

**What is the #1 issue that teachers are dealing with that is hindering academic success in the classroom? What will you do to make sure that the issue is addressed?**

Teachers and staff are burnt out. The pandemic took an enormous toll on so many: trying to teach online without any training on how to do this effectively; managing the mental health of their students (and themselves) coming out of the pandemic; testing and other requirements that take away from their instructional time; many in our community and state trying to regulate their work.

We need to support our teachers and staff, and elevate them as the professionals that they are to help them with burnout and disengagement, so they are ready to teach and support their students. When I was a Cook County physician in Chicago 15 years ago, I was a union leader and learned how my working conditions were the healing conditions of my patients. That's why I know that our teachers' working conditions are our students' learning conditions. I'm proud to have been endorsed in my re-election by all unions representing TUSD teachers and staff, including TEA, AFSCME, and CWA.

During my first term, we increased wages each and every year. I led our district in the proposal that targeted unused Covid relief (ESSER) funds to give each TUSD employee \$7500 in bonuses. I've fought against increases to health insurance premiums. I supported our district in revising its Code of Conduct, a need I regularly heard from teachers and principals during my school visits. We have kept classroom sizes below contracted maxes throughout our district, and I've led our district in finding ways to fund positions that are supporting teachers' professional development and classroom learning.

In a second term, I will continue supporting our teachers and staff so they have the resources, working conditions, and wellness that benefit our students.

**SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

**What is the primary responsibility of a school board member and why do you want the position?**

I'm a parent of three young children in TUSD. My oldest student is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader at Alice Vail Middle School in TUSD, and my twins are 1<sup>st</sup> graders at Lineweaver Elementary School. I've spent my first term on the TUSD Governing Board fighting for the next generation of Tucson kids, including my own, to have the resources and support they need to succeed.

My strengths as a leader – both in my career as and as community leader – are future-focused and vision, results-oriented drive, and collaborative people-centered team-based approaches. I believe my role on the TUSD Governing Board is to use these strengths to help our district evolve to better meet the needs of our students and community.

In my first term on the TUSD Governing Board, we've achieved so much. We changed the culture and narrative of our board and our district to win a resounding 60% community vote for the TUSD Bond last year, which will transform each and every campus of our district. While there is so much more work to do to address academic achievement, we've achieved tremendous growth and improved school letter grades to record highs. We expanded music and arts programs throughout our district, counselors and social workers to address mental health and wellness for our students, and professional development for our teachers. We also lowered administration spending from a peak of 11% a few years ago to nearly 8% and the lowest in Pima County.

I hope that voters give me a second term to continue serving our community, so I can continue helping TUSD succeed and meet challenges head on, and keep TUSD looking towards a vision and future driven by success and improved outcomes for students of all backgrounds.

## **ACCESS**

**Where and how will you get your information about the diverse needs of the district's students, staff and community?**

I'm a family physician, a profession that is built around listening. Through asking focused questions and active listening, I'm able to help my patients determine a diagnosis and treatment plan that meets their needs.

During my first term on the TUSD Governing Board, I have visited schools throughout our district. These site visits are not only fun but very educational for me as I meet with principals, teachers, and students and ask questions such as how the Governing Board can best support them. Throughout my term, I regularly meet with district leadership, union leadership and members, community stakeholders and groups, and others to better understand the needs of our diverse district, and will continue to do so in a second term.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

**How should the District be held accountable? Have there been instances that you know of where it has not been transparent?**

Holding the TUSD administration accountable is part of each and every meeting I have with our TUSD Superintendent and other members of district leadership, including

ensuring promises are kept, stakeholder input is sought, and important compliance needs are met.

Being accountable with the budget, for example, was a major goal of my first term on the TUSD Governing Board. I used my experience as a business leader and finance background, including an MBA from the U of A Eller College of Management, to push district leadership to be more accountable and transparent with our budget. As a result, our district developed 5+ year projections for the district budget. Now, whenever the district and the Governing Board makes any major decisions, we can transparently see the effects not just for the current budget, but for years to come.

I disagree with my colleagues and others that public shaming of employees is the same as holding our district accountable. These are human beings who, yes, are not perfect and make mistakes, but do not deserve to be treated disrespectfully in public, especially when facts are still being gathered.

In a second term, I will continue to develop my relationship as a Governing Board with the main employee that reports to the Governing Board, our Superintendent, and ensure that the Superintendent is not only held accountable, but has the resources and support to be the most effective leader and steward of our district possible.

**What do you think the District's relationship with its internal auditors should be? Be specific.**

TUSD is unique in having an active Audit Committee and having an employed Internal Auditor. The Internal Auditor reports to the Governing Board and helps support our role in ensuring our district meets standards and complies with regulations. Before being elected to the TUSD Governing Board in 2020, I spent over 2 years as a community member on the TUSD Audit Committee.

In my first term on the TUSD Governing Board, I led our district in rewriting the charter of the Audit Committee to focus its work to support the Internal Audit and the work of the Governing Board. I have engaged regularly with the Internal Auditor and supported her role in our district. In a second term, I will continue to support the work of the Internal Auditor to ensure our district is meeting its obligations and striving for excellence in financial standards and compliance.

**A recent KOLD news investigation has shown that an "audit finds TUSD failed to fix chronic absenteeism." What specifically is the district doing to address the ADE findings? What is the district doing to address the fact that there is chronic absenteeism in TUSD?**

Chronic absenteeism is a major problem in the post-Covid education world. If students aren't present and ready to learn, they are missing out on key days of instruction.

Unfortunately, the news story was not thorough and failed to recognize the work of TUSD's Dropout Prevention Program, MTTs coordination teams that work with at risk students to develop comprehensive plans to support their needs, and other programs in our district trying to help students that are missing school for one reason or another. I have also supported TUSD's expansion of mental health and addiction resources for students to tackle underlying issues affecting absenteeism and being ready to learn.

## **ACHIEVEMENT**

**How can TUSD increase achievement for all students? How would you close the achievement gap between the highest and lowest performing students? What is the ideal learning environment for students? What are areas where you would like to expand curriculum or opportunities?**

My profession of medicine has led the way on evidence-based practice – doing what data show work instead of what feels like the right answer should be. I have pushed for a major cultural change to do this for our students.

For example, I led to create a Budget Advisory Committee made up of community leaders and members, school leaders, and front-line staff. This committee has reviewed the best available evidence to address district needs and resources on issues such as classroom sizes, improving literacy, and more.

I would continue addressing achievement gaps by supporting programs that have the best data behind them. When addressing literacy, we know that an evidence-based curriculum, effective professional development and support of teachers, and small-group instruction are some of the most effective ways to help students grow. In my first term, we have adopted new curriculum standards, approved expansion of professional development for teachers, and supported positions that can provide individualized attention to students who are struggling.

In a second term, I will continue to push our district to find ways to implement these evidence-based programs.

I will also push for expansion of CTE and other technical education programs. While so much of our focus is preparing students for college, we need to also support students who are not going to college and help them prepare for careers of today and tomorrow. As a family physician, I'm especially excited for the recent opening of the TUSD / JTED Health and Medical Careers campus and would like to expand these programs even further.

## **DESEG**

**What do you know about the decades long desegregation case against TUSD? Without court oversight, how should the district manage the desegregation money it still receives? Where should oversight of that process come from?**

I've spent my career as a family physician working to address health equity and access for communities of color, whether as a County physician in Chicago 15 years ago, or my work this past decade in Tucson working with underserved patients. Addressing educational equity and access has been a focus of my time on the TUSD Governing Board, ensuring all students have the opportunities and resources to succeed regardless of race and zip code.

While court supervision of desegregation has ended, the work to address disparities and equity continues. The oversight of this work now lies with the voter-elected Governing Board.

I have been working with TUSD leadership to better involve our community to support TUSD's efforts addressing disparities among TUSD students. With community and stakeholder input, we can best determine the goals and outcomes we want to accomplish by our desegregation dollars, and then utilize evidence-based and data-driven approaches to achieve these goals.

## **TEACHERS and personnel**

**Is the district adequately staffed? What is the best way to make sure the district, from custodians to teachers to substitutes, is well staffed?**

We need to recruit and retain more teachers and staff in every department in our district. I'm proud that vacancy rates this school year are down significantly from their pandemic peak.

And I'm proud to have been endorsed in my re-elections by all unions representing TUSD teachers and staff, including TEA, AFSCME, and CWA.

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In a second term, I will continue supporting our teachers and staff so they have the resources, working conditions, and wellness that benefit our students.

**How should the district support the physical and mental health of the students?**

Students are ready to learn when their physical and mental health needs are met.

After TUSD received the settlement funds from our lawsuit against Juul and Altria, I led the Board in developing a task force made up of district leadership and experts in our community in addiction medicine because I didn't want the money, approximately \$9m, to be squandered. Instead, I wanted it to directly address substance use, mental health, and other behavioral needs for our students. The Governing Board approved the task force's proposal to fund navigation of students that are struggling with community resources.

I supported using ESSER (Covid Relief) funds to expand social work, counselors, and other positions throughout our district, and came up with the proposal to move positions to our Medicaid funding stream (billable services) to continue services after federal funds went away.

**Some school districts are looking to ban cell phone use in classrooms. Do you know what the TUSD policy is regarding cell phone use? Do you believe it is effective? Be specific.**

My middle schooler doesn't have a cell phone at my home. As a physician, I know the research out there about the harms that cell phones / overuse of screens have on developing minds (let alone with adults).

I would support policies that would significantly limit access to cell phones during the day at our schools. Sabino High School is trialing this currently and I'd like to use feedback from students, parents, and teachers to see how to address this district-wide.

**Are there TUSD policies in particular that you would like to change or propose? Be specific.**

I am currently working to revise our climate sustainability policy. This is a student-led initiative. The Arizona Youth Climate Coalition (AzyCC) reached out to me during the summer of 2023 to discuss the climate crisis, and their need for a sustainable future. I've worked with them, other community members, and staff to draft a proposal that would be one of the nation's most comprehensive sustainability frameworks of any school district.

As we work to educate and grow the next generation of Tucson children, we need to make sure they have a planet that is livable. If this policy passes, TUSD will be doing its part to make sure all our children have a sustainable future.