

Lara Bruner Written Response

1. What are the major issues you see facing CUSD schools? What would you do to address these?

CUSD's population is aging and enrollment is declining. We must do everything we can to make our schools a place that students want to be. High-motivation methods of instruction such as project-based and inquiry-based lessons draw students to our schools. Increasing Career and Technical Education (CTE) options allows us to meet the needs of a larger variety of students, improve graduation rates, and better prepare workers in our community. After all efforts to increase enrollment have been exhausted, we need to look to our community to repurpose land and buildings in a way that benefits neighborhoods and the district.

The retention crisis for school staff, including teachers, is a serious issue. I am looking to develop a meaningful annual retention survey, stay interviews, and deliverables from the information gathering. We must make every effort to make the work sustainable, foster support from the community, maximize funds towards salaries, and give teachers autonomy and voice.

2. Would you support a board decision you did not vote in favor of? Why or why not?

Once the board votes to support a policy, hire a superintendent, fund a project, or approve a curriculum, I would support that initiative. For example, I did not vote to unilaterally hire Mr Narducci as superintendent, as we had not followed best practice of gathering community input and posting the position for applicants. However, I fully support him and his priorities publicly and privately, and communicate on a regular basis that I appreciate his tireless efforts for our children. He absolutely has my full support and respect. Healthy and respectful debate in the voting process is necessary so that all groups feel represented. Once a decision is made, all leaders must join in support. The staff and community must see a united organization where its leaders seek to gain input, consensus, and support for each other, the mission, and the students.

3. What programming and policies do you hope to bring to the district?

I am currently working to help bring a comprehensive, community-based and evidence-based mental health plan. I would like to see a proactive, formal meet and confer process for staff to bring concerns and ideas to administration, in addition to an overall increased focus on retention efforts. The marketing plan is beginning to take shape, and I would like to see additional resources dedicated to help us compete in the increasingly market-driven education culture here in Arizona. In our rapidly changing world, we also need to continually explore how we can help our students prepare for careers that don't yet exist through the expansion of CTE programs, allowing educators to be innovative, and facilitating more community partnerships.