

## From the Neighborhood Chairs Committee of Lake Oswego

The Lake Oswego School District plays an important role in our community. The Neighborhood Chairs Committee held a forum at our March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting to hear from school board candidates. We provided 14 questions to the candidates and asked them to address 5 of the questions during the forum. Because we were limited in time we told the candidates we would share any written answers provided with our mailing list and the Lake Oswego Review. Below is a brief explanation of the LO school board election process and the written answers that were submitted by the candidates.

The Lake Oswego school board candidates run for specified positions and all positions are 4-year terms. These positions do not refer to areas of town; they are simply designating school board seats by number.

- Lena Elbakshish and Neelam Gupta are running for Position 2.
- Brian Bills is running for Position 3, currently unopposed.
- Kasey Adler and Katherine Lupton are running for Position 4.

The application process is open until March 20<sup>th</sup>. Voting is May 20<sup>th</sup>.

The NCC thanks all 5 candidates for participating at our forum. We acknowledge the time and attention to respond to the questions and we hope it is helpful to the community at large. All candidates are included in the following pages. There is so much useful information here to review as you make your selection for school board. I encourage you to share this attachment with your boards.

## **Questions for Lake Oswego School Board candidates**

### **Section 1 -General topics**

- 1a.** Why do you want to join the school board?
- 2a.** What do you bring to the board in terms of specific skills that you offer?
- 3a.** Compare and contrast the roles of school board members vs. school administrators and staff.
- 4a.** The State of Oregon encourages a workforce that reflects student diversity. As a school board member how do you create policy to adhere to Oregon and Federal guidelines?
- 5a.** What experiences from your life or work have shaped you that you'll take with you and apply in the role should you get elected?
- 6a.** In 10 years, when you see LOSD, what changes do you see from today and why?

### **Section 2 -Specific topics**

- 1b.** What issues have you spoken up most about and used your voice and expertise to influence in your community? What issues have you decided to stay less vocal about and why?
- 2b.** There is a lot of debate in the local paper currently about Oregon being ranked close to the bottom in national proficiency tests. How did Lake Oswego students rank in comparison to students in top ranking States and what is your hypothesis for why?
- 3b.** Will you assure the public that you will stay steadfast in keeping Lake Grove School open in its current location?
- 4b.** What is your position with regard to the Federal Government's directive to remove DEI & CRT from public school curriculums?
- 5b.** What would be your approach to solving the current LOSD budget shortfall of \$12M, and what will you do to prevent deficits from happening again?
- 6b.** Would you support encouraging a plant-based diet in schools?
- 7b.** Would you be willing to include in the curriculum educating kids to understand the effect of their choices regarding food, research labs, puppy mills, etc., and how that all relates to racism, sexism, etc.?
- 8b.** What do you believe should be in the LO school bond proposal and what should not be included?

## **Lena Elbakshish, Position 2**

Questions for Lake Oswego School Board candidates

### **Section 1 -General topics**

#### **1a. Why do you want to join the school board?**

A: I want to join the Lake Oswego School Board because as a parent, I am deeply committed to ensuring our students have the opportunity to succeed. I also believe in the importance of strong, transparent leadership in the district. As a community member, I see a need for community representation; and professionally, as an individual with a background in finance, I see the critical need for fiscal responsibility in our decision-making. I think I speak for the majority of parents in our district when I say LOSD leadership has been lacking in both transparency and fiscal responsibility.

#### **2a. What do you bring to the board in terms of specific skills that you offer?**

A: I bring the ability to analyze school budgets, identify inefficiencies, and advocate for responsible fiscal management. My experience in financial oversight equips me to assess the long-term impact of spending decisions and ensure resources are used effectively. I will advocate for greater budget transparency.

I am focused on ensuring that school board decisions reflect what the broader community wants and most importantly, what our students *need*.

#### **3a. Compare and contrast the roles of school board members vs. school administrators and staff.**

A: School Board member

Role: Set policies, oversee budget, and ensure accountability.

Authority: Governance; approval of budgets, policies, and strategic decisions.

Decision-making: Long-term in nature.

Student Interaction: Indirect; with the focus on system changes.

Accountability: Accountable to the public

School Administrators/Staff

Role: Implement policies, manage daily operations, and support student learning

Authority: Operational; enforce policies, hire staff, and manage

schools

Decision-making: Short-term, day-to-day management of schools and programs

Student Interaction: Direct; work with students, teachers, and families daily

Accountability: Accountable to the superintendent and board policies

**4a. The State of Oregon encourages a workforce that reflects student diversity. As a school board member how do you create policy to adhere to Oregon and Federal guidelines?**

A. As a school board member, I will ensure compliance with Oregon and federal diversity guidelines by developing inclusive hiring policies, monitoring workforce data, and ensuring legal compliance.

**5a. What experiences from your life or work have shaped you that you'll take with you and apply in the role should you get elected?**

A: My finance and accounting background has given me a deep understanding of budget management and fiscal responsibility, which will help ensure smart financial decisions for the district. My commitment to community representation means I will advocate for transparency and inclusivity in decision-making. As a community member and parent I believe in student-centered policies that prioritize academic success, teacher support, and responsible resource allocation.

**6a. In 10 years, when you see LOSD, what changes do you see from today and why?**

A: In 10 years, I see LOSD as a financially responsible, academically thriving, and community-driven district. With better budget transparency and fiscal discipline, more resources will be directed to classrooms, teachers, and student programs. Community engagement will be stronger, with families feeling heard in Board and District-level decisions. Most importantly, LOSD will return to its legacy as a leading District that maintains top-tier academic performance, preparing our students for future success.

**Section 2 -Specific topics**

**1b. What issues have you spoken up most about and used your voice and expertise to influence in your community? What issues have you decided to stay less vocal about and why?**

A: As we're shuttling kids around to sports and activities after school or on the weekend, or at the bus stop in the morning parents find a few minutes to connect and talk about things that are going on in the community and at school. I've had many of these conversations and there is a common theme that comes up repeatedly... why are we doing this if the community doesn't want it? So I see that as my goal in this candidacy, to be the voice of moderate parents that just want what's best for all of our kids. One issue that's causing a lot of frustration amongst parents is the bathroom plan at LOJ. Parents have provided a lot of feedback to the board and voiced their opposition to it, but the board has ignored them. It appears the same thing happened when the same bathrooms were being designed and built at the Lakeridge Middle School and those parents expressed similar frustrations. I believe we should provide bathrooms for all. We should provide adequate gendered bathrooms for the population that want that and non-gendered bathrooms for the population that would like that. We have the ability to do that. The transition to middle school is hard enough on our kids, let's not make it harder on them. At an age when many are already struggling with social and emotional issues, why are our leaders putting this unnecessary strain on them?

**2b. There is a lot of debate in the local paper currently about Oregon being ranked close to the bottom in national proficiency tests. How did Lake Oswego students rank in comparison to students in top ranking States and what is your hypothesis for why?**

A: This is a very hard to answer because score reporting amongst districts and states isn't consistent. There is no single source that will objectively quantify LOSD scores as compared to anything nationally. There is a website called [Thenationsreportcard.gov](http://thenationsreportcard.gov) that allows you to see the results of national test scores but it doesn't offer a detailed comparison against a smaller school district such as Lake Oswego.

Despite that, I believe that LOSD students' test scores are due to active parental engagement, the quality of our educators, strong community support for education, and student access to resources and facilities. But there is certainly room for improvement in LOSD students academic achievement and success both in and outside of the classroom.

**3b. Will you assure the public that you will stay steadfast in keeping Lake Grove School open in its current location?**

A: Absolutely. Lake Grove is our neighborhood school and such an important part of our community. I'm really encouraged to see the community come together to convince this current Board that Lake Grove deserves to maintain its community school and to rebuild in place. I know it wasn't an easy process and without community intervention, I think we could have very easily lost this treasured community school. Now we have to come together again as a community to pass the November no-tax-increase School Bond and improve our schools and rebuild Lake Grove and Forest Hills, two of the oldest schools in our district. .

**4b. What is your position with regard to the Federal Government's directive to remove DEI & CRT from public school curriculums?**

A: Lake Oswego is a diverse community and it's important that we foster an inclusive, respectful environment where all students feel valued and are given the opportunity to thrive. I am very supportive of the DEI curriculum in public schools. With respect to CRT, I believe that this curriculum is more ideological and that it will cause more division. Our children need more unity, not more division. I'd want to review the curriculum more deeply to understand the messaging and how it has been implemented and take feedback from the community to determine if that's really what we want our kids learning. Bottom line, if we focus on academic achievement and progress in an inclusive environment that fosters collaboration, all of our students win.

**5b. What would be your approach to solving the current LOSD budget shortfall of \$12M, and what will you do to prevent deficits from happening again?**

A: I've reviewed the LOSD audited financial statements and the budget forecast quite deeply and also met with our assistant superintendent of Business services, who oversees the reporting of our financial numbers. The most significant takeaway from this review and conversation was that the current Board has not utilized analytical computations to guide their decision making and review the outcome of their decisions. Analytics such as spend per student vs outcome or instructional spend vs administrative spend are not requested by the board prior to decision making. If we are not utilizing this data, then what is guiding the decision making?

I think it's important to note that aside from our PERS funding obligation, our budget deficit does not come from our standard school operations at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

Combining classrooms, reducing electives, and letting go of librarians isn't going to remedy the situation, because that is not what is driving our budget shortfall. The deficit is driven and will continue to be driven by our special services expenditures. Special services on our financial statements mostly reflect support for students with behavioral issues. 20% of our operating budget is spent on special services. I want to highlight that the school district is required to provide these support services. My concern lies with *how* we are providing the services. Six years ago, an outside firm suggested to the board that the Access and Delta programs be decentralized and dispersed amongst all the schools in the district. No financial analysis of the cost per student (at the time) vs the projected cost per student after the change was done. No analysis currently is done to determine that the financial resources we are dedicating to these programs are yielding a supportable and acceptable outcome. The district frequently touts graduation rates as a metric of success, but graduation rates aren't the only statistic that matters. We are now in a position where we need to rely heavily on sound financial analysis of outcomes to guide our decision making.

**6b. Would you support encouraging a plant-based diet in schools?**

A: The district currently provides a daily vegan option for students. I think what deserves our focus is the quality and nutrition of the food we are currently serving to students. It's not fresh and not very nutritious. My children regularly tell me that many of the items are still frozen when they're served.

I am occasionally at school during the lunch break. I see students tossing their food trays with a majority of their food left uneaten. They aren't eating it and they aren't getting the nutrition they need to learn. We need to explore ways to improve the quality of food we are providing to our students so they can focus on learning.

**7b. Would you be willing to include in the curriculum educating kids to understand the effect of their choices regarding food, research labs, puppy mills, etc., and how that all relates to racism, sexism, etc.?**

A: My focus will be on ensuring that our students excel in math, reading, science and the arts. We need to ensure that our children have a strong grasp of core competencies so that they are successful post-graduation.

**8b. What do you believe should be in the LO school bond**

**proposal and what should not be included?**

A: I am so glad to hear that the School Board approved the bond proposal. Our students are in need of updated facilities and I'm glad that rebuilding Lake Grove and Forest Hills have been prioritized and that we are repurposing Uplands as our district's administrative building. Our community wanted this from the very beginning and I'm glad they were finally listened to. I think the process of getting to this point could have been handled much better by our leaders with greater transparency and respect for parents' wishes.



## **Neelam Gupta, Position 2**

### Questions for Lake Oswego School Board candidates

#### **Section 1 -General topics**

##### **1a. Why do you want to join the school board?**

I was appointed to the school board in June 2020. I was honored to be selected out of 24 applicants. I am running for re-election because we have accomplished a lot as a school board, and there is still more to do. Being on a school board is hard work that takes a leader committed to listening, learning, centering student voices, caring for our dedicated educators, creating flexible environments conducive to teaching kids to be college and career ready, and achieving equitable outcomes. School board service is also incredibly meaningful work, and I look forward to another four years of service if I am re-elected.

##### **2a. What do you bring to the board in terms of specific skills that you offer?**

I bring professional expertise along with my lived experiences to school board service.

I am a public health professional with social work training with a 20+ year career devoted to advancing health equity for diverse communities at nonprofit, labor, and advocacy organizations. I am now at the Oregon Health Authority, directing a team focused on improving primary care and workforce. I believe in building bridges to achieve policy and systems change.

I offer my experiences to the school board as a sibling to a LOSD graduate, parent to a LOSD student, person of color, daughter to immigrants from a multilingual family, and more.

I have worked with multiple partners to accomplish shared goals. It's clear how important these particular skill sets and experiences are needed for our local government such as school boards. I provide a valuable perspective and voice to this important elected position.

##### **3a. Compare and contrast the roles of school board members vs. school administrators and staff.**

School boards are locally elected public officials who are responsible for governing a community's public schools. The superintendent is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the school district and managing the administrators, teachers, and staff. The superintendent is supported by school administrators at the district level and at each school. School building administrators partner with our talented teachers and staff to provide instruction and supports to our students so they may learn, grow and thrive.

The main responsibilities of a school board include:

- Employing and evaluating the superintendent.
- Determining the long-range direction and vision of the district described in the strategic plan.
- Establishing policies that direct instructional and support programs.
- Approving the annual budget, along with large contracts and agreements.
- Calling elections on bonds and levies and other funding.
- Ensuring that policies and priorities are implemented.
- Communicating and engaging with school communities.
- Advocating for educational priorities with local and state leaders.
- Recognizing student, staff, and community contributions.

School board members have different perspectives and expertise that come together in speaking as one voice to be champions for students.

**4a. The State of Oregon encourages a workforce that reflects student diversity. As a school board member how do you create policy to adhere to Oregon and Federal guidelines?**

The school board has a goal in the LOSD strategic plan under the pillar Create a Culture of Belonging to develop diverse leadership, teachers and staff members. The school board receives regular updates on the plan and this goal to monitor progress. In the most recent update in October 2024, the school board received in Fall 2024, LOSD staff diversity has increased by 3 percentage points since the 2021-22 school year, with an increase in the diversity of new hires by 7 percentage points.

**5a. What experiences from your life or work have shaped you that you'll take with you and apply in the role should you get elected?**

I have a 35-year history in Lake Oswego and its schools, first as a sibling and now as a parent. I moved to Lake Oswego when I was a teenager. My younger brother started at Lake Oswego High School as a freshman, when I left for college in Los Angeles. His excellent secondary school preparation allowed him to excel, go to college and medical school, and become a practicing physician. This June, my daughter will be the second generation in my family to graduate from Lake Oswego High School.

Whether our graduates decide to work or further their education, I want them to be ready for that next step. The Lake Oswego schools gave that to my family, and I want it for every child in the district.

That's why 10 years ago when we had an opportunity to move to the Portland area, we chose Lake Oswego for the same reasons my parents did. For the top-notch schools.

Lake Oswego has become a family hub for me. My family, including parents and in-laws, collectively live in three of Lake Oswego's beautiful neighborhoods. The work that we have done as a family is to enrich the schools and the community at large. I became involved in the Lake Oswego Schools Foundation, parent-teacher organizations, bonds and levies, and community organizations like Respond to Racism and LO for LOve.

I bring my community knowledge, familiarity with the schools and district, my professional expertise, and lived experiences into school board service.

**6a. In 10 years, when you see LOSD, what changes do you see from today and why?**

I have seen significant, meaningful changes in LOSD in the past 10 years, from when my child started attending school at the district, to today, and I expect to see even more change in the next 10 years. I helped to develop the school district's current strategic plan, which created four bold new pillars dedicated to academic excellence and the whole child. I have seen the culture of belonging improve, terrific progress towards achieving equitable academic outcomes, a focus on improving health and resiliency of students and staff, and introducing sustainability into our teaching, buildings, policies, and practices. Some examples include introducing student representatives to the school board to bring additional voice and perspective, replacing and

improving school buildings and facilities, introducing the science of reading so that students are reading at grade level, and more.

It's great to see many of the strategies from the plan be implemented, and there is more work to do. One of my priorities would be updating the LOSD strategic plan to set a course for the future.

## **Section 2 -Specific topics**

### **1b. What issues have you spoken up most about and used your voice and expertise to influence in your community? What issues have you decided to stay less vocal about and why?**

I have used my voice and expertise to volunteer and offer my expertise to our schools. Prior to joining the school board, I was selected to serve on the district's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, which has been renamed as the Culture of Belonging Committee to be in line with the LOSD Strategic Plan. I have served on the Lake Oswego Schools Foundation board of directors, as the Lake Oswego Middle School parent club treasurer, as the 2019 LO School Levy campaign co-chair, and as an active volunteer in the classroom and school activities.

Since I joined the school board, I have been vocal on many issues. I have served as board liaison to various board-appointed committees. For two years, I was on the Oregon School Boards Association board of directors and Legislative Policy Committee, and I am immediate past president of the Oregon School Board Members of Color Caucus.

I have been least vocal about issues related to special education services, because it is a topic in which I do not have a lot of experience and am still learning. However, I have supported culture change to promote inclusion, improve academic outcomes, and address college and career readiness.

### **2b. There is a lot of debate in the local paper currently about Oregon being ranked close to the bottom in national proficiency tests. How did Lake Oswego students rank in comparison to students in top ranking States and what is your hypothesis for why?**

The 2025 report card for the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) was released in January 2025. The report card shows that Oregon's 4th and 8th graders scored in the bottom half of all

states in math and reading proficiency in tests last year. NAEP tests random schools in Oregon. Data is only available at a state level and not specifically for Lake Oswego students. Lake Oswego student performance in Smarter Balance assessment scores in Math and English Language Arts has dropped in the past 10 years, and the Lake Oswego school district has significantly higher scores than Oregon school districts overall.

The school board has taken proactive steps to assess students and improve their academic outcomes. Four years ago, LOSD began using iReady, a K–8 diagnostic assessment and instruction program designed to help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses in reading and math, and to provide personalized instruction to address learning gaps.

The school board reviews educational data regularly, including other measures of student proficiency and achievement. For example, Lake Oswego student composite SAT scores have increased slightly from 2017-18; 89% of Lake Oswego students in the 2023-24 school year received a score of 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement test, the highest proportion of students since the 2019-20 school year when some classes were held online during the pandemic. The number of students taking AP tests increased, and students saw score increases in math, science, and English tests.

**3b. Will you assure the public that you will stay steadfast in keeping Lake Grove School open in its current location?**

The school board approved the recommendations presented by the Bond Development Committee on March 10, 2025 for the third bond, which includes rebuilding Lake Grove Elementary School in its current location.

**4b. What is your position with regard to the Federal Government's directive to remove DEI & CRT from public school curriculums?**

I participated in developing the LOSD Strategic Plan, which includes goals and actions under the Culture of Belonging to:

- Address biases and their impacts.
- Emphasize professional development in equity, bias, bullying, and harassment.
- Provide authentic curriculum, resources and training.
- Develop diverse leadership, teachers and staff members.

The school board monitors progress towards achieving the strategic plan, including these goals and actions. I support this direction. There is no change to this pillar or the associated goals and actions.

**5b. What would be your approach to solving the current LOSD budget shortfall of \$12M, and what will you do to prevent deficits from happening again?**

Oregon has never spent enough on public education, as shown by a state commission charged with developing a vision for high-quality Oregon K-12 public schools. The Quality Education Commission studies best practices and recent research and then estimates each biennium how much it would cost to achieve Oregon's education goals. The commission's 2024 Quality Education Model report says Oregon has a funding gap of \$2.5 billion needed to successfully provide adequate environments for all students. The state's current budget proposal falls short of this goal. The commission's report and its recommendations have no formal power, but they serve as a standard in discussions about what the state should be spending.

School districts across Oregon are experiencing budget shortfalls, including LOSD. LOSD's budget shortfall was caused by a combination of factors along with insufficient state funding. Some of these factors include:

- Increased staffing in the past 10 years to provide needed academic and mental health supports, especially post-pandemic (e.g., academic and learning support centers, nurses, special education, mental health).
- Focus on achieving goals informed by data and best practices, such as moving special education students from a single site to their neighborhood schools to promote inclusivity.
- Having a growing proportion of special education students in the past 10 years, from 8.1 percent to 14.8 percent. During the same time, the numbers of high-cost disability students quadrupled.
- Having a steep increase in PERS costs at 7.6 percent.

LOSD should experience fiscal relief with funding proposals being considered by the Oregon legislature, such as lifting the cap on special education funding currently set at 11 percent, increasing the high-cost disability fund, and increasing PERS funding.

It is difficult to completely prevent budget deficits for public school districts for a few reasons. One reason is that the school board has made policy choices based on data, best practices, and community engagement to provide all students with educational opportunities. The school board regularly reviews educational data, and we are seeing improvements. Most notably, LOSD had a 33 percent increase in graduation rates for students on a Individualized Education Program (IEP) in the past 10 years. In addition, public school districts receive their funding budget every two years from the Oregon Legislature, which makes long-term fiscal planning difficult unlike. LOSD has an excellent fiscal team that provides the school board with regular financial updates, as well as a Legal Budget Committee comprising school board and appointed citizen members that reviews and approves the budget each year.

**6b. Would you support encouraging a plant-based diet in schools?**

Eating a plant-based diet can offer many benefits, including improved health, weight management, environmental sustainability, and lower risk of certain diseases. In my home, we eat primarily a vegetarian diet, and my culture encourages eating plant-based foods. I have been a strong advocate of increasing plant-based options in school meals. LOSD is fortunate to have an amazing director of nutritional services focused on equity, diversity, sustainability, and nutrition education. The director and their team have prioritized bringing more fruits, vegetables, beans and lentils, and other plant-based food, some of which are locally sourced, so that students can choose these options. Students are involved in providing input into offerings through surveys and taste testing. I had a chance to taste test some of the plant-based choices, which are delicious, and to have lunch at school with students. I appreciated the opportunity to experience this first hand.

**7b. Would you be willing to include in the curriculum educating kids to understand the effect of their choices regarding food, research labs, puppy mills, etc., and how that all relates to racism, sexism, etc.?**

I will support approving curricula that are in line with the LOSD strategic plan, meet state and national standards, and allow students to increase their knowledge about important topics.

**8b. What do you believe should be in the LO school bond proposal and what should not be included?**

The school board has been working on LOSD's bond program for over a decade, with the vision to fix every school in the district. Bonds provide funding to address the school district's buildings and capital infrastructure.

LOSD has strong citizen planning and oversight of our bond program, with the school board providing review and final approvals. Citizens are involved in:

- A Long Range Facilities Committee that helps to set strategic vision.
- A Bond Development Committee that helps to develop recommendations to the school board.
- A Bond Accountability Committee that ensures planning and oversight.

LOSD has excellent fiscal management, which delivers premiums and interest, as well as an excellent ED of project management who works with a dedicated team and the committees. For this third bond, the school board conducted community engagement, such as having extended public testimony and hosting a town hall moderated by the Lake Oswego Review, to ensure we were hearing from patrons on their opinions and feedback.

This bond program has been in three phases, with the school board in the process for the third phase of the bond. The school board:

- Approved the Long Range Facilities Plan in October 2024, which was developed and updated by the Long Range Facilities Committee.
- Appointed a Bond Development Committee, which met from October 2024 to February 2025 and presented their recommendations to the school board.

The school board approved the Bond Development Committee's recommendations at the March 10, 2025 meeting. The school board plans to start the citizen campaign in April 2025 and have the bond on the November 2025 ballot.

This third bond approved by the school board will invest in safe, healthy, and secure schools that are resilient. The bond will be \$235 million that maintains the current tax rate. About one-half of funds will replace the oldest elementary schools, Forest Hills and Lake Grove. About one-third of funds will be used to replace failing and obsolete systems. About 12 percent of funds will be to address essential



capacity needs, and the remaining 2.5 percent will repurpose Uplands Elementary to centralize and consolidate district-wide services

**Brian Bills, Position 3****General Question 1: "Why do you want to join the school board?"**

I initially joined the school board because, as a parent of three children—currently attending elementary, middle, and high schools—I recognized a unique opportunity to bring firsthand understanding of student and family experiences across all grade levels within our district. My passion for public education is rooted in the belief that exceptional schools are foundational to thriving communities, preparing students to succeed academically and personally in a rapidly evolving world.

Nearing completion of my first term, I clearly see the critical work still ahead. We must address our immediate \$12 million budget shortfall through strategic financial planning and responsible fiscal oversight—skills I developed through my legal career in structured finance and legislative policy reform. Our district must simultaneously maintain our commitment to educational excellence while making difficult but necessary decisions to ensure long-term financial sustainability. I also believe we must prioritize responsible investments in technology, particularly generative AI, to democratize access to high-quality educational resources that meet each student exactly where they are, while also reducing administrative burdens on educators.

I remain committed to thoughtfully integrating innovative technologies into our educational ecosystem, which can both enhance student learning and create operational efficiencies. My more than two decade-long experience as an educational consultant brings deep insight into college readiness and career preparation, helping ensure our students are well-equipped for life beyond graduation.

Additionally, my background in real estate development is especially valuable as the district continues addressing essential infrastructure upgrades and facility improvements, including the bond measure to rebuild Forest Hills and Lake Grove elementary schools. With these combined experiences, my goal is to maintain our longstanding commitment to excellence, equity, and responsible financial management, ensuring LOSD remains a district known not only for academic achievement but also for preparing every student to thrive.

**General Question 2: "What do you bring to the board in terms of specific skills that you offer?"**

In my professional career, I have developed a distinctive set of skills

that align directly with the essential responsibilities of an effective school board member. My background as an attorney specializing in structured finance, legislative policy reform, and conflict resolution has equipped

me to navigate complex financial challenges—particularly critical as we address our current \$12 million budget shortfall.

This experience has proven valuable in ensuring we maintain fiscally responsible practices while advocating effectively at state and federal levels for adequate education funding. My ability to analyze complex financial data allows me to ask informed questions about resource allocation and ensure taxpayer dollars are used effectively to support student achievement.

My experience in real estate development provides practical expertise regarding facilities management, construction oversight, and infrastructure planning. This knowledge has been particularly valuable during bond planning discussions and will continue to be essential as we implement the upcoming bond measure, including rebuilding Lake Grove Elementary at its current location.

Additionally, my work as an educational consultant gives me unique insight into student needs and educational effectiveness. By working directly with high school students pursuing competitive college admissions, I see firsthand which academic programs and support structures best prepare students for future success. This experience helps me evaluate the return on investment of various educational decisions and advocate for strategies that maximize student outcomes within our budget constraints.

Collectively, these skills—financial acumen, legislative advocacy, conflict mediation, infrastructure stewardship, and a comparative understanding of educational effectiveness—allow me to contribute meaningfully to the board, ensuring effective governance that consistently prioritizes both student success and fiscal responsibility.

**General Question 3: "How would you characterize your involvement to date with the Lake Oswego School District (LOSD)?"**

My involvement with LOSD spans multiple roles: from governance and financial oversight to direct student engagement and community outreach. As a current board member who has served as board chair, I've actively participated in the district's strategic planning, policy

development, and budget oversight processes. During my chairmanship, I prioritized transparency by leading a town hall to increase community involvement in the Long Range Facilities Planning recommendations—ensuring that stakeholder voices were heard before making critical decisions about our school infrastructure.

Beyond board service, I've been deeply engaged at the school level, serving two years as Treasurer for the Forest Hills PTO and volunteering regularly in classrooms. For the past decade, I've coached OBOB regional qualifying teams and spent 12 years coaching Little Hoopers basketball, fostering teamwork and sportsmanship among our students.

My commitment to academic support includes providing math assistance during breakout sessions at Forest Hills Elementary, conducting mock interviews to prepare high school students for college admissions, and presenting as a Laker Talk speaker on careers in law. This hands-on involvement keeps me connected to the classroom experience and student needs, informing my board decisions with practical insight.

Additionally, I regularly engage with parents and students about college planning and academic preparedness, sharing insights gained through my experience as an educational consultant. This role uniquely positions me to evaluate LOSD within a broader educational context, helping guide district decisions toward continued academic excellence while addressing our current budget challenges.

This multifaceted involvement demonstrates my deep commitment to LOSD's success and provides me with diverse perspectives—from parent to volunteer to board leader—that enhance my effectiveness in addressing the complex issues facing our district today.

**General Question 4: "What issues have you spoken up most about and used your voice and expertise to influence in your community? What issues have you decided to stay less vocal about and why?"**

Throughout my service on the school board, I've consistently advocated for educational excellence by ensuring our students have rich opportunities to reach their full potential. I've championed rigorous academic programs, expanded AP and career-pathway opportunities, and supported extracurricular activities that foster holistic student growth—all while maintaining a focus on fiscal responsibility.

I've been a proactive voice for addressing our declining proficiency scores, particularly in math and science, by advocating for targeted interventions and enhanced support systems. These efforts are especially critical as we work to reverse the concerning trends in our state assessment results while maintaining our position as a top-performing district within Oregon.

I have also emphasized responsible technology integration, including clear policies on cellphone use during school hours to promote academic focus and student mental health. While I support leveraging educational technology to enhance learning, I've advocated for balanced approaches that prioritize meaningful teacher-student interactions and protect against digital distractions.

Regarding issues I've chosen to be less vocal about: I have intentionally focused my energy on matters directly connected to educational outcomes, district operations, and student success rather than broader political debates that extend beyond the scope of local school governance. My approach has always been to evaluate issues through the lens of data, educational research, and our community's specific needs.

As a board member, I believe my primary responsibility is to ensure that every decision serves our core educational mission. This sometimes means staying focused on pragmatic, evidence-based decision-making rather than engaging in divisive debates that distract from student-centered priorities. By concentrating on areas where I can make the most meaningful impact, I've worked to build consensus around issues central to our students' education and future preparedness.

**General Question 5: "How do you view the roles of school board members and the school district administration staff?"**

The relationship between the school board and district administration is foundational to effective school district operation. School board members are responsible for governance: setting policies, ensuring fiscal responsibility, establishing educational priorities, and serving as the essential bridge between the community and school district. We represent the public's voice, articulating the needs and values of families, students, and taxpayers, while ensuring transparency and accountability in decision-making.

The district administration, led by the superintendent, handles implementation and operations: executing educational programs,

making staffing decisions, managing budgets, and addressing day-to-day issues within schools. This clear delineation of responsibilities—with the board setting direction and the administration executing it—creates the necessary balance for efficient district functioning.

In practice, this means board members should never micromanage daily operations; rather, we hold the superintendent accountable for implementing board-approved policies and achieving strategic goals. For example, as we address our current \$12 million budget shortfall, the board's role is to establish parameters and priorities for reductions, while the administration develops specific implementation plans.

When these distinct roles are respected, the district can maintain a cohesive vision for student excellence while effectively managing operational challenges. This governance structure ensures that policy decisions reflect community values and priorities, while implementation benefits from the professional expertise of our administrative team. Throughout my board service, I've worked to uphold this distinction, focusing on strategic guidance rather than operational intervention.

**General Question 6: "What experiences from your life or work have shaped you that you'll take with you and apply in the role should you get elected?"**

As the first person in my family to attend college, I have a profound appreciation for education's transformative power. Growing up in Las Vegas—not known for educational excellence—I experienced both the impact of exceptional teachers and the limitations of a system lacking unified academic ambition. This background drives my commitment to ensuring every LOSD student has opportunities to exceed what they believe possible.

Despite attending a high school with limited college preparation, I was fortunate to have teachers who encouraged my academic potential. This experience showed me how individual educators can profoundly influence student trajectories, even within challenging systems. When I began college at the University of Nevada, Reno, and later transferred to UCLA, I quickly recognized the disparities in educational preparation across different systems—reinforcing my conviction that schools must intentionally cultivate excellence for all students.

My professional experiences in law, finance, policy reform, and educational consulting have equipped me to navigate complex challenges, build consensus, and think strategically about long-term

impact. Working with students across the country and internationally as an educational consultant has given me a broad perspective on various educational models and their effectiveness, allowing me to assess what approaches best support student success.

These experiences directly inform my approach to our current budget challenges. I understand that while financial constraints are real, we must maintain our commitment to educational excellence. Every decision must be evaluated based on its impact on student outcomes and long-term district sustainability. I bring a uniquely broad perspective to these deliberations, combining personal understanding of education's transformative potential with professional expertise in finance, governance, and educational achievement.

**Specific Question 1: "How will you assure the public that you will stay steadfast in keeping Lake Grove open in its current location?"**

The future of Lake Grove Elementary has been a significant focus of district planning efforts, and while there were differing views on the best long-term site for the school, the decision to rebuild at the current location was made through a deliberate and informed process.

The Long-Range Facilities Planning (LRFP) Committee assessed district needs, enrollment trends, and facility conditions, and the School Board unanimously approved its recommendations. Similarly, the Bond Development Committee proposed a bond package that included rebuilding Lake Grove at its current site, and once again, the Board unanimously approved that direction.

Throughout these discussions, it became clear that the most viable path forward—one that would maximize the likelihood of bond passage for the benefit of the entire district—was to move forward with a plan that aligned with the priorities expressed by the Lake Grove community's strong advocacy and mobilization efforts. While site selection involved multiple considerations, the Board's final decision recognized the importance of community voice and reflected a commitment to ensuring the bond proposal has the greatest possible chance of success.

As Board Chair during this critical time, I worked to expand public engagement by leading efforts to hold a town hall discussion, providing a forum for community members to better understand and shape the decision-making process. I have consistently approached this issue with an open mind, a focus on data, and a commitment to

district-wide outcomes, ensuring that our approach is informed, transparent, and aligned with the broader goal of providing excellent educational opportunities for all LOSD students.

The passage of the next bond is critical for the district, and my focus remains on ensuring that we secure the resources needed to provide safe, modern, and effective learning environments for all students. The district has already made a clear and public commitment to keeping Lake Grove open at its current site, and I stand by that decision. My track record of championing transparent decision-making, advocating for community involvement, and balancing fiscal and logistical realities should provide confidence that I will remain steadfast in honoring this commitment.

**Specific Question 2: "There is a lot of debate in the local paper currently about Oregon being ranked close to the bottom in national proficiency tests. How did Lake Oswego students rank in comparison to students in top-ranking states, and what is your hypothesis for why?"**

It is true that LOSD's proficiency scores in reading, math, and science have declined over the past decade, reflecting both a statewide and national trend. For context, our 11th grade reading proficiency has decreased from 87% to 70% over the past ten years, and our science proficiency has declined from 81% to 43%. These trends are concerning, and we must take them seriously.

Several factors contribute to these trends. First, Oregon has chronically underfunded education, with per-pupil spending well below the national average. Additionally, state policy changes have reduced graduation requirements and eliminated proficiency testing as a graduation requirement, removing incentives for students to perform well on, or even show up for, these assessments. This is particularly true for some of our highest achieving students who prioritize other assessments such as AP Exams and SAT/ACT exams that coincide with the timing of the state assessments. Pandemic-related learning disruptions also played a role, widening achievement gaps that districts across the country are working to close.

Despite these challenges, LOSD remains one of the top-performing districts in Oregon and continues to produce graduates who excel in competitive college admissions, STEM competitions, and post-secondary pursuits. While standardized test scores are an important measure, we also look at college readiness, AP success, extracurricular achievements, and student engagement as key indicators of success.



Moving forward, we must take decisive action to reverse these trends. I support implementing evidence-based strategies to improve student achievement, including:

- **Expanding early literacy and math intervention programs** to provide targeted support where needed.
- **Continued Leveraging of Frontline Analytics tools** to measure program effectiveness and ensure resource allocation is tied to student outcomes.
- **Providing data-driven professional development for educators** to enhance instructional methods. While we must always strive to improve proficiency scores, it's important to recognize that test scores alone do not define the quality of a school district. LOSD students continue to gain admission to top-tier universities and demonstrate strong preparedness once they arrive. Our ultimate goal is not just to raise test scores but to ensure that every student graduates well- prepared for college, careers, and life beyond LOSD.

**Specific Question 3: "What would be your approach to solving the current LOSD budget shortfall of \$12M, and what will you do to prevent deficits from happening again?"**

The \$12M budget shortfall is a serious concern, requiring both immediate solutions and long- term structural adjustments to prevent future deficits. My approach focuses on financial sustainability, prioritization of essential services, and transparent community engagement.

### **Immediate Solutions to Address the Shortfall**

1. **Strategic Cost Containment** – The district has already taken steps to align special education staffing with peer districts, but further work is needed to ensure our spending is effective while still meeting student needs. Identifying cost savings through program efficiencies and administrative adjustments will help mitigate the immediate budget gap.
2. **Maximizing Revenue Sources** – Exploring potential increases in local revenue through the LOSD Foundation, partnerships, facility usage fees, and maximizing state funding opportunities, including grants, could provide short-term relief.

3. **Data-Driven Spending Prioritization** – Continuing to leverage the robust academic ROI analysis gained through LOSD’s use of Frontline Analytics tools will help ensure that district spending aligns with educational impact. These tools align resources with strategic priorities, identify opportunities for improvement, and ultimately enhance educational outcomes for all students.

### **Long-Term Structural Adjustments**

- **Multi-Year Budget Planning** – Continuing to use a multi-year budget model that anticipates cost increases, fluctuating revenues, and potential financial stressors.
- **PERS & Payroll Management** – LOSD’s participation in PERS Side Account Investments was initially beneficial but has become a growing burden due to higher-than- expected payroll growth and lower investment returns. Addressing this through proactive financial planning will prevent future deficits.
- **Facilities & Program Evaluation** – Continue to assess whether district programs operate at a high cost with limited district-wide benefit. Conducting regular evaluations to determine the sustainability of such programs is necessary.

### **Ensuring Budget Stability in the Future**

- **Transparent Communication & Community Involvement** – One of the reasons I led a town hall as board chair for the Long-Range Facilities Planning (LRFP) recommendations reflects my philosophy that community voices should be heard in major financial decisions. Budget planning should pursue similar opportunities for engagement, ensuring transparency, and data-driven decision-making.
- **Balancing Equity & Fiscal Responsibility** – While LOSD has made significant strides in inclusivity and expanding student services, the financial model must be sustainable. Ensuring that we are prioritizing core educational functions while still meeting student needs is critical.
- **Future Bond & Revenue Measures** – While the upcoming bond measure is focused on facilities, ongoing work is needed to ensure that future funding efforts align with operational sustainability. A proactive rather than reactive approach will

increase the likelihood that deficits do not reoccur.

In summary, my approach is rooted in responsible fiscal management, strategic investments, and proactive planning. The shortfall is a challenge, but with a focus on efficiency, transparency, and thoughtful prioritization, we can navigate this without compromising educational excellence

**Specific Question 4: "What is your position regarding the Federal Government's directive to remove DEI & CRT from public school curriculums?"**

As a school board member, my priority is ensuring all students receive a high-quality education that prepares them for success in college, careers, and civic life. In LOSD, our focus remains on academic excellence, critical thinking skills, and creating learning environments where every student can thrive.

It's important to clarify that LOSD does not teach Critical Race Theory (CRT) as part of its K-12 curriculum. CRT is a complex legal framework typically taught at the graduate school level, not in K-12 classrooms. Our curriculum is developed based on state standards and focuses on core academic content.

Our district does work to ensure that all students feel welcome, respected, and supported. These efforts include:

- Providing academic support services to help every student excel
- Ensuring all students have access to advanced coursework and enrichment opportunities
- Creating classroom environments where students learn to respect diverse perspectives
- Preparing students with the skills needed for success in an increasingly global workforce and society As a board member, I believe in maintaining transparency about curriculum and instructional materials. Parents should have access to information about what their children are learning, and our district has procedures in place to ensure this transparency. I firmly believe that education should transcend political debates. Our focus should remain on what matters most: providing every student with excellent teaching, rich learning experiences, and the support needed to achieve their full potential. These

fundamentals have guided Lake Oswego's educational approach for generations and will continue to be my priority as we navigate complex educational issues.

**Specific Question 5: "Would you support encouraging a plant-based diet in schools?"**

- I support offering diverse, nutritious meal options in our school cafeterias, including high-quality plant-based choices. Our nutrition program should focus on providing all students with healthy, appealing meals that support their growth, development, and academic performance.
- Offering plant-based options ensures that students with different dietary preferences or requirements—whether for health, environmental, cultural, or personal reasons—have access to nutritious meals. However, these should be offered alongside other options, respecting the diverse dietary needs and preferences of our student population. I am encouraged by recent improvements in our food service program, including the introduction of salad bars, smoothies, and more fresh produce options. I particularly support the student taste-testing council, which ensures menu items are both nutritious and appealing to students. This student-centered approach to menu planning increases the likelihood that healthy options will actually be chosen and consumed.

Additionally, I believe nutrition education should be integrated into our curriculum, helping students understand the connection between diet and health. This education should present balanced information about various dietary approaches, empowering students to make informed choices.

Ultimately, my position is that our school meal program should offer high-quality, nutritious options—including plant-based meals—while respecting individual choice and family preferences. The goal should be supporting student health and learning through excellent nutrition, not promoting any single dietary philosophy.

**Specific Question 6: "The issues surrounding restroom designs in LOSD have been the source of controversy. What is your position regarding restroom design and access?"**

Ensuring that all students feel safe, comfortable, and respected in our schools is a priority. Restroom design and access are important

aspects of this, and I support an approach that balances inclusivity with choice by offering a variety of restroom configurations to meet the needs of all students.

Contrary to some claims, LOSD has actively listened to and acknowledged the voices of parents and community members who have advocated for maintaining traditional, gender-neutral, and single-use restroom options for students. I have personally met with many parents who have expressed the importance of ensuring that all students—regardless of their comfort level or personal needs—have restroom options that work for them.

As a result of this input, LOSD has made adjustments to restroom plans at LOMS (formerly LOJ) and has committed to similar updates at LMS to ensure that each of these options remains available for student use. This approach respects the diverse needs of our student body while also recognizing the importance of parental and community input in shaping school policies and facilities.

Moving forward, I believe it is critical that we continue to engage in open dialogue with students, parents, and educators to ensure that restroom facilities meet the needs of all students in a way that fosters safety, dignity, and accessibility.

**Specific Question 7: "What is your position regarding cellphone usage in schools, considering recent data that shows social media is negatively impacting student mental health?"**

I strongly support clear, enforceable policies that limit cellphone use during the school day. Research consistently shows that excessive screen time, social media exposure, and digital distractions negatively impact student focus, mental health, and academic performance. The recent surgeon general's advisory on social media's effects on adolescent mental health further validates these concerns.

As a board member, I have led the call for and will continue to support a straightforward "off and away" policy for cellphones during the entirety of the school day. Implementing a LOSD Policy requiring compliance with this approach:

- Creates clear expectations for students
- Simplifies enforcement by teachers and administrators by eliminating subjective discretion

- Reduces classroom disruptions
- Minimizes tardiness as students are less tempted to linger in hallways checking phones
- Decreases opportunities for cyberbullying during school hours
- Encourages in-person social interaction
- Supports student mental health by reducing social media access during school While I recognize that technology has an important place in education, personal devices often create more distractions than benefits during the school day. Our schools provide appropriate technology tools when needed for learning activities, making personal cellphones unnecessary for educational purposes. Parents who need to contact their children during school hours can do so through school offices, as was the practice before cellphones became ubiquitous. This approach actually reduces anxiety for many students, who no longer feel compelled to monitor and respond to messages throughout the day. Schools should be places of focus, collaboration, and human connection. By implementing thoughtful cellphone policies, we can create learning environments where students are fully present and engaged—mentally, emotionally, and socially.

**Specific Question 8: "The bus barn has been identified as insufficient for several years. What approach would you take to solving this long-standing issue?"** I'm pleased to report that LOSD has successfully addressed the long-standing transportation facility challenges by completing a new bus barn in 2024. This upgraded facility represents a significant improvement for our transportation system and includes several forward-thinking features:

- Electric bus charging capabilities to support our transition to a greener fleet
- A modernized power grid designed to manage distribution during peak use periods
- Improved traffic flow with enhanced ingress and egress
- Updated facilities to better support our drivers and transportation

staff As we move forward, my approach focuses on maximizing this investment:

1. **Supporting our transition to electric buses** by ensuring proper infrastructure, maintenance resources, and staff training are in place. This shift will reduce both environmental impact and long-term fuel costs.
2. **Monitoring operational improvements** to ensure the new facility enhances transportation efficiency, reliability, and service for students and families.
3. **Leveraging the facility's power grid capabilities** to support district-wide energy resilience, particularly during peak demand periods.
4. **Ensuring long-term fiscal sustainability** by tracking maintenance needs, utility costs, and overall transportation budgets to confirm the investment continues to benefit the district without creating unexpected financial burdens.

With the transportation facility now operational, my focus is on ensuring we maximize this investment's return while maintaining fiscal responsibility and environmental sustainability. This project demonstrates our commitment to addressing infrastructure needs systematically while planning for future technological advancements—an approach I will continue to support across all district facilities.

**Kasey Adler, Position 4****Questions for Lake Oswego School Board candidates****Section 1 -General topics****1a. Why do you want to join the school board?****2a. What do you bring to the board in terms of specific skills that you offer?**

The galvanizing event for my entry into this school board race was learning that the Lake Oswego School District is facing \$12M in budget cuts. I've enjoyed volunteering in many capacities for the district & city over the years – but the challenges facing schools have been compounding since my son entered this district. I felt compelled to step up and use my skill sets, so that my son's generation and beyond, can benefit from as strong an experience as I did when growing up here.

I bring a strong financial and budgeting background, an ability to listen and to prioritize and the leadership skills to help pull a team together to reach a common goal. My formative professional years were spent in finance, running financial planning and analysis, and risk management analyses for media companies. I suspect many challenges in the years to come will pertain to our school district's finances. Additionally, I've spent years as an executive in the entertainment industry – notorious for its challenges in wrangling the large and diverse teams required to produce films and television programs. Working cohesively, listening, and incorporating a wide variety of perspectives in one's approach is mandatory to achieving success. Lastly, I was a Division I athlete in college, where the importance of team and coming together to achieve common purpose is paramount.

**Section 2 -Specific topics****1b. What issues have you spoken up most about and used your voice and expertise to influence in your community? What issues have you decided to stay less vocal about and why?**

I've committed most of my time to raising money for our school district and advocating for our school bond on the Schools Foundation



Board. The Lake Oswego School Foundation raises money exclusively for teaching positions, special needs programs, and music/art/STEM courses. Our annual raise and endowment efforts are an essential part of the district's budget planning each year. I'm also passionate about our district's playground and outdoor facilities. I still remember the gigantic wooden playground I grew up on at Hallinan, and hope to see fantastic resources for play be worked into facilities planning in the years to come.

**2b. There is a lot of debate in the local paper currently about Oregon being ranked close to the bottom in national proficiency tests. How did Lake Oswego students rank in comparison to students in top ranking States and what is your hypothesis for why?**

Yes, this issue is a priority for me. Salem has adopted the position in recent discussions with our district administration that additional funding will be set behind "accountability" around these performance metrics. And it's true, proficiency scores in Lake Oswego are down sharply over the last decade – and that's across the board (Reading, Math, and Science). At the same time, we've scaled up staffing considerably, and costs per student are up >80%. My concern is that since the state eliminated the requirement to take the proficiency exams in order to graduate, we've introduced a confounding variable into this equation. Who's taking these optional tests now? Or, perhaps more importantly, who isn't? And for those that ultimately do, are they trying their utmost given they have no bearing whatsoever on a student's academic resume? In my opinion, the metric has become flawed, and the district must prioritize more reliable data by which to measure our ability to drive student success in collaboration with Salem to overcome this impasse. And Lake Oswego families deserve transparent metrics to ensure accountability around district performance.

**3b. Will you assure the public that you will stay steadfast in keeping Lake Grove School open in its current location?**

100%. I still treasure the stability and continuity of my experiences as a child growing up here at Hallinan. To say nothing of the practical impacts on the adults, to feel a part of longstanding traditions – that you're a part of it all – was important to me and no doubt many other kids in Lake Oswego. Shuttering schools should be a last resort.

## **Katherine Lupton, Position 4**

Questions for Lake Oswego School Board candidates

Section 1 -General topics

### **1a. Why do you want to join the school board?**

Hi! I'm Kate Lupton. I am running for Lake Oswego School Board Position 4.

I am a parent (of three), an educator, and a life-long Oregonian running for Lake Oswego School Board to ensure that Lake Oswego preserves and expands on its reputation as the #1 school district in Oregon. I am so grateful that my children will be able to participate in Lake Oswego's outstanding K-12 education system for the next twenty years. My first priority on the School Board will be maintaining our district's academic successes, despite a projected budget shortfall.

My number one priority as a School Board member will be to ensure that our students can compete academically on a national level, from Kindergarten through AP and college prep courses. We must provide rigorous academic offerings throughout the district. We must adopt and promote effective curriculum, backed by current research and best practices. And we must explore options for expanding learning time and educational opportunities in our district, so that our students can achieve equity by being provided the same opportunities offered to students in other states in our nation.

My second priority is to empower the community to provide input to the Lake Oswego School Board. This can be achieved by increasing opportunities for students and families to connect with board members, in both formal and informal settings. Improved feedback can be gathered by seeking out and prioritizing feedback from teachers and staff in the district. And finally, but most importantly, we must partner with stakeholder groups such as the Neighborhood Chairs Committee, LOSN, Oswego Lake Watershed Council, Prep LO, LO for Love and Respond to Racism to incorporate neighborhood perspectives in School Board decisions.

My third priority is to ensure that our School Board includes best practices and innovative research in every decision. We must create policies that adapt to current best practices and technologies. We must partner with teachers to develop more targeted training and support. We can provide training so that teachers can evolve with best practices and research, creating a teacher that is able to adapt and evolve with

new innovations in our community and in our nation. This targeted training can range in subject, from classroom management, to reading and math techniques, to creating a culture of inclusion and belonging, to training on the latest research pertaining to advanced courses at the AP level.

**2a. What do you bring to the board in terms of specific skills that you offer?**

I am the proud product of an Oregon public school education, and I served as a classroom teacher for eight years. My parents were both public school teachers, and instilled in me a pride and love for public education. Nothing is more important to me than public school education and providing opportunities for all of our students to succeed.

As a teacher in public school classrooms for eight years, I was able to experience first hand the immense responsibilities teachers have to their students and their communities. I served as a teacher for middle school students for two years, high school students at an International Baccalaureate School in Baltimore for four years, and as a college professor at Portland State University for two years.

I attended Oregon public schools throughout my entire K-12 education, and my parents are both (now retired) public school educators. I received a M.S. in Education Policy from Johns Hopkins University, as well as a M.A. in Spanish from Portland State University.

I am fluent in Spanish and take great pride in my communication skills in the language, and in sharing my passion for the language with other teachers. I currently create curriculum for Spanish teachers across the nation, so that I can share best practices and contribute to student success with my well-researched curriculum. I also serve as an International Baccalaureate examiner for Spanish language exams through the International Baccalaureate Organization. I grade IB Diploma Spanish exams from students all over the world.

While living in Baltimore, I taught in the Baltimore City Public Schools and participated with my students in the "Advocacy Project"--a program I founded that partners students with diverse urban neighborhood groups. In my class, my students were able to gain volunteer experience in their community, while practicing their Spanish language skills and immersing themselves in an unfamiliar culture right in their own city.

I was named one of three finalists for the national Sue Lehmann Teaching Award. I was also a semi-finalist for the Kennedy Leadership Award for Teaching Excellence. I currently serve as a Spanish Language Examiner for the International Baccalaureate Organization.

I am uniquely well-qualified to serve as your representative on the Lake Oswego School Board.

**3a. Compare and contrast the roles of school board members vs. school administrators and staff.**

As a School Board member, I will have one main employee, and that is the Superintendent. It will be our job as a School Board to set the strategic plan, vision, policy and guidance for our school district.

My job as a school board member will be to ensure that the Superintendent, staff and administrators carry out that vision on a daily basis with our students.

**4a. The State of Oregon encourages a workforce that reflects student diversity. As a school board member how do you create policy to adhere to Oregon and Federal guidelines?**

The broader issue here is that we must diversify our workforce of teachers, both here in Oregon, and in Lake Oswego. How do we increase our population of diverse teachers? How will we encourage and foster growth in teachers of diverse backgrounds, so that more students can see themselves reflected in their classroom leaders?

There are many ways to do this. We can encourage our students to become teachers by making the profession one that is well paid and well respected within our community. This includes providing scholarship programs for college students to earn their M.Ed. degrees, to make the degree more accessible financially.

My mother was a recipient of this type of scholarship at Western Oregon University in the 1980's. She moved to Oregon from her home in South Dakota to study for her Masters in Education, and specifically to train as a Special Education teacher. My mother grew up in poverty in South Dakota, but was able to provide a good life for herself and for her family by becoming a public school teacher. My mother then went on to serve for thirty-five years as public school special education teacher with the Salem-Keizer public school system.

**5a. What experiences from your life or work have shaped you that you'll take with you and apply in the role should you get**

**elected?**

I am a Spanish teacher by trade, and I am also the proud author of a popular Spanish novel for mid-level Spanish students. I have great respect for classroom teachers and the dedication they are able to bring to their students every day. Both of my parents were public school teachers, and I served as a classroom teacher for eight years, where I experienced first hand the joys and challenges of classroom teaching.

I received my undergraduate degree from the University of Oregon, a Masters of Arts in Spanish from Portland State University, and a Masters in Science in Education Policy and Leadership from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

As a student of Education policy at Johns Hopkins University, I learned that the most effective policy is policy that is responsive to community needs. Policy is a living instrument that must be responsive, transparent, flexible, and accountable. Our policy must reflect current best practices and research, and must take into account current technological advancements. This applies directly to school district policy and will be my guide while serving on the School Board.

**6a. In 10 years, when you see LOSD, what changes do you see from today and why?**

In ten years, I see our students competing academically on a national level, from grade school standardized tests all the way through AP and college prep courses.

I see our students enjoying expanded learning time and educational opportunities in our district, so that our students can achieve equity by being provided the same opportunities offered to students in other states in our nation.

I see our students in school for 180 instructional days per year, on par with the other states in our nation. I see a school district where students are able to start their school year in August, which in turn gives them a fair chance at achieving advanced scores on Advanced Placement and standardized exams. I see students who are well prepared for college, and for a global workforce.

I see our community feeling empowered to provide input to the Lake Oswego School Board, and knowing that their feedback is heard and taken into consideration. This includes listening to the voices of

students, parents, community stakeholders, teachers and staff.

In 10 years I see our School Board including best practices and innovative research in every decision they make. I see our leaders crafting policies that adapt to current best practices, research and technologies.

## **Section 2 -Specific topics**

### **1b. What issues have you spoken up most about and used your voice and expertise to influence in your community? What issues have you decided to stay less vocal about and why?**

I am running for Lake Oswego School Board so that I can be vocal about public school education and best practices, to improve our school district and our city for the residents of Lake Oswego. I am a passionate parent, educator and advocate and I seek to make our community a better place both now, and in the future, so that we all can thrive. I will use my voice and the opportunities I have been given to represent my neighbors and my community to the best of my ability.

I am a passionate advocate for safer sidewalks and pathways. I ran for Lake Oswego City Council in 2022 so that I could use my voice to advocate for pedestrians, and ensure that their rights are honored and protected. Making our city more walkable and accessible not only helps the environment by reducing our carbon footprint, but it also helps the citizens of our community lead healthier lives.

I am passionate about funding for special education and creating a space of culture and belonging in our schools. My mother was a special education teacher with Salem- Keizer Public Schools for thirty-five years. Her experience ingrained in me the importance of honoring all voices and abilities. As a classroom teacher, I was very attentive to all 504 and IEP students, so that I could provide them with equal access to our curriculum.

### **2b. There is a lot of debate in the local paper currently about Oregon being ranked close to the bottom in national proficiency tests. How did Lake Oswego students rank in comparison to students in top ranking States and what is your hypothesis for why?**

As a student in Salem-Keizer Public Schools, I attended Englewood Elementary, Parrish Middle School, Waldo Middle School, and North

Salem High School. By the end of my K-12 education, I had received the equivalent of a full school year less instructional time than students who completed their education in the city of Baltimore. This calculation is made by taking into account the number of instructional days provided for our students per year.

We must provide the opportunity for our students to compete academically at a national level, from grade school standardized tests all the way through Advanced Placement and college prep courses. We must allow our students to enjoy expanded learning time and educational opportunities in our district through an extended school day. This will allow our students can achieve equity by being provided the same opportunities and classroom time offered to students in other states in our nation.

We must provide for our students a school year that includes 180 instructional days per year, on par with the majority of the states in our nation. We must give our students the opportunity to start their classes in August, which will in turn give them a fair chance at achieving high ranking scores on national Advanced Placement tests and standardized exams.

**3b. Will you assure the public that you will stay steadfast in keeping Lake Grove School open in its current location?**

I am passionate about re-building Lake Grove Elementary on the school current site. This will ensure that we are able to retain the neighborhood feel and substantial history of Lake Grove Elementary in the Lake Grove neighborhood. It will also continue to provide the walkable accessibility that Lake Grove Elementary provides for many of its students in the Lake Grove neighborhood.

**4b. What is your position with regard to the Federal Government's directive to remove DEI & CRT from public school curriculums?**

DEI and CRT programs should always be included in public school curriculums. As a student of Education Policy in a graduate program in the city of Baltimore, we focused extensively on DEI and CRT best practices and techniques. After receiving my M.S. Ed. degree from Johns Hopkins University, I was able to apply DEI and CRT practices first hand in my Baltimore classroom on a daily basis. It is important that all children feel included and honored, and can see themselves reflected in their curriculum.

**5b. What would be your approach to solving the current LOSD budget shortfall of \$12M, and what will you do to prevent deficits from happening again?**

Our priority as the provider of public school education in Lake Oswego needs to be that our students can compete on a national level. Our school district budget and our budget for education in the state of Oregon must reflect the reality that our students in Oregon are not receiving the same number of instructional days or instructional hours as other states in the nation.

We need to take a hard look at which of our educational practices are working, and which ones are not serving our students. We must prioritize academic achievement for our students so that they can compete on a national level, and prioritize our budget spending and policies to give our students the best chance at a high quality education.

**6b. Would you support encouraging a plant-based diet in schools?**

I would support a plant-based diet in schools and I live out this ideal in my every day life. I will support policy that ensure all students have access to healthy, sustainable, locally-sourced food.

When I was seven years old, I decided that I would become a vegetarian after reading the book *Charlotte's Web*. My parents were not vegetarians, and had no idea what to do with me when I told them I was no longer "eating animals". As I became older, I learned how to cook with a plant-based diet and found a way to support my sustainable, healthy lifestyle that did not include meat. I have been a vegetarian since I was seven years old, and I am proud that I was able to find a way to express my strong opinions from such a young age.

**7b. Would you be willing to include in the curriculum educating kids to understand the effect of their choices regarding food, research labs, puppy mills, etc., and how that all relates to racism, sexism, etc.?**

A thorough grounding in civics and history is crucial to the education of young citizens who will have to grapple with economic, social, scientific issues throughout their lifetimes. School boards do have the flexibility to approve new classes based on an evolving society and based on student interest. I would be willing to include subjects in our curriculum if the course material is based in fact and extensive



research. As educators and school leaders, we must keep in mind that all information that we disseminate to our students is of the highest quality, backed by extensive research and best practices.

**8b. What do you believe should be in the LO school bond proposal and what should not be included?**

I agree with the bond proposal as it stands. I agree that we should replace failing and obsolete systems, replace our oldest elementary schools at their current school sites (Forest Hills and Lake Grove Elementary), address essential capacity needs (CTE, STEM, CTP and Palisades World Language School facilities), and repurpose our available facility (Uplands) to consolidate district-wide services.