

NEWS LITERACY

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Voice of San Diego SUHSD Candidate Questionnaire

Responses Received by 16 of 21 Candidates running for seats on SUHSD school board.

The following candidates **did not** submit responses:

Burt Grossman, Area 1 Candidate

Arturo Solis, Area 1 Candidate

Derrick Roach, Area 4 Candidate

Marcelino Martinez, Area 5 Candidate

William “Bud” Mcleroy, Area 5 Candidate

South Bay community members worked with News Literacy Program Manager Bianca Bruno to come up with questions. All Candidates were asked the following questions:

1. What is your interest/ intent in serving on SUHSD board?
2. What background or experience do you have that qualifies you to be a SUHSD board member?
3. What do you think is the biggest problem in the district and how will you commit to solving it?
4. How will you interact with and respond to the public/community? If a resident lives in a different geographic area than where their child goes to school, how will you respond to them?
5. Will you commit to a forensic financial audit of the district?
6. Define transparency and what it means to you. Give an example of how you will be transparent as a board member?

VOICE OF SAN DIEGO SUHSD CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

SUBMITTED BY: JEROME O. TORRES, CANDIDATE, DISTRICT #1

1. What is your interest/intent in serving on SUHSD board?

Truthfully, I felt compelled to run. After reading the newspapers these past several months about the extent of corruption and dysfunction in Sweetwater UHSD, I could not stop thinking about how the district's students, parents and employees were being abused by this outrage. Public education has been my passion in life. I strongly believe that my education, experience and expertise will greatly benefit the district during this critical period in its history. I'm running for School Board, not because of any political ambitions. Rather, I'm running because I know I can help the district through these tenuous times.

2. What background or experience do you have that qualifies you to be a SUHSD board member?

My qualifications are two-fold: The first, is my extensive professional experience in the public sector. I have served as a Sr. Analyst in four levels of local government: city, county, university and school district. I also have a Master Degree in Public Administration. The second is my experience with child development and K-12 public education which started in Long Beach, California as Board President for LULAC-Headstart, and Founder/President of the Latino Advisory Committee for the Superintendent of the Long Beach Unified School District. I also was a part-time instructor at Long Beach City College where I taught "Introduction to American Government." From 1998 to 2001, I served as the Sr. Policy Analyst for the San Diego Unified School District Board of Education.

3. What do you think is the biggest problem in the district and how will you commit to solving it?

The #1 issue facing SUHSD in the near future is budgetary. Presently, SUHSD is looking at a potentially significant budget deficit by either the end of the current school year or by the end of SY 2016. This is due a confluence of two major factors: 1) the expiration and renegotiation of the current labor agreements; and 2) the district's obligation to increase its funding of the CalSTRS pension liability. These two factors will wipe out the projected mandatory discretionary reserves. One must remember that the current MOUs resulted in a 10% reduction in discretionary funds for books and materials. Like San Diego City Schools, SUHSD will be compelled to devote more monies to salary and benefits at the detriment of other funding requirements. In the meantime, labor unrest will manifest as the labor bargaining units try to recover from past years of no salary increases, etc. This will require exemplary and strong leadership to ensure Sweetwater does not

become San Ysidro. All stakeholders need to have a clear, fully-informed idea of the budget challenges facing SUHSD and take ownership in its resolution.

4. How will you interact with and respond to the public/community? If a resident lives in a different geographic area than where their child goes to school, how will you respond to them?

One of the biggest criticisms I've read about the past Board Members is that they never visited the schools within Sweetwater UHSD. I plan to be a regular visitor to the schools in my district. I want the parents, teachers and administrators to know they have an advocate who will work with each of them to solve their problems. With regard to the second question, it doesn't matter. I'll still work to help them.

5. Will you commit to a forensic financial audit of the district?

YES. That is part of my campaign platform. There is so much distrust among the labor bargaining units with regard to the financial condition of the district that we need to "clear the air" on this vital matter. Additionally, I want a more thorough audit of the Proposition BB and O funds as well.

6. Define transparency and what it means to you. Give an example of how you will be transparent as a board member?

It means that, except for those Board decisions that a legally required to be conducted in closed session, all other decisions will be conducted in public and not clandestinely. The Board meetings will be webcast with translation services in Spanish and Tagalog provided in real time. All current and past policy and financial-related documents will: 1) be made available to the general public free of charge; and 2) posted on the websites of the District and respective Schools. All documents pertaining to students will be translated in Spanish and Tagalog for their parents and provided to them electronically and in print – free of charge.

Adrian Arancibia, Area 2 Candidate

1. I am a product of the district, but more importantly, I'm a father of two girls that will one day attend the district. As a student, I was offered a high quality education that permitted me to attend Cal and later to obtain my Ph.D. I want the same for Victoria and Esperanza. They are my two victories and my hopes. For that reason, I intend to continue my work as an advocate, activist and organizer to make sure that they and all students in the district have a chance to obtain the best public education possible that will allow them a chance at their educational and career goals.
2. I've taught in all levels of education for 22 years. I've taught aspiring teachers at U.C. San Diego and I've taught college classes for the past ten years. I don't believe that there is a better candidate with regards to understanding educational pedagogy and policy on this list of candidates. I've worked as a teacher to allow young students a chance to achieve their goals of attending a four-year university or settle down into a stable job. I see my efforts as part of a larger trajectory of my family. My family which has over 100 years of educational experience. These are experiences that provide students with the learning and motivation to succeed, not only in education, but in life. I am about offering all students this opportunity.
3. The biggest problem facing the district is the issue of trust. The word trustee involves the belief that the community entrusts you with the stewardship of the district. We must make decisions based on proven methods and educational policy, not a quick way of making money. As board members, we must work tirelessly to address the past ten years and still, chart out a new vision of education for all students. Some candidates may point out to how they've actively worked as community members and politicians. I can point out the lives of young students that I've touched. I can talk about young people like Dianna who needed a professor that challenged her but also guided her with mentoring and love. For great education cannot happen without a love. A love for the profession of teaching and a love for making a difference in students' lives.
4. I will attend to the needs of the district. This means I will be willing to listen and account for the needs of all students in our district. In order to do this, I plan to observe, to engage community meetings and to address the needs of teachers. For, in the end, all of us must work with all of our constituents to better the district that offered my family the best of what this country has to offer. That is, a quality education and a chance towards a middle class life.
5. Cost permitting, I would agree to a forensic financial audit. I know that we, as a district can have complete audit (for nearly nothing) done by local entities that will allow us an understanding of how best to move towards both transparency and sustainability in the future.
6. Transparency means two things to me. First, we must act as board members to make sure the entire community knows the dealings and business of the district. Second, I would demand that all board members not take gifts nor vote on issues that they have conflicts of interests in. I would demand that all board members work towards bettering student achievement in the district, not the nepotistic manner of doing business that we've seen over the past ten years.

Bertha Lopez, Area 2 Candidate

1. I have been involved in the South Bay Community for the past 35 years. As a parent of 3 Bonita Vista High School graduates, I understand that a first-class public education system is important in the community's well being. I strongly believe that Parents, Community Members, Business Leaders, Senior Citizens, and Educational Professionals must combine their efforts in educating students. I want to be given the opportunity to serve the students, staff, and parents of the Sweetwater Union High School District.

2. I have taught for the past 38 years in the National School District. I make responsible decisions that impact Student Achievement. I am an individual who is an independent thinker and someone who values fairness and transparency. I have experience in various community organizations, including serving the Chula Vista Elementary School district as a Trustee for 10 years.

3. Student Achievement - Place students first and foremost in any decision made by the board. Have board members become more knowledgeable in instructional practices and current pedagogy. Research staff recommendations for accuracy before voting on an item. Demand curriculum presentations from principals of all schools at every board meeting. Be visible at all sites and establish regular communication with all school staff.

B) Fiscal Accountability and transparency- Demand to have regular financial audits of the district and information be available on the website so everyone can see the results. Create a plan that supports localized allocations of resources. Ensure that all board members participate in a budget workshop for a better understanding on the process of fiscal accountability.

4. Students have always been my #1 priority. If there an issue I will guide the parents in the right direction so they can resolve their concern. Geographic areas should not be a barrier for our students or parents. My role as a board member will be to represent all students and the public regardless of their geographical area. I will direct district staff to focus on the question at hand and use policy to reach and come to a conclusion that will benefit the student.

5. Yes, the district needs to a have a forensic audit from someone that does not have any relationships with any district personnel. The results should be posted on the website.

6. As a board member I will ensure that all students, community, parents, staff and stakeholders have a CLEAR understanding of how a district operates on a daily basis. Involve staff, students and community members in all decision making. Treat everyone with respect and dignity. Allow for community members to interact with the board members and ask questions regarding a particular issue or concern. Hold all staff accountable for their actions without giving preferential treatment to some individuals because they are your relatives. Conduct financial audits on a regular basis and provide information on the website. Make transparent decision and hold people to their obligations with financial responsibilities that are within the policies of the district.

Kevin O'Neill, Area 2 Candidate

1. I will reestablish trust and confidence in both the board and the District for both parents and employees.
I will chart out a course to bring the District back to firm financial footing.
2. I am presently on the Bond Oversight Committee for Sweetwater. I have a financial and construction background.
3. Confidence and financial.
I solve the first by conducting business in the public view and the second by cutting waste and inefficiency. The second by establishing both a reserve fund and a rainy day fund.
4. I am elected by the voters within my area but my allegiance must be to the institution as a whole. I hope to minimize any parochial issues created by the shift to distinct areas. I will make myself available to all who have an interest in the district, business employee, parent, and student alike.
5. I will insist on a forensic audit of all district finances. It is imperative that we find any holes and formulate a plan to fill them. This should be started as soon as the new board is sworn in.
6. All of the district business that can legally be done in public will be. The response to a PRA will meet the spirit as well as the actual requirement under the law in so far as district staff will help the requester formulate and define the information that is being sought. Board agenda language will be understandable and the staffer who is requesting/recommending the action will certify and sign the agenda stating that the information is accurate and complete.

Kevin Pike, Area 2 Candidate

1) The reason that I am interested in running for the school board, is that I am tired of all the scandal and corruption that has plagued this district. The school board should be focusing on the number one issue, educating students. My primary goal is to see that we get back to the basics, educating the students throughout the district, and seeing to it that students and staff are safe in their learning environment. Teachers must have the material they need to educate the students, and the proper facilities to ensure that student's educational needs are met.

2). My background includes a degree from the University of San Diego in Business Administration, and working for the City of Chula Vista for over 30 years. During those 30 years, I worked 6 years as a Recreation Supervisor, where I worked closely with administrators from the district to provide programs in the schools. I then became a Chula Vista police officer for 24 years, where I spent over 12 years working as a School Resource Officer and Detective for the Family Protection Unit. I worked closely with the District Office and Administrators at the high schools and middle schools to ensure that the students were in a safe learning environment. I taught classes in both the elementary school and high school on Gang Awareness and Juvenile Law. During this time I built strong relationships with the Principals and Vice Principals that still exists today.

3). I think that there are several problems that we face in the School District. We need to select a Superintendent, so that we have a leader who can help solve the problems and issues that the district is currently going through. The District Offices and properties is another issue, as is what to do with the current properties that we have. We need to bring back credibility to the School Board and restore the faith of the community and students we represent. We need to take a hard look at the common core that is being implemented into the district and more importantly the curriculum that is being used. As a Board we, along with the new Superintendent, need to establish a vision that has input from the community, so we are all working toward the goal of educating the students. If elected I would work together with the four other board members to find solutions to these problems so that it's a joint effort, not an individual effort like the past board.

4) My philosophy is to have an open door policy with all the residents of the district. I am willing to listen to any issues or problems someone may encounter. I think that Sweetwater was divided into districts, so that everyone will feel represented. If I am contacted by someone not in my district that has a concern, I would look into the problem and let the board member who represents that area know about it as well. Even though we represent different sections of the city, we all need to work together as a board for the best interest of the students.

5). I would be willing to commit to any legal audit that is used to provide information to the public that has to do with any public funds being spent. I think it will be my job to let the people of my district know what we are spending the funds on and where they are going and why.

6). Transparency means being honest, open and accountable. As a board member I would be transparent in letting the people see what I am voting for and why. I represent the community and I want them to know and see what we as a board are doing. I want my community to know what policies we are making and why. The purpose of being a board member is to represent your community and be their voice. The Board must work together for the number one issue, educating the students. It's the people business and they have a right to know what is going on.

1. I became interested in serving because I saw a need for a person of integrity to step forward. I felt the time for sitting back and observing the dysfunction was over. I was especially drawn in because of the new districting and the area of Seat 2 has been my home for the past 32 years. Seat 2 is a short term seat (only two years) because the former trustee was removed as part of a plea deal for wrongdoing. That person is running again. I believe it is time for a fresh start for Sweetwater and I am doing all that I can to make it happen. Now it is up to the voters.
2. I am the candidate with both business and teaching experience. In fact, I have been a business owner, teacher, parent, and taxpayer.
I have owned and operated a business in Chula Vista for 20+ years. Currently, we own and operate four Subway sandwich shops, from Bonita Point to Otay Ranch Town Center. Business has taught me many lessons that would prove to be useful such as sticking to a budget and allocating limited resources for the maximum benefit.
I have been a teacher, and I still think like a teacher. I taught in the Sweetwater district from 1992-2003. I taught all levels of math offered in the district, mostly at Hilltop High. While teaching, I was involved in extra duty jobs that included curriculum development and implementation, textbook selection, and mentoring new teachers. My children went to school in both the Hilltop and Bonita areas and graduated from Bonita Vista High School.
3. The school district needs to get back to the business of EDUCATION. We need to change the old dysfunctional, corrupt culture into one of integrity, respect, and professionalism. One step is to hire a permanent superintendent to be a strong educational leader. Board members and district staff need to demonstrate to the community the way adults should work together in a respectful, professional way. Allocate resources fairly to ensure the best possible educational experiences for all students.
4. I plan to create opportunities for parent and community involvement. For instance, appoint an advisory panel of parents and community members to aid in the selection of a permanent superintendent. Facilitate opportunities for parent, teacher, student, and community input wherever possible. If a resident from another area approached me, I would LISTEN and help in any way feasible. Although the district is divided into areas, each trustee makes decisions that impact the entire district and the entire district must be considered.
5. Absolutely.
6. Transparency is making decisions and the rationale for those decisions as public as possible, whenever legally allowed. One way to be more transparent is to put the District's audited financial statements on a tab on the main district website for easier access by the public. Currently, they are found at fiscal.sweetwaterschools.org.

Richard Arroyo, Area 3 Candidate

- 1. I want to serve on the board to bring back the respect that has been lost because of the pay to play scandal. The board is perceived as corrupt, which negatively reflects on the students, teachers and our community. My number one priority will be students, but teachers will be my next priority. My daughter is a graduate of the district and is a teacher. Although not endorsed by the teachers union, I respect teachers and will listen to all their concerns.**
- 2. I have been representing, mentoring and educating students charged with committing crimes for over 30 years. I encourage my student clients to respect persons and property, to not use drugs, to do well in school, to accept responsibility for their actions, understand what they did was wrong and to not make the same bad decisions in the future. I have a passion for working with youth. I have lived in Chula Vista for over 25 years and have given back to my community and the students of the district through my community service activities as a member of the Chula Vista Rotary Club. I am the immediate past president of the Chula Vista Noon Rotary Club.**
- 3. The misuse and mismanagement of money and corruption by the superintendent and some board members. I have never been investigated by the State Bar, the Bureau of Real Estate nor have I been sued by a client. I do not have a criminal record. In principal, I do support a forensic audit of the district but have some concerns about the cost and the usefulness of such an audit. I will ask the difficult questions and hold the new superintendent, administrators and the other new board members accountable.**
- 4. When I decided to run for the board I immediately began reaching out to the community, teachers, students, and anybody who would speak to me about our district. I have jogged on the treadmill at the Y chatting with teachers and retired teachers about the district. What is going good and what needs to be changed. I will have an open door policy where anybody can meet with me to discuss district issues. I will make decisions not based on my pocket book, not based on any debt to any union or special interest, but after an investigation and analysis to the best of my ability. Any resident of our district, regardless of where their child goes to school, can reach out to me. I will be elected as the trustee for Area 3, but I will be accountable to every district citizen, student, parent and taxpayer**
- 5. YES**
- 6. Transparency to me means being open and accountable to the community. Secrecy breeds distrust. I will encourage the board to adopt a policy of full disclosure except where the safety of any person may be at risk or where there may be a legal requirement prohibiting full disclosure. I have never run for a political office before. I bring integrity and no special interest obligation or perception to the voters. I will take my election to the board seriously and will practice due diligence and complete honesty avoiding even the appearance of any conflict of interest or other impropriety.**

Jim Cartmill, Area 3 Candidate

1. My interest in serving on the board is to continue the reforms I was able to pass as President of the Sweetwater School Board last year which include the most sweeping campaign finance reform in the 90+ year history of our district, increase transparency on our bond program and continuing the focus on maximizing student achievement that saw all of our comprehensive high schools being ranked by U.S. News & World Report in the top 9% of high schools nationally. I also have a desire to enhance our school/career focus to give students an option and working with community leaders and legislators to bring a four year university to the South Bay region.
2. For the first 20 years of my working career, I worked as a coach and youth leadership development director in the Sweetwater District. I have had the unique opportunity to coach nationally-ranked and all-American athletes and worked with thousands of middle and senior high school students during this time period. I served on the National Campus Life Tax force because of my expertise in working with young people. I now run a small business and was named by the California Small Business Association as a California Small Business Owner of the Year. I know what it means to meet a payroll and make sure that budget priorities stay focused on the mission. As a Sweetwater School Board Member, I was privileged to help start the nationally recognized Compact for Success that has nearly doubled the admissions of Sweetwater students to San Diego State University. In addition, As President of the Sweetwater School Board last year, we were recognized with a perfect score for transparency in our bond program by the San Diego Taxpayers Association. During these tough economic times, in my role as School Board President last year, I was able to utilize my ability to build consensus in negotiating a 3 year settlement with all of our employee groups to provide a positive working environment.
3. The public perception of the district. I will commit to solving it by getting the message out that the Sweetwater District continues to be true to its mission: Maximizing Student Achievement. I will build on the quantifiable academic progress to work with our employee groups to get the message out to the broader community that the Sweetwater District is moving in the right direction.
4. I was the only Sweetwater School Board member to vote against geographic voting districts because I believe it will establish a "parochial" approach to district governance - board members that will be focused more on their geographic area than the needs of the entire district. Having said that, I have always had an "open door" policy with the public and held numerous meetings with citizens that had concerns in my office and in the community. Where a student goes to school would not determine the focus I would have of getting their individual needs met and I have demonstrated that during my board service.
5. Yes - This is the commitment I made in my ballot statement: Jim Cartmill passed sweeping campaign finance reform as Sweetwater Union High School District President; Stopped bond fund borrowing; Supports Sweetwater Union High School District forensic audit.

6. Transparency to me means sharing all data allowed by law to be shared with the public either through a request or proactively on the web. We have been honored for our transparency with the bond program because of the extensive reporting we now have on our website. As a board member, the way I would demonstrate transparency is by working to get the information members of the public request and if that is not sufficient to provide district staff and resources to be as responsive as possible to requests for information. As President of the Sweetwater School Board last year, we greatly improved and enhanced the transparency of the district.

Chris Shilling, Area 3 Candidate

1. The reason I am running is because I am a parent of students currently in the district. As a parent with students in the district, I want a district that is focused on the education, achievement, and opportunity of my children. Instead the district has been embroiled in politics focused on the personal agendas of adults. When I am elected I will change this by leading the district in taking the necessary steps to transform the culture of the district so that it is once again student achievement oriented.
2. As the Chairman of the Chula Vista Board of Ethics I have spent years fighting for integrity in government and accountability of our public officials. I am also a Director for a local non-profit and a college faculty member. I hold a master's degree in organizational leadership and I am working on a doctorate in education and leadership. My background has given me extensive experience in leadership, business, and education that uniquely qualifies me to be a board member.
3. The district has many issues; however, I believe the number one overarching issue is that the culture of the district is not learning and student focused. This has created distrust between the district and the community. Until this underlying issue is corrected the district will not be able to move forward in a positive direction and rebuild trust within the community. As a board member I will lead by example and set the tone for the district by ensuring that we hire the right transformational superintendent for the district.
4. I will be open, accessible, and responsive to the public and community. I plan to hold monthly community forums so that I can get input, concerns, and ideas from the community which I can bring back to the district and superintendent and use in my decision making. I believe that this is important for collaboration, communication, and accountability. I will treat everyone equally regardless of where they live or where their children go to school. Everyone deserves the respect of being heard.
5. I fully support a complete forensic audit of all district operations. I have been unwavering in this position and as a board member I will start the process of ensuring it happens on the first day.
6. Transparency means being accountable for operating in a completely open, honest, and communicative manner. When meetings are completely open to the public and follow set rules and procedures, budgets and documentation may be reviewed by anyone in a timely fashion, and decisions are open to discussion and public input, then there is transparency, and there is less opportunity for people to abuse the system for their own personal interests. I want to record board meetings and archive them online, post all financial and other documents online as soon as they are available, conduct a complete forensic audit, and conduct independent financial audits on a yearly basis as ways to improve transparency.



Frank Tarantino, Area 3 Candidate:

1. What is your interest/ intent in serving on SUHSD board?

There are 3 reasons why I am running for the Sweetwater Board:

- I have invested 35 years in the district working both as a teacher and guidance counselor. It saddens and angers me to see that the district has lost its focus. What was once considered an innovative and great place to work, has deteriorated into a “laughing stock” of the state run by individuals who are only concerned about “what’s in it for me” as opposed to “what’s best for students, employees and the community”.
- I have a passion to serve as seen by my involvement in both my community (Chula Vista) and my associations (CTA and SCGA). See resume for specifics
- I know that I am a “change agent”. My people skills and ability to bring people together is a skill that is needed to begin to change the organizational culture of the district. I wouldn’t be running for this office if I didn’t think I could bring about long-needed changes.

My campaign slogan: Let’s put the “**WE**” back in **Sweetwater** sums up both my interest in running and my top priority for the district. It is time we re-position the Sweetwater District as an example of collaborative problem solving, fiscal responsibility/transparency, high academic standards, creativity, open communication, accessible leadership, ethical behavior and the belief that all students can reach their potential.

2. What background or experience do you have that qualifies you to be a SUHSD board member?

I have a Master’s Degree in Counseling and in the Science of Education Administration. I have spent my 35-year career in the education of students of Chula Vista, National City and south San Diego, first as a teacher, then as an administrative intern, and as a guidance counselor until my retirement in 2009. I also have an extensive list of the City of Chula Vista community service, from the Friends of the Chula Vista Heritage Museum to serving as an elected board member of the Chula Vista Elementary School Board (1986-1990). These experiences have prepared me to help guide the district toward a fiscally sound and morally strong future. My collaborative and inclusive leadership style is also a strength I bring to this position during this challenging time.

3. What do you think is the biggest problem in the district and how will you commit to solving it?

The district, under Jesus Gandara and Ed Brand and the “deposed board”, has lost its focus, purpose, and moral compass. I would describe their practices as “grab ‘n go”. For the last 10 years, the district has been governed by an “insiders’ club” of individuals who are interested only in their personal, financial and/or political gain. The needs of students, parents, staff and the community-at-large have taken a “back seat.” The decisions made regarding support of independent charter schools, the elimination of neighborhood school boundaries, the use of Mello-Roos funds to buy iPads without a workable implementation plan, the disposal of district property and the lease/option to buy on a new district office in the EastLake Business Park are short-sighted and will impact the district (and the new district leadership) for many years.

The new SUHSD Board needs to Re-establish **TRUST** in leadership, **TRANSPARENCY** in conducting district business, and **STUDENT-FOCUSED** decision-making.

4. How will you interact with and respond to the public/community? If a resident lives in a different geographic area than where their child goes to school, how will you respond to them?

My campaign slogan: Let’s put the “we” back in **Sweetwater** sums up my vision for the district with regards to interacting with and responding to the public/community. It is time we change things. It is time we take back *our* school district. It is time we re-position the Sweetwater District as an example of collaborative problem solving, fiscal responsibility, high academic standards, creativity, open communication, accessible leadership, ethical behavior and the belief that all students can reach their potential.

Most people will tell you that the function of a school board is to provide direction to the superintendent and take action on various business, personnel, and policy issues. I also believe that an equally important role of a board member is to be accessible to students, parents, employees and members of the community. For me, this function has always been important but it will become even more crucial as the Sweetwater District moves forward with a new board and superintendent. This responsibility involves visiting schools, attending community events and providing opportunities at board meetings for the public to address the board for more than one minute. Board members need to listen to issues presented and then subsequently bring those concerns and viewpoints into Board discussions and decisions. Furthermore, it is important to change the meeting venue when topics of “more importance” are on the agenda so that all who are interested can be accommodated, comfortably, within the meeting site.

As a Board member, there are things that I can implement as an individual (ie: accessibility) while other changes may need the majority of Board members to implement. On a Board, the real power is generated through relationships and personal connections established with other

Board members. I have the skills to work with people to “move” those things that require decisions by the majority of Board members.

In terms of the question **If a resident lives in a different geographic area than where their child goes to school, how will you respond to them?** will be new “territory” for the in-coming board. This election is the first time that trustees are elected by area. I believe that the new board must come together and decide on how such issues are to be handled. Whatever decision is reached, there needs to be agreement by all board members to follow district protocols (if any) and ensure consistency and fairness throughout the 5 Trustee Areas.

5. Will you commit to a forensic financial audit of the district?

Yes, I will ask for a forensic audit of all district financial dealings. A forensic audit will not only examine and evaluate the district’s financial information for use to provide assessments of areas of operational weakness, internal control deficiencies, and methods to prevent fraud or malfeasance but also uncover matters relating to fraud, asset misappropriation, compliance violations, accounting irregularities, vendor fraud and economic extortion/bribery.

If you look at the websites and campaign literature of all candidates, most of us are calling for such an audit (even those who have served on the “deposed board” are now calling for such a practice). The question which most candidates are “silent on” is: What do you do with the information once gathered?

According to the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, fraud is committed by individuals who have a higher level of authority. The majority of fraud was committed by those working in the accounting, purchasing or customer service departments, as well as those in sales and/or executive or upper management. Will the district pursue civil and criminal legal action against individuals if such fraud is discovered? Will the board implement new internal controls to eliminate current operational/internal control weaknesses (if any)? Will a system of “checks and balances” be implemented to ensure that these practices (if any) don’t occur again? My answer to all these questions is YES.

6. Define transparency and what it means to you. Give an example of how you will be transparent as a board member?

Transparency, implies open communication, and accountability. Transparency is operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed. I believe there are 3 components to “transparent operations”: information disclosure, clarity and accuracy in communications with stakeholders. Transparency is used as a means of holding public officials accountable and fighting corruption. When district meetings are open to the press and the public, its budgets available for review by anyone, and its laws and decisions are open to discussion, it is seen as transparent, and there is less opportunity for the authorities in charge to abuse the system for their own interests. Community members and employees of the Sweetwater UHSD have recently complained that the district has made important decisions “behind closed doors” with intentional “modifications” in disclosure, clarity and accuracy to accomplish “personal” objectives of the superintendent and deposed board members.

My priority, when elected, is to work to create an engaging, respectful, trusting organizational culture. The key to this outcome is to establish two-way communication--providing opportunities for all parties to strategically listen and communicate our respective messages in honest, meaningful conversations with each other—to learn, to grow and work together. Does this mean that **all** input will be reflected in decisions made? No. That is not realistic. Does that mean that **all** district business will be conducted in public? No. There are certain requirements of the Brown Act which precludes public discussion of certain personnel/litigation issues. I can guarantee, however, that all decisions not governed by the Brown Act will be discussed in public with input, from the community, honestly considered. It is my intent that decisions rendered will be those that do honor to our working relationships with all Sweetwater District stakeholders while respecting the fiduciary responsibility the district has to the community it serves and the students it educates.

Valley P. Coleman, Area 4 Candidate

1. What is your interest/ intent in serving on SUHSD board?

To eliminate crooks that hold office now.

2. What background or experience do you have that qualifies you to be a SUHSD board member?

What experience do you need, but common sense and being able to work with people.

3. What do you think is the biggest problem in the district and how will you commit to solving it?

To stop wasting money on building newer buildings when your already remodeling older ones.

4. How will you interact with and respond to the public/community? If a resident lives in a different geographic area than where their child goes to school, how will you respond to them?

Having an open mind when speaking to anyone. If a parent believes their child can get better educated they should be able to go to a different area.

5. Will you commit to a forensic financial audit of the district?

Audit for sure! Find out about our finances.

6. Define transparency and what it means to you. Give an example of how you will be transparent as a board member?

Being honest and open. I will speak in plain English " yes means yes" – "no means no"

Tino Martinez, Area 4 Candidate

1. My interest in serving on the school board is to be the voice of Castle Park and San Ysidro. I will see that students on our campuses are given equal opportunities students on the East Side have. I will make sure that the Art and Music Programs we still have remain. And I we will protect our students over politics with every vote I cast. Although our State adopted it, I oppose the Common Core Curriculum.
2. Since 1965 when our father came to live in Castle Park, my six siblings and I all graduated from the SUHSD. My youngest currently is a ninth grade AP student in the District and want the best for her. I will bring a backbone to the board and stand up for what is right for the students and future of my community.
3. The biggest problem in the district is the misappropriation of funds. From touching our Mello Roos fund to using Prop money to buy a new district office. I will solve this simply by respecting the voters' vote. Not taking from what doesn't belong to us. Keeping the public involved honoring The Brown Act.
4. I look forward to being an ear my community can count on. I invite my community to reach out to me via Email, social media and even letters. I will make it a priority to respond to every concern. It doesn't matter the area they belong to, we are one body.
5. I demand a forensic financial audit of our district's past and present deals. We have to know what damage has been done so we could control our future financial stability. If we missed any indictments, let's bring all to face justice. I want to work together to create better checks and balances in our district.
6. Transparency to me means being genuine and able to relate with the people you represent. Being a person who demonstrates leadership through honor and is never self-gratifying. These are the values I will hold as a member of the board.

ELECT
FELIPE NUNO

SWEETWATER UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOARD OF TRUSTEES (AREA # 4)

"YOUR VOICE FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN"

Questions for SUHSD Candidates:

1. What is your interest/ intent in serving on SUHSD board?

R.- My interest or intent is simple and pure: "I am looking out for the best interests and success of all the students in the District". I am not representing any particular group or party. My only representation is that of our community and it will be an honor to be their voice and to fulfill their wishes in the District.

2. What background or experience do you have that qualifies you to be a SUHSD board member?

R.- I have been involved with the District for over ten years but more so directly in the last six years. I have attended many board meetings. I was the past president for two terms for the (DAC) District Advisory Committee and I am still attending the meetings. I am also part of the (DELAC) District English Learners Advisory Committee. I was part of the School Site Council for four years at San Ysidro High School. I have attended many educational conferences with the District such as CAFE, LCAP, LCFF, Common Core, and I have been part of many more committees within the District. I am a parent whose children are attending the school District.

3. What do you think is the biggest problem in the district and how will you commit to solving it?

R.- Transparency, Integrity, Honor, Courage and Commitment. The Board has been tainted by the lack of these essential traits. If

leaders do not abide by these traits, then they do not deserve to lead us. My intent is to lead by these traits and to encourage my peers to do the same.

4. How will you interact with and respond to the public/community? If a resident lives in a different geographic area than where their child goes to school, how will you respond to them?

R.- First I would like to find out why their child is going to a different area than where they belong. If it is because the parents believe that the other schools are better than the one in their communities then I would challenge them to help me change that. I want parents to become part of the solution in improving their own schools in their own communities.

5. Will you commit to a forensic financial audit of the district?

R.- Absolutely! At one time I was part of a District committee to resolve budgetary distributions. But I was not a board member to make the final decision or decisions. A forensic financial audit will bring more a transparency to everybody in the community. I will be very much in favor of it.

6. Define transparency and what it means to you. Give an example of how you will be transparent as a board member?

R.- Transparency is total honesty and clarity of all my actions and decisions. If in the future I have to vote for something that is not popular but in my conscience I know is the best thing for the students, then I will vote with my conscience even though it might not be the most popular thing to do and I will divulge all the necessary information to the public as to why I am voting that way. I will be open to be contacted or approached by any member of the community because I am fully aware that I am a public servant. That is being transparent.

HONOR

COURAGE

COMMITMEN

Nicholas Segura

Candidate Sweetwater Union High School District Area 4

What is your interest/intent in serving on SUHSD board?

I have a vested and personal interest in serving on the SUHSD Board because I have a son currently enrolled in the 7th grade and a daughter who will start in the SUHSD district next year.

What background or experience do you have that qualifies you to be a SUHSD board member?

Other than being an active and concerned parent and a proponent of high quality public education, I have ample experience that qualifies me to be a SUHSD board member:

- Vice Chairman of the Proposition R Oversight Committee for Southwestern College
- Served on the School Site Council (SSC) at Rohr Elementary for 2 terms
- Experienced in negotiations on collective bargaining agreements
- Former member of the Board of Directors at the San Diego Electrical Training Center

What do you think is the biggest problem in the district and how will you commit to resolving it?

In addition to overcoming the recent political scandals brought on by the former Board and ensuring integrity and transparency for district funds and activities, I believe the biggest problem is education inequality. I would like to ensure that resources are more fairly distributed throughout the district. Every student should have access to strong opportunities and a chance to shoot for the stars and receive a high quality education, regardless of their community's socio-economic environment.

How will you interact and respond to the public/community? If a resident lives in a different geographical area than where their child goes to school, and how will you respond to them?

I value public input and community outreach, and I would make myself available to meet with the community at individual school sites and listen to concerns and discuss options to resolve problems.

Some of our students live outside of our geographic area and are enrolled at our local school sites with an inter-district transfer. I value the opinions and perspectives of all persons and communities connected to our district, including parents of inter-district transfer students.

Will you commit to a forensic financial audit of the district?

Yes – transparency, integrity, and accountability are paramount to our duties for our students and for the district!

Define transparency and what it means to you. Give an example of how you will be transparent as a board member?

Transparency means being open and accountable with the public on decisions being considered by the Board. Our discussions and deliberations should be conducted in a public forum so that our stakeholders are better engaged and can see our thought process.

My purpose for being on the board is to improve the quality of our education for all students. My actions and considerations will always be centered on 'what is best for our students.' As such, students and our community stakeholders should have access to deliberations, budgets, and documents pertaining to our actions as board members. Transparency and accountability is very important given the political scandals of the previous Board, and SUHSD has a long way to go to build back the public's trust as every action will be scrutinized. I will always maintain the highest level of integrity and transparency, and be open and honest for the best interest of our students.

Paula Hall, Area 5 Candidate

Q. 1 answer: I intend to bring ethical leadership to the SUHSD Board of Trustees, and represent our students, families, educators and staff and communities making decisions that include the input of all stakeholders and that will provide our students with the best educational opportunities, equitably.

Q.2. answer: I am an Educational Budget Analyst and have worked in finance for large urban school districts for over thirty years. My children have been in the SUHSD schools, I am a parent who has been trying to be the voice from our area (west of 805) for the past few years because our schools have been neglected.

I have also been active involving other parents from different schools so they understand the decisions tied to programs and finances, and what they must question and what they must provide input on.

Q.3. answer: Ethics and Equity are the biggest problem.

The interim superintendent has been making a start on bringing ethical leadership, and that will start us on healing so our schools can focus on the business of education and not politics or defending themselves from corruption.

Q.4. answer: I would be entrusted to make good decisions for all of the District, and part of that is being out in the community to hear and see what is going on, to listen to all stakeholders, and to be educated on the issues. It's the only way to transforming from negative to positive for all.

Q.5. answer Of course, I won't expect any candidate to oppose such an audit, but in case you are unaware, the Interim Board and the Interim Superintendent to their credit, have already initiated a forensic audit and it's being conducted right now. A team from the State has been brought in FCMAT, and they are experts. I have experience with such an audit and understand what it means and what to expect from them. When completed I will review the whole process and documentation and will decide then what further action would be necessary.

Q.6 Transparency means you provide detail, not just high level reports, you go out in the community to provide opportunities for input and interaction, and you make informed decisions after vetting fully the information and proposals. This must happen before they are brought as Action Items on a Board Agenda.

Thomas "Tom" Schaaf, Area 5 Candidate

1. What is your interest/ intent in serving on SUHSD board?

To be part of getting the District back on track and out of politics and returning the communities trust in the actions of the District. The first major goal is to hire the best Superintendent to represent and lead the District. I hope to work with the new board and District to assure accountable spending practices and get the focus back on students by supporting the schools and teachers. I will work with the communities the District serves to find out what they want and need, and then help to set the policies to reach our future vision for our students and communities needs.

2. What background or experience do you have that qualifies you to be a SUHSD board member?

I worked throughout the Sweetwater District for over 35 years as both a teacher and administrator. I have served on the Building Design Review Board for Imperial Beach for 15 years and have experience in leadership. I pride myself on being ready for all meetings, and being well prepared. I have been in leadership positions with various community groups, and know how to listen to the public and set goals and help others focus on our tasks.

3. What do you think is the biggest problem in the district and how will you commit to solving it?

The new Board must listen to the communities it serves, and collectively demonstrate they can understand the Policies they are approving. The board should not be a rubber stamp for the Superintendent but understand education, teaching and leadership to make decisions. I will work to stop wasted spending, and get the best value for our students.

4. How will you interact with and respond to the public/community? If a resident lives in a different geographic area than where their child goes to school, how will you respond to them?

I have lived in Area 5 for over 40 years, and have always listened to the public and community when they came to my schools. I will encourage community meetings and local support of our schools; by working together we can do so much more. We as elected board members must follow all current policies and make sure the District is following them. As a board member we should listen to our community members if they have a problem, and help to refer them to the correct help.

5. Will you commit to a forensic financial audit of the district?

Over the last several months the interim Superintendent has requested an audit, plus had a company approved by the board to go through the budget audit line by line with their recommendations. This will be done hopefully for the new board and then we can openly discuss concerns and practices to get the District funding and budget in order.

6. Define transparency and what it means to you. Give an example of how you will be transparent as a board member?

First, the audit and its review to see what position the District is really in with its finances. As part of the Board, we can discuss issues and get them on the agenda for public discussion. I believe the communities of our district need to know about and be involved in how the District works. The

public should know what is going on in their District, not when something is just not right, but with what is right too. An all new fresh board should conduct business openly, with our goal of integrity and honest practices of operations and holding the highest standards for educational practices for every school.