

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

The biggest challenge I believe public schools are currently facing is navigating a path from the COVID-19 pandemic to healing, growth, and thriving. Throughout the pandemic, students across the academic spectrum have struggled to engage in learning, struggled to “keep up” with traditional standards, or struggled to be sufficiently challenged. Pandemic recovery will require personalized and differentiated instruction for all students, enhanced relationships with families, discussions related to what achievement means in the current context, and innovative and feasible approaches to measuring progress toward these goals over time. Our educator workforce will need enhanced support to allow them to effectively teach while also ensuring their own well-being and preventing burnout. Helping our students manage the transition back to social and academic environments will also require dedicated investment in social-emotional learning and trauma-informed care as well as enhanced positive mental health support inside and outside of the classroom. And finally, although many students suffered socially and academically throughout the pandemic, some students fared better related to certain aspects of their lives (e.g., students with decreased anxiety being away from bullying or instances of racism while home; students with chronic illness who were sick less often and thus missed fewer days of school). We need to learn from all of these experiences using traditional and creative approaches to build stronger relationships with students and families and engage their voices in problem-solving and decision-making.

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

My definition of equity is that all students have the resources, opportunities, skills, and supports to thrive socially and academically. The Corvallis School District is serving an increasingly diverse population of students and families and that diversity comes in many forms, including gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, language, race/ethnicity, abilities/disabilities, neurodiversity, socioeconomic resources, and lived experience. Embedding equity across all levels of education can help ensure that district goals are meaningful to students and that all students receive maximum benefit from educational opportunities.

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?

The Corvallis School District has had consistently high graduation rates (87% in 2019, 90% in 2020), however, there are numerous gaps identified by standardized tests showing gaps in social and academic outcomes. Specifically in 2019, graduation rates were 76% for students qualifying for the free/reduced lunch program and four- and five-year graduation rates were 68% and 78%, respectively, for students with disabilities. Alarming, data from the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey (2019) show that a significant number of youth experience unmet emotional or mental health needs (nearly 20% of 8th graders and 30% of 11th graders) with high rates of depression (nearly 25% of 8th graders and 40% of 11th graders) and suicidal ideation. The risks associated with these outcomes are significantly higher for youth who identify as LGBTQ+. Standardized tests at younger ages point to achievement gaps in 8th grade math standardized test scores with 15% of students with disabilities, 19% of students who were ever English learners, 20% of Hispanic/LatinX students, 49% of multiracial students meeting standardized test score benchmarks. And finally, similar patterns are seen in 3rd grade with 34% of students with disabilities, 31% of students who were ever English learners, 33% of Hispanic/LatinX students, 34% of multiracial students meeting standardized test score benchmarks.

These numbers only reflect one type of metric – standardized tests. Public school districts rely heavily on standardized measures and these metrics play an important role in understanding where students may need support. They also have limitations and must be coupled with knowledge of student goals and progress from teachers, counselors, supporting staff members, and families for districts to understand what is and isn't working, for whom, and why. Standardized metrics must also be examined for developmental appropriateness and cultural responsive. How public schools define and assess student achievement will likely be called into question in the coming year, especially following the challenges experienced with supporting academic success through virtual/hybrid/online learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oregon's historic investment in the Student Success Act (SSA) brings new funding opportunities to school districts, specifically to support students in communities of color, as well as funds to community partners. SSA funds can be used to support student academic and mental health, early childhood education and the transition to kindergarten, parent leadership, access to parenting education opportunities, and more.

Question 3 continued:

CSD cannot meet all of the needs of students and families alone and the district does not need to if resources in the community are effectively blended and leveraged. Expanding partnerships between the school district and other local and state-level partners will be critical to address achievement gaps. Knowledge of these programs and deeper engagement with community partners would allow CSD to use district resources strategically while also coordinating with community partners to effectively support families and meet the district's metrics and goals.

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

Addressing the learning needs of students from other cultures and languages requires that districts embed an equity perspective across all levels of education so that students and families become partners in education and goals are relevant, meaningful, and attainable. Students need access to curricula, materials, and role models that reflect their individual and family identities so that they see themselves reflected in their community and for students to value one another as part of the same community. Here are a few examples of how I view equity in action toward the aim of supporting students from all cultures and languages:

- classroom/student level (e.g., differentiating instruction; ensuring that materials and books reflect diverse children and families so that students see themselves reflected and learn to view one another as part of the same community; implementing anti-bias/anti-racist curricula; considering how historical and current events are taught and critically discussed to reflect multiple viewpoints and experiences);
- family level (e.g., offering and recognizing many different forms of family engagement; honoring diverse family forms; ensuring that families have access to materials in their native language that is culturally responsive; building relationships with families to understand their values toward effectively supporting their students and including family voice in developing student and district goals);

Question 4 continued:

- educator/staff level (e.g., providing teacher professional development focused on understanding trauma, historic oppression, the history of race in our state, implicit bias, navigating challenging conversations, and cultural responsiveness in teaching; supporting teachers as they embark on these transformative experiences and addressing unintended consequences that arise, such as a rise in staff experiencing secondary trauma or negative responses from families/community; discomfort of staff engaging in conversations); and
- administrator level (e.g., ensuring assessment tools are meaningful as well as linguistically and culturally valid; recruiting, hiring, supporting, and retaining educators/administrators from diverse backgrounds reflective of our student population, ensuring voices from diverse backgrounds and experiences are valued, even when different from or uncomfortable to the dominant culture; commitment to an ongoing process of listening, learning, reflection, and growth).

Our public schools must be a place where students have equitable access to social and educational opportunities and where all students and their families find belonging in order to thrive during their time in the district and beyond.

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?

My vision for the future of education in our community is a school district where every student feels welcome and safe, physically and emotionally, to engage in meaningful learning. Education should help students develop academic and social skills needed to be critical and reflective thinkers, creative problem-solvers, and caring and compassionate members of society. Education should also prepare students with the skills needed to pursue meaningful pathways beyond K-12 education, including career and technical education, transition programs, post-secondary education through community colleges or universities, ongoing care plans, or other pathways identified by students and their families.

If elected to the School Board, I bring a broad range of experiences across all levels of education related to:

- promoting social-emotional learning and positive mental health;
- building meaningful relationships with students, families, and educators; honoring their voices in decision-making;
- identifying and developing effective assessments and metrics;
- supporting research and data-informed practices and policies with an equity-focused, trauma-informed, and anti-racist lens; and
- building state and community-level systems and partnerships to effectively leverage resources for children, youth, and families.

Question 5 continued:

My role as a School Board member would be to bring these experiences to the table in service to the community I love and call home. I grew up in Corvallis and was a student in the Corvallis K-12 public school system. Now, as a district parent, I aim to give back to our community by strengthening the relationship between students, families, educators, district administration, and the school board; asking questions that help the district understand what is working, for whom, and in what contexts so that decisions are made that take into account data and research, the voices of those impacted, and resources available; and ultimately supporting community thriving.