

LPoV Board of Ed Questionnaire Nov 2022

General Questions

Candidate Name *

Lainie Motamedi

Candidate Website

LainieforSFBOE.com

Why are you running for *this* office?

I'm a parent with a decade of engagement in school sites and the District - including PTA and SSC leadership. At the District level, I served a four-year term, including as co-chair, on the Public Education Enrichment Fund Committee. While on the PEEF CAC, I advocated for accountability and transparency reform to ensure that San Francisco City funds are utilized for student benefit as mandated by the City Charter. In this role, I also reviewed SFUSD programming, advised the Board of Education, and provided recommendations to best serve our students. In addition, I actively participated in the District's Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) Task Force.

I have over twenty years professional experience in state government, business, and nonprofits. I grew up in Los Angeles, where my mom and stepfather were teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District – serving for a combined 56 years. And I'm the daughter of an immigrant. My father moved to San Francisco from Iran when he was 17. California's public education system enabled him to learn English and achieve his professional aspirations.

A more complete bio is here: www.lainieforsfboe.com/bio

General Comment: I am a SFUSD parent and am not running for supervisor or any other higher office, nor do I intend to. I am singularly focused on our kids and their education, and how we can support our educators and school sites for success. I come from the community and am new to politics. I responded to the questionnaire topics in ways that relate to this work.

If elected, do you commit to completing your entire term?

Yes

What are your values, and how did you get them?

Integrity, Kindness, Honesty. I will credit my family, but also acknowledge how much I've been influenced through caring for animals for much of my life. Most recently, for the last 10 years, I've been the personnel manager for the National Park Service's horse patrol program in the Headlands. Working with horses has solidified the importance of behaving in a trustworthy, calm, and caring manner in order to build strong, respectful, and safe relationships. And I cannot do that without integrity, kindness, and honesty. And it helps with working with kids too!

What communities do you represent, and how do they hold you accountable?

I work in service of all public education students in SFUSD to ensure their success. Ultimately, I feel accountable when I see student achieve success, a sense of belonging in our schools and community, and are ready to pursue college, career, or a vocation of their choosing upon graduation. Ultimately, it is our students' families and the community at large who will hold me accountable and determine whether I continue in this role.

What three endorsements are you most proud of?

My mom and stepdad are retired Los Angeles Unified elementary school teachers. Having their support means the world to me. Parents and educators here in San Francisco. I have built strong connections to families, educators, and school site staff over the last decade. I am so proud to see them step forward to join me and voice their support.

What are the top three issues you will work on, and how will you implement solutions in a timely manner?

My top priorities are

Focus on student success

Fiscal responsibility,

Engaging with students, families, educators, and the community at large.

In the last four months since taking office, I've been working hard to move these priorities forward. We've hired a new superintendent, approved a balanced budget, rescinded teacher layoff notices, committed to in-person instruction for our students, embarked upon a process to improve all high schools, and are working with our city partners to share resources and shore up financial support.

As a parent and commissioner, I have visited over thirty-five schools and talked with educators and site administrators about their experiences and needs. I have continued to engage with our district leadership to ensure that our financial decisions are sound and I have worked collaboratively with our Dept of Education colleagues to ensure we are headed in the right direction. I have met with numerous parents and community groups who are invested in our student success.

In short, I am deeply committed to ensuring that our district is run and managed for the benefit and educational success of our students. This is an all hands on deck effort as the problems we see didn't happen overnight. This will take sustained and supported collective effort to focus on our students and the resources, skills, and experiences they need to be successful.

What for-profit or non-profit boards do you serve on, including political organizations?

I have been an active parent in SFUSD for a decade - volunteering in classrooms, leading fundraising efforts, and serving on Student Site Councils and PTAs. I recently completed a four-year term serving as the Co-Chair of the Public Education Enrichment Fund Committee (PEEF), where I advocated for accountability and transparency reform to ensure that San Francisco City funds are utilized for student benefit as mandated by the City Charter. I also served on the Bicycle Coalition board (8 years, including President and Treasurer roles) and Botanical Garden board (3 years) as they underwent organizational change and growth. I am currently the personnel manager and a park ranger with the National Park Service's volunteer horse patrol program in the Marin Headlands (over 10 years). Earlier this year, I was honored to receive the Presidential Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service in recognition of my ongoing contributions.

What local and state commissions or policy bodies do you serve on?

I have been an appointed member of the Board of Education since March of this year.

Please describe specific accomplishments in your activism. What did you get done, and what was your role?

I spent 4 years on the Public Education Enrichment Fund Advisory Committee including 2 years as co-chair... during that time I rooted out SFUSD central office staff and budget bloat and discrepancies. I worked to create more transparent reporting to daylight the lack of central accountability and the disconnect between what central said they were doing and spending - and what our educators and students were actually receiving.

I also am proud of the work I helped accomplish during my time on the SF Bicycle Coalition. When I first joined the board, the City was held up in the middle of an injunction and CEQA review and all bike infrastructure was on pause. We took advantage of that time to build up our member base to over 10,000 (!!!), to work behind the scenes to plan for a comprehensive bike network, and investigate options for Market Street, pavement to parks projects, parklets, etc. When the injunction was lifted, we were ready to roll and had developed relationships and goodwill to get the infrastructure in place!

Please list specific ways you have shown up for immigrants at risk of deportation.

I have not worked directly on immigrant issues. As a Board of Education commissioner, I am interested in learning how I can be supportive of immigrant and newcomer communities and students. My path to this position has been through student site councils, PTAs, and district budget advisories. On the PEEF CAC, I served with members of many community based groups including the Latino Task Force and other immigrant rights and advocacy groups and supported their leadership, recommendations, and work.

Please list specific ways you have fought against racism and white supremacy.

All of my community based efforts have focused on fair and equitable access to transportation, education, and healthy environments. When in leadership positions, I have actively worked to ensure diverse and underrepresented voices in decision-making.

Please give us some examples of situations you've encountered where gender and LGBTQ inequity was evident and what you did or would do to address it.

Gender and LGBTQ inequity are persistently evident and I am mindful of power and gender dynamics in nearly all aspects of our systems and society. As such, I do my best to bring awareness and to interrupt power imbalances and assumptions so that all voices are represented and we can do the work to create a more just, safe, and supportive community.

I am very supportive of Equality CA's recommendations for 'SFUSD and would like to see them fully adopted and implemented.

Amid a homelessness crisis, how can the City and County of San Francisco improve the effectiveness of our city's homelessness and supportive housing services?

I am supportive of SFUSD developing surplus property for large scale affordable and workforce housing. Shirley Chisholm Village is one example of one such project that was undertaken in partnership with the City. I would be interested in pursuing other such projects.

I am also supportive of the community schools model which in many places offers referrals and support to unhoused or underhoused families. Similarly, I understand BVHM has had success with their shelter model that they have implemented alongside many support partners.

Some of the issues that have been voiced to me that are related to, but not limited to, unhoused and underhoused communities have been in proximity to schools of choice, access to resources, food and income security, need for tutoring and homework support, and overall frustration that their voices are not being included or reflected in district decision-making that affects their kids.

What is your favorite park, and why?

El Polin springs. Because it is one of two watersheds and natural freshwater springs offering sustenance to this land's native peoples. (The other being Mission Creek at Mission Dolores). El Polin was the location of one of the first known farms in SF and was homesteaded by a medicine woman who traded with the Spanish army when they occupied the Presidio. Later the US Army filled in the watershed and it was filled with debris and barracks housing. Now the watershed has been daylighted and connects to the Bay. It is also a migratory bird hotspot and breeding area. I love everything about El Polin. It's a warm little gulch and feels like a secret. It is also the origin of one of the oldest trails in SF connecting El Polin Springs to the Mission Dolores watershed. These were two of the most historic locations in all of our city. And there are three ponds that fill during wet seasons, and a weeping willow. It is nature magic.

Why do you want the League of Pissed Off Voters' endorsement?

Because you are mysterious - and I am intrigued! And also because I am a SFUSD parent and am not running for supervisor or any other higher office, nor do I intend to. I am singularly focused on our kids and their education, and how we can support our educators and school sites for success. I come from the community and am new to politics. I want to reach out to as many communities as possible so I can respond to their questions and hear their concerns and suggestions.

Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Just thank you for considering me for your endorsement!

Board of Education

What experience do you have with SFUSD or the BoE?

I have attended board meetings regularly for the last five+ years, including presenting to the Board as co-chair of the Public Education Enrichment Fund Community Advisory Committee, and as a member of the Local Control Accountability Plan Task Force. In addition, I have served on School Site Councils and PTAs. And I have been serving on the Board of Education since March.

School Site Involvement.

I have been a parent in the district for over a decade. And have served on SSCs, PTAs, tutored in classrooms, cleaned out school storage closets, helped in Wellness Centers, lunch rooms, and libraries, distributed PPE, run fundraising campaigns, and generally pitched in wherever she can to support our schools, educators, families, and students. As a parent, and now a Board Commissioner, I have visited over 35 schools and counting.

SFUSD PEEF.

I spent 4 years on the Public Education Enrichment Fund Advisory Committee including 2 years as co-chair... during that time I rooted out SFUSD central office staff and budget bloat and discrepancies. She worked to create more transparent reporting to daylight the lack of central accountability and the disconnect between what central said they were doing and spending - and what our educators and students were actually receiving.

I also was an active participant in SFUSD's Local Control Accountability Plan Task Force and pushed hard for transparency in central office's planning process, elevating the role of our school site councils, educator, family, and student voice, and alignment of student priorities and budget allocations.

In this role I regularly presented to the board, and consistently pushed for District transparency and school site voice, feedback, and support in this process.

What do you see as the district's greatest strengths and challenges?

The current system, although ostensibly designed to promote equity and integration, has not. I am committed to doing the work to improve outcomes for all of our students, at all of our sites. I understand that we have a diversity of students that we must set up for success.

The district has suffered from very real budget challenges coupled with a lack of focus on core educational services and outcomes for students. This combination has both failed our learners who we know need additional support as well as a much broader range of students.

For instance, 40% of our 8th grade graduates are designated as "not prepared for high school." We need to build our systems and practices to ensure we are providing coherent educational instruction and support for all of our students.

As a board, we have committed to collaboratively working to establish priorities, review objective data and information, and align our priorities, systems, and resources to deliver for our students.

We have incredibly talented, dedicated, and impactful educators and school site staff. We have many happy families and students. We should learn from, highlight, and expand the successes at our schools, like Mission High and John Muir Elementary. I am pleased that my colleagues and I voted 7-0 to direct the Superintendent to examine, investigate, and evaluate our high school portfolio for the purpose of improving all of our high school programs. These recommendations are due to the board by April, 2023 so we can begin making necessary investments to improve our students' opportunity for success.

Given that many of the policy and funding decisions for SFUSD are made by other entities, what is your vision for fully funding SFUSD, and what actions can the BoE take to that end?

I support Supervisor Ronen's Student Success Fund and believe that is an important step in supporting our school sites to be innovative and best serve their students - and shore up District finances and supporting our sites to serve their students.

I also support modifying Prop 13 so our schools are funded as robustly as they were when I was attending K-12 school in California.

I am open to pursuing other options to fully fund our schools from the state, federal, and local levels. In particular, I would strongly advocate to see greater state and federal contributions to cover pension and retirement, and special education services.

How do you think SFUSD should be responding to the COVID-19 pandemic at this point?

Continue to coordinate with DPH and other health and safety experts to ensure we are following the most up to date guidance.

It's clear we need student-centered interventions and support given the disruption in learning that the pandemic created. We need to ensure that our students are progressing in their learning, and supporting them early and often when not. This can be through tutoring, 1:1 support, and assessments to identify learning differences. When we do see performance improvement success - we should highlight, learn, and expand what is working.

Do you support a moratorium on charter schools?

I know very little about charter schools. My focus on this board is to ensure that SFUSD is carrying out its role so that all students have access to excellent education and support to fulfill their aspirations and be prepared as they graduate as young adults. I have no connection to charter schools.

Do you think that all SF charter schools should join SFUSD?

I'm not sure I understand this question. I am not aware of any charter school applications before SFUSD. My focus on this board is to ensure that SFUSD is carrying out its role so that all students have access to excellent education and support to fulfill their aspirations and be prepared as they graduate as young adults. I have no connection to charter schools.

Have you ever had a role at a charter school in SF (including parent, student, staff, volunteer, or paid organizer)?

No.

Right now, only 8% of San Francisco's general fund goes toward SFUSD. Do you support increasing that investment? How would you propose to do that?

Yes. For instance, I am very supportive of Supervisor Hillary Ronen's Student Success Fund and am grateful that the Board of Supervisors is unanimously recommending it to the voters. San Francisco taxpayers pay more into education funding than our district, students, and educators receive (via ERAF). I also am a supporter of the Public Education Enrichment Fund which allocates about \$80 million of city funds annually to SFUSD.

What can SFUSD do to increase teacher retention, and what policies would you support to do so?

Pay increases for our educators - teachers, paraprofessionals, social workers, and other onsite staff serving our students- should not be an afterthought. We need to always plan for step and tier pay increases. I have been consistently vocal about my expectation that our district planning includes and anticipates educator pay and COLA increases.

I also believe recruitment and retention of our educators is ESSENTIAL to our success as a school district. I would like to learn more about sabbaticals, prep time allowances, and other ways to support our educators through pay and planning time.

I also support housing for our educators and workforce- such as the Shirley Chisholm educator housing complex in the Sunset. I was excited to hear that financing and construction is planned and on track for this year, and that the City loaned the project \$48 million to enable it to happen. I am looking forward to more projects such as this one moving forward in our district and in partnership with our city.

I am heartened to see greater appetite in our city for affordable housing projects and am very open to supporting projects like this moving forward. The District owns a significant amount of property throughout the City. As the facilities inventory is completed, I will be interested in understanding what other non-school use property may be additionally available and attractive for potential housing.

What is your plan to fight the privatization of schools and the district workforce?

I fully support our labor partners and am an advocate for pay and benefits increases. I have no interest in privatizing our public education system.

How can SFUSD bring students and their families to the table more fully?

Our school assignment systems for elementary and middle school have been modified many times and each time has failed to produce the promised results. I believe we need to focus on the following:

Clear commitments at all schools. We need to clearly and broadly communicate what is offered to students at all schools in our district. Likewise, we need to invest in programming that is attractive to our students and families, including consistent and coherent pathways.

Reduce uncertainty regarding enrollment. Our enrollment system needs to reflect student and family priorities. I hear too often that the complexity and uncertainty baked into our enrollment systems have led to families divesting from our system or otherwise adversely affecting their confidence in our district.

Improve outcomes at all schools. The district needs to deliver on its educational promises and show positive outcomes at all school sites so that families have confidence that their children will be set up for success. That does not mean that all schools should be the same. ALL neighborhoods and communities must have schools that they are proud of and wish to attend.

In addition, every CA school district is required to submit a three year student and budget plan to the CA Dept of Education, and report on progress annually. This is called the LCAP.

Throughout the year, each school's School Site Council (principals, teachers, families, students, and other school site staff) develops a plan for student achievement, the site budget, and monitors progress on student success. The school site plans collectively are supposed to inform district priorities and decision-making. In addition, the community broadly is supposed to have the opportunity to provide input and hear updates on the plan and process.

Normally, a city district has to submit its plan to the county office for review. Because we are a city and a county, we bypass that oversight step.

For years, SFUSD has declined to meaningfully engage our school sites and families in this process. The result has been a lack of school site voice and top-down decision making from the District. In many years, no members of the public have been given the opportunity to see even a draft LCAP prior to its completion, or give input in any meaningful way.

I am working to change this as I believe in good governance. Those who know our students best should have opportunities to inform decision-making and see their voice and feedback reflected in student priorities, student success plans and results, and budget alignment.

While the LCAP process doesn't change the amount of funding we receive– community, educator, family, and student input on how to fund and support our students' success would very likely result in real and measurable improvements.

What metrics would you use to determine your success as Board Member in four years?

- Elimination of structural budget deficit,
- Significant improvements to literacy and math skills for all of our students, especially those currently disproportionately below grade level.
- Career and college readiness graduation rates are the same as overall graduation numbers
- Significant educator compensation improvements and increase in morale, retention, and recruitment
- Enrollment increases across our district - especially in high school

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