

Monterey County Weekly

1. Why are you running for this seat and what makes you the best candidate?

I am running because I want to use my experience and knowledge to give back to this special district and community that has had such a positive impact on my family. I am a strong advocate for public education and it's power to transform and enrich individual lives and our society.

I have a background in education and have always been an active volunteer in my children's schools and on community boards. The broad perspective I have as a recent District parent and from my experience in other districts will be an asset in championing the unique qualities of CUSD while identifying areas for growth. I will use my analytic skills to define best practices and find creative solutions to areas needing improvement. My ability to listen and effectively communicate will ensure that trust is built among the Board and all District stakeholders.

2. Why do you think the district has been unable to retain its past two superintendents, particularly after paying executive search fees? What went wrong?

The first superintendent became ill and it was an unfortunate situation but I honestly do not know what happened with Dr.Varga and therein lies a big part of the problem. There are several "theories" circulating but the fact that no-one has a clear idea about how and why says to me that at the very least there is a communication problem between the Board and the District stakeholders. Obviously there are employee privacy issues that need to be respected but there are still ways to have transparency and open dialogue. The situation with the superintendents has been costly and disruptive to the district.

3. What letter grade would you give the district on its response to Covid-19?

4. What have been the best parts of the response, and the worst?

I think the response has been mixed. Initially, the situation with the pandemic was chaotic and so actions from the District couldn't help but be reactionary. Losing the superintendent during this crisis was ill timed and I think added to frustrations and a lack of trust. To me, the survey that was put forth and caused such a backlash is an example of a "reactionary" response, and while well intentioned I'm sure, caused a lot of negative consequences. There is a science to conducting surveys that involves thoughtful analysis into what information is sought and why, the best way to garner that information and then a clear sense as to what is the intention/how will that information be used. And all of that needs to be well communicated. I think the impact of Covid has heightened the necessity of having clear, thoughtful and detailed communication between the Board and District stakeholders. I think the absence of this has been a problem.

I know that at the school level, teachers and staff have been working hard to adapt to the online teaching mode and from what I have heard, many parents

and students feel that this school year is off to a good start, much improved from the Spring. We have an amazing group of teachers and staff who are invested in providing the best education possible and in meeting the needs of all their students during this crisis.

5. What will you do as a trustee in response to Covid-19?

As I mention in my previous answer, I think the communication between the Board and the District stakeholders needs improving. I will work to ensure that the Board provides an open, accessible and transparent forum for all stakeholders to be heard and find agency.

While this crisis is creating disruption on an unprecedented scale, it also offers the opportunity for innovation and creative re-thinking of old paradigms. Seeking new ways of looking at our structures and programs doesn't mean abandoning the integrity of who we are as a District community. I think there will be opportunities to put to use some of the adaptations made in response to covid and use them to better serve our students.

The fiscal impact will be a challenge in the coming months. There is no doubt that the budget decisions will be difficult and that cost cutting measures are likely. I would not take any action without extensive deliberation and thoughtful consideration for all stakeholders impacted by such a decision.

6. Do you think there are any inequities in the funding of high school sports?

I think there should be transparency into how the athletic funding is distributed. This should be an easy detail in the budget to review and if it is not, that is a problem. Of course there should be equity across all the sports and across boys and girls sports.

7. In the face of the national outcry over race and colonialism, should the mascot 'Padres' be retired?

I think this is a conversation worth having but it needs to be a thoughtful conversation and involve, again all the District stakeholders. No decision should be made without extensive feedback from students, alumnae, parents and teachers. But engaging in this conversation is an opportunity to bring greater awareness and reflect upon race issues and colonialism.

8. Thinking generally about the current board, what grade, A-F, would you give it for advocacy and performance on behalf of each of the following:

Generally speaking, giving a grade involves assessing information or a body of work against a rubric. So without all those components I am hesitant to just throw out a grade as I feel it lacks real depth to the analysis.

9. What initiatives will you champion personally in the next term if elected?

I will champion any initiative that improves student learning and seeks to better meet the diverse needs of all our students. I feel that all Board decisions should be made through the lens of asking how does this serve our students.

Our CUSD District is an integral part of our greater community. One idea I have that I would like to bring to our District is to create a more formal, robust and active alumni network. This would help to facilitate connections between past students and parents, current students and parents and the community at large. Such networks can serve to galvanize more active district engagement across these groups, utilize brain trust and and create opportunities for mentorship and job and career networking.. During this crisis we are currently in, such a network could help enlist recent alum who are home from college in supporting our current students and parents through tutoring childcare etc.