

Candidate Name: Liz Block

1. As a member of the school board, what will you do to improve outcomes for the children of West Contra Costa? (200-word limit)

As a Trustee, I will continue to work to ensure that the board talks about teaching and learning at every meeting. There is a strong correlation between the focus of the school board and academic gains. Currently in WCCUSD, we are often talking about topics unrelated to teaching and learning and tend to be more reactive than proactive about what we discuss. As a school board member, I will continue to work to ensure that we are a data driven district. Towards this end, we must write School Board policy that requires quarterly presentations of data with the Board. As GO has learned, promises are not enough from a district that only pays lip service to data. Teachers need to receive more time to work in grade level teams to look at student work and progress. These meetings should be loosely but unfailingly monitored and structured. Board members need to ensure that budget decisions reflect a priority on teaching and learning. We need better articulating from Preschool to K, Elementary School to Middle School, and Middle School to High School. Additionally, we need to oversee changes in the teacher evaluation process and usher in student evaluations of teachers.

2. How do you plan to gather feedback and input from students, families, educators, and community members when making important decisions? (200-word limit)

Direct communication with stakeholders is the best way to gather feedback. This can happen in emails, phone calls, public meetings, school board meetings, school visits, grocery store chats, picnics. Both informal and formal meetings are important because they provide different opportunities for sharing. Important information gets shared in emails and phone calls and I pride myself in being the one board member who returns messages. I appreciate being able to hear our community voice in board meetings, and on Board Committees. Board Committees provide excellent opportunities to hear information in detail and hear stakeholder feedback in specific areas. Classroom visits during the school day are equally as important as attending public events. Another useful form of stakeholder feedback comes to us in the form of survey data, attendance records, parent participation rates, and test scores. Trainings, such as recent union meeting in San Diego give time to hear from specific employees and improve communication.

3. How would you work to establish and maintain a healthy team culture among school board members? (150-word limit)

Positive relationships among school board members contribute to better decision making. The Board needs to reinstitute many previously used strategies for

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maintaining positive relationships. We need more frequent board retreats. This year, we have been having study sessions rather than Board retreats. Study sessions are extremely important but we still need school board retreats. We haven't had a retreat in almost a year. Weekly 1-1 meetings with all trustees helps to maintain positive feelings, even when trustees disagree on issues. As always, it is essential to have frequent communication between the president and each school board member. The school board has written protocol for meetings which should be reviewed at every meeting. Limiting grandstanding in meetings and working together as a team is essential.

4. What role does data play in your decision-making process? What would you expect of district staff, contractors, and school sites in terms of data use and how would you hold them accountable to data use in decision-making? (250-word limit)

Data use is essential for monitoring student progress. Nationally Standardized student progress data is one important way to gauge school performance. Local Student benchmark testing can provide even more information, that can be used immediately to impact teaching. At other times, data from student work samples or teacher made tests provide the kind of information we need. I expect all district schools and contractors to look at student data and to report progress data at regular intervals during the school year or contract. Data that reveals that some students are significantly below grade level would give the opportunity to do some preteaching for students who need more help with underlying skills or do better in a small group. Sometimes testing shows that a concept needs to be retaught to the entire group.

We also need to look at data on suspension, student absenteeism, teacher absenteeism, and teacher experience at regular intervals. This information will contribute to a positive culture and maximize learning opportunities. Data from a parent/staff designed questionnaire could be valuable data for parent outreach. The superintendent needs to require principals to turn in specific student progress data three times per year, no exceptions.

5. Currently in WCCUSD, only 49% of our graduates are eligible to apply for UCs and CSUs. How will you support efforts to close this achievement gap in college readiness and college eligibility rates within our district? (250-word limit)

These percentages represent failure of our educational system. We need a multifaceted approach to address this failure. We need to identify and address children's academic weaknesses earlier, when children first enter school. We need to start informing parents and family members about college requirements in fifth grade so that students and parents can make sure the right courses are taken in middle school to keep them on track for graduating with eligibility. Students and families

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should not be hearing about course requirements for the first time in High School. We need to provide better teaching, every hour of every day. Intervention needs to be provided for students who are in reach of grade level, not only for students who are significantly behind. Fairer discipline processes are needed to establish a feeling of trust in our students.

6. What have you done to lay the foundation for a successful candidacy? Speak specifically to fundraising, campaign staff, field preparation, and key endorsements. (150-word limit, do not count key endorsements against your word limit)

I have been meeting with supporters to plan my campaign. I am writing to over 100 people who contributed financially to my last campaign to ask for their donations. I developed a letter describing my accomplishments in my first term, including, teacher raises, teacher housing, increase in transparency, investigation of our bond program, hiring a new Superintendent, increasing trust and morale of staff, healthy relationships with all Union leaders, and continued push for the use of data to monitor student progress. This description will be sent to my previous contributors with requests for continued support. I am reactivating my campaign website to officially kick off my candidacy. House parties with small groups of supporters are planned for August. I confirmed support with previous endorsers and am discussing new endorsements. The campaign will take resources: people, finances, and time. I am planning my strategy for reaching voters via phone calls and...