



*Bringing Oakland Together for Our Students*

City Council Candidate Questionnaire 2010

Thank you for responding to this City Council Candidate Questionnaire from Great Oakland Public Schools Information Center.

Great Oakland Public Schools Information Center is a 501c3 charitable organization that provides leadership, education, and information to ensure that all Oakland students have access to excellent public schools in their neighborhood and throughout the city. The GO Info Center supports a coalition of Oakland families, students, teachers, principals, community, and civic leaders united around a positive, student-oriented vision for public education in our city. More than 250 parents, teachers, principals, and community leaders from the hills and flatlands, East, West, and North Oakland, charter and district public schools have endorsed GO's beliefs and vision for improving Oakland public schools.

Your responses to the questions here will be used in candidate profiles published both in print and on the GO Information Center websites. Please be candid, complete, and forthright in your responses, and prompt in returning the completed questionnaire.

You will receive both an electronic and paper version of this questionnaire; we prefer that you return your questionnaire electronically. Completed questionnaires should be signed and returned **by Friday September 17<sup>th</sup>** to:

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## Great Oakland Public Schools Information Center Questionnaire

Name:  Jill Broadhurst	Office Sought:
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**Please answer each question in 250 words or less.**

- Oakland Unified School District has been the most improved large, urban school district in California over the last five years yet, continues to fail many of its students. Only 42 percent of high school graduates in OUSD have taken the A-G courses required to apply to a CSU or UC for college,<sup>1</sup> and this does not take into account the 28 percent of students who drop out in grades 9-12.<sup>2</sup> We are not producing excellent outcomes for all students. What is your vision for equitable public education in Oakland, and what systemic changes will you work toward to achieve that vision?

The success of a child’s education draws from a number of factors: family life, community, school staff, councilors, and school environment. Schools should not be expected to fill-in for the factors that are missing. Youth are more likely to stay in school if they have opportunities that engage them. Quality youth programs that revolve around academics, sports, and social skills while maintaining a homework component will reduce truancy and crime.

- OUSD’s “Options” program allows families to choose which of Oakland’s public schools they would like their children to attend. Students are then assigned to schools based on their preferences and a school’s available openings. What reforms, if any, would you propose for OUSD’s “Options” program?

Everybody wants the best education for children. Equity in education would best be served by strengthening all schools in Oakland. This includes building the supporting components that make a school

successful: an active parent group, an engaged principal, and neighborhood community that fosters relationships with the youth, and potentially a sister school in a different part of town to share learning's and improvements. Furthermore, logistics and transportation issues create opportunities for inequities. The child that has to take three buses to get to school will have a disadvantage to the child that walked three blocks to school, not to mention when social opportunities present themselves.

3. What role should charter public schools play for students and families in Oakland?  
One of the reasons that charters exist is because of the shortcomings of public schools. Having options is always good however; strengthening our current schools will alleviate much of the controversy surrounding charter schools. Charters can also be selective in who they want as students...there can be some equity lacking.

4. What State-level practices and policies hold back the quality of our public schools, and what are your plans to change them?

The way schools are funded via the system of Average Daily Attendance is a major hindrance. Schools need to have income streams that they can count on. Pulling money from schools budgets also inhibits the fiscal functionality of schools. Other state-level practices that hold back the quality are: underfunding our public education and certain facets of the Education Code which specifically look to bump rights for support staff. This does not help build a cohesive community, something vital to raising stable children and support families. The bottom line is that schools need to be better funded at the state level. As a council person I could reach and collaborate with the school board and lobby for change at the state level. On a local level, grants can be sought out to bolster specific programs.

5. Where do you turn for information and ideas about how to improve Oakland public schools?

One of the advantages of living in Oakland is the incredible diverse population and diversity of ideas. In Oakland, we are surrounded by people from all over the world. While, the issues we face today may be new to us, they are not unique. People bring a variety of ideas and solutions to the table. Continual community outreach is a very

important for obtaining fresh ideas. Bringing all stakeholders to the table will ensure all ideas and potential solutions are explored. We are also fortunate enough to live in a community that has an abundance of experts in education. We are surrounded by several prestigious universities: UC Berkeley, Stanford, St. Mary's College, and Mills College to name a few.

6. What will you do to ensure there is an effective, qualified teacher in every OUSD classroom?

-I will partner with school board representative and the principals to make sure that state standards are being met.

-Partner with university education programs to attract new teachers, boost salaries to make us competitive with other districts, support school administrators who then support teachers, strengthen BTSA (new teacher support) programs etc. (More people change jobs due to a feeling of lack of help and support than salary).

-Increase professional development opportunities.

7. Do you support the November 2010 Parcel Tax (Measure L - Oakland Student Achievement, Support and Safety Measure) to increase compensation for Oakland's teachers? Please explain.

Yes I do. As a parent of a child in OUSD and a second to join her next year I understand firsthand the problems. We need to increase teacher's salaries to stay competitive with other districts that pay higher and do not face as many organizational challenges.

8. President Obama is making the largest single Federal investment in education in history via competitive and formula grants. How will you ensure Oakland students benefit from this funding?

-Embark on an aggressive campaign to find identity areas that are eligible for grants.

-We should assemble an excellent grant writing team to go after those grants

-Work with school board to position ourselves to receive maximum benefits.

9. Are there other cities you would look to as models of city-schools partnership and why?

I would look to New York for their consistent desire to model programs based on the student populous and truancy rates. There are

similarities both culturally and socio-economically. Oakland might be able to borrow some of their novel practices including assigning mentors at a ratio of 15:1.

10. OUSD has just released a new strategic framework called “Thriving Students,” in which City Government plays a significant role. How will you make the City a partner in the implementation of “Thriving Students?” What role can City agencies play in developing the Promise Neighborhoods envisioned within OUSD's new “Thriving Students” strategic framework?

Making sure that the priorities of OUSD, such as safe, healthy schools, effective instruction, and college and career readiness are met. I will lead the vision of a healthy, connected, sustainable city and schools. And finally, work with the School Board in strategy and direction to support OUSD’s mission and student population.

11. How do you plan to support public schools and public school students in your District?

Attend PTA meetings when necessary, support fundraising efforts, stay in contact with Principals, possibly holding a quarterly meeting with all stakeholders in the District.

**I attest that the above answers represent my actions and beliefs, are now part of my public record, and may be used by Great Oakland Public Schools.**

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Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

<sup>1</sup> The Education Trust- West. *Oakland Unified School District Education Opportunity Audit Report.2009*

<sup>2</sup> California Department of Education Educational Demographics Office . Dropouts by Grade OAKLAND UNIFIED (0161259) for the Year 2007-08. 2009