

1. *What do you think are the biggest challenges currently facing our public school and what are your plans to address them?*

What I see as most urgent is especially urgent because of the pandemic. We will need to deliberately and carefully address the opportunity gaps that will surely be heightened for our most marginalized students. We will have students who will have had every opportunity to access education, with structures in place at home to support it, and we will have students who will have had obligations that pulled them away from school - work to support the family, childcare for younger siblings, an environment non conducive to learning. The second part of this is that we are facing a historical crisis with the power associated hate that's surfacing around the country. White supremacy in congress, anti-trans bills, rhetoric and propaganda that are empowering a dangerous voice. Here in Oregon, many white people will say "this is an LA problem, this is a Minneapolis problem, this is an NYC problem". Now, everyone knows that's not true. And I think it has to be addressed, right away, deliberately, carefully, with intentional action steps that call every stakeholder to the table, and protect and ensure the educational environment for our BIPOC students is safe, fair, and equitable.

2. *What is your definition of equity and what is its importance in education?*

Equity in education means adjusting systems that are designed generally (general systems do not meet the needs of every kid) in order to ensure that every single kid has the same access to high quality education. Equity plays a role in all aspects of the school day, typically impacts our underrepresented students negatively. If a district maintains equity of practice there are many places where one can see the work. Take behavior for example... Zero tolerance is common practice. You steal a sandwich from a peer, you get XYZ. But, what if a student isn't being fed at home at all? What if they're hungry and they steal the sandwich because they're hungry? It is certainly still wrong, but should their consequence be the XYZ? Restorative Practice brings equity into the conversation. It asks the question "What does this student NEED" and then ensures there is a plan that should alter the behavior.

Let's look at equity in academics. In Philomath School district, let's say there are zero students of color enrolled in an AP course at the high school, AND/OR 100% of our students that are English Language learners are enrolled in some sort of alternative classroom/online environment separate from their peers. This means that we have a specifically marginalized group of students that DO NOT have the same access to education as their peers. And this is a systemic failure, what about our systems is denying these students an opportunity to advance in the same way their peers might be?

*Question 2 continued:*

Building equity is hard work, and needs to be data driven, and it does not mean it's the same for every kid, it means the system adjusts to meet the unique needs of every kid. It can be subtle, in elementary the majority of stories read to students are stories that feature white characters. Students of color are not seeing themselves as heroes, main characters or "the self" in the story. In math curriculum, many story problems lack relevance to students who wouldn't fit into its publisher's definition of "ordinary" and that can have incredible impact on how they do in school. We all disengage when we lose interest, we can start ensuring our classrooms represent our ALL of our students.

There is real equity work moving in Albany. I see it as a parent, and I see it as a partner in my role as chair to our district for the Regional Racial Equity group, and as the district begins to do this work hurdles arise in our community. I realized, there is a single place where I can take my experience as an educator, my feelings as a parent, and my knowledge and beliefs in regards to equitable education, and that is, to run for school board. When I was teaching at South, my first couple of years I taught a Fundamentals of English class to seniors. There is a unit where we work on resumes and career based writing and we spend some time in a computer lab. In these classes there are often 10 or 11 students that are in special education classes, and when there are that many there is also typically an instructional assistant that attends that class to provide additional support. In the lab, students were trying to come up with experiences that would be good for a first job on their resume. I remember the IA helping a student, who is receiving services for special education and is also an English Language Learner, and was also Latinx. The IA was helping him and kept asking "don't you have some experience working in the fields maybe?" This is just one microaggression that was a daily occurrence that our students of color experienced on the regular. There was a teacher and coach who told her Mexican student/athlete that, "I don't see you as Mexican. You are one of us". Her intentions were to build the kid up, instead, she demeaned her entire heritage and culture and insulted a part of her identity. Time and time again these moments were tallied in my mind. Here in Philomath, a teacher told a group of students of color that, if they don't fit in, they need to make themselves known to the rest of the students (the rest of the white students). How much of this can a child take in and take on before it starts to impact how they see themselves. With these experiences, and what I know about schools, in the trenches and behind the scenes, I am certain I can represent all of our students.

*3. Describe the achievement gap in your district and what you think can be done about it. How could the Student Success Act Funds be used to address this gap?*

It is clear that there are still systems in place that separate this status quo from everyone else. While this varies depending on the school, there is data that still shows Black and Brown students expelled and suspended in our schools at disproportionate rates. There is still NOT ENOUGH representation of students of color in our extracurriculars/AP courses and areas of leadership. BUT I also have observed that since the district hired Superintendent Goff was hired this is shifting, and it shows.

One thing that is happening, but still needs work is matching the diversity of our students to our staff and allowing the student voices of the underrepresented groups to also be empowered is crucial. When I was at South Albany High School, my first year teaching, it was really interesting. There was no AVID, there was not a lot of representation of students of color in advanced courses, there were many instances of implicit bias between staff and students (I can share more if need be) and there were systems that were designed for the status quo (and still are). My first year was also the Principal's first year there- within the 9 years I/he was there the school completely changed. They hired a person of color/native Spanish speaker to teach Spanish and ELD, and a Spanish for Spanish speakers class and they started AVID. Within that time frame, Latinx students were specifically targeted to close opportunity gaps, empowering them to seek out leadership on campus. The Spanish teacher started MecHa on campus which grew every year, and by my last year, many of these Latinx students were not only leaders in MecHa, but they were emerging leaders in extracurriculars, AP courses, AVID, ASB and we began to see what I can only call this kind of social desegregation in a way ... But, it was one building, and it did not remove the implicit bias that is institutionalized, and that exists intrinsically in many teachers and staff.

This was one school. And I do not have data on this, but I am certain that there are VERY FEW if any Black educators in our district. The district has prioritized hiring Bilingual Educators but there is still a lot of work to be done.

*4. How can schools address the learning needs of students from other cultures and languages?*

The first part is recognizing how educators portray "normal" in their classrooms. What books are our students reading? Who is the curriculum designed for? My 4th grader goes to a dual immersion school in Albany. She is surrounded by teachers and students that belong to different cultures and there is no "HER LANGUAGE" there. BUT because we talk a lot and have discussed representation, and because she's grown up with a white parent and a Latinx parent, she has observed, especially this year that every book she reads is about a white character unless she's learning about Harriet Tubman or studying a story within the civil rights movement. She notices and she asks. This year, they read about the Oregon Trail. She put in the chat (she told me this later) "Why is the little girl scared of Native Americans? Why does she call them Indians. Does she know they're traveling on stolen land"? At first I was like "Oh Gosh, I don't know if the 4th grade teacher anticipated questions like this from a 4th grader" I almost felt bad for a moment. But I asked "And, what did she say"? "She said we'd talk about it later". Neobi hasn't told me if it ever came up again. The point is, our students need representation. They need teachers that look and talk like they do. They need to feel like their heritages and languages are valid and that they aren't "the other". That's a long road. District level collaboration, policy, hiring will ensure that systems are examined, and changed.

*5. What is your vision for the future of education in your community? What would be your role as a school board member in realizing this vision?*

I really feel like if you read my answers to the other questions you can see what I see. Albany is moving in the right direction but it's bumpy and I want to help. Continuing to support EDI is at the center of what will build an amazing place for every kid. EVERY KID. As a board member, I can support that by passing policy, in collective bargaining/negotiations, Supporting the district leaders in their efforts to do this work.