to share information and ideas and to align and support each other, where possible. Collaboration between staff members and electeds in these bodies are valuable in ways that are not often appreciated, since mostly the institutions operate in their own silos. I just wanted to flag the importance of working together at the same time as these institutions pursue their own missions. One example where collaboration among the three institutions should take place involves the discussion mentioned above about whether and where to have grass or artificial turf fields. This is ultimately an issue for all three institutions which could be approached more thoughtfully and comprehensively together.

3. Please describe whether and how you used generative AI tools in preparing your responses. If elected, how would you use these tools in governance, if at all?

I did not use generative AI tools. I don't yet know how I will use AI tools in governance. I am open to suggestions and will discuss with District leadership going forward.