

Joe Otto – BUSD Questionnaire

Q: Why do you wish to be elected to the Bonita Unified School District Board of Education?

There are so many ways I can answer this, and numerous reasons I can list. The bottom line is I genuinely want to be more involved in this district and our community. I live in La Verne, and my business is in San Dimas. I have roots placed in both cities. With a 1st grader in this district, I have multiple “dogs in the fight” I am not a politician, I am not interested in higher office, or garnering power, or anything silly like that. I am interested in lending my voice and unique experiences to create a stronger and more efficient district. When my daughter started school, I joined the PTA and eventually the PTA Board. I was also elected as the chairman of the School Site Council. I also began attending the Youth and Family Action Committee meetings. All of this to be more involved, and to lend my voice to this amazing community and district. Win or lose, I plan to continue volunteering and working to be a force and resource to this community.

Q: When did you attend your first BUSD Board Meeting? Why did you attend? What did you like and dislike about your meeting experience?

My family moved to La Verne about two years ago. We moved to this area specifically so our daughter would have the opportunity to join the Bonita school district. Since then I have read through the minutes and watched the recorded Board videos.

Q: Educational Experience (Please include highest level of education achieved and any degrees, certificates, and career and trade related training you have received)

- Associate's degree in Human Behavioral Science.*
- C-36 Contractors license.*
- Notary public license.*
- Member of the La Verne Chamber of Commerce 4)*

Q: What specific talent, skill, life experience or expertise would you bring to the Board, and how do you feel it would benefit the District?

I bring my experience as someone who took a non-traditional route through education. I, unfortunately, faced family issues during high school and graduated with a GED a year early. I then worked towards obtaining my associate's degree in Human Behavioral Science at Mt. SAC. I spent a few years working in various corporate positions:

- Regional Sales Manager – Dell Computers*
- National Field Operations Manager – Beats by Dre*
- International Field Marketing Manager US, Canada, Mexico – Oakley*
- Director of Marketing – Greenspire*
- Plumbing Contractor / Small business Owner – My Dad's Plumbing*

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Q: What do you think are the most important roles and responsibilities of a board member?

In my opinion, the Board needs to be the bridge between the district and our community. As a board member I would not be working for the government, or even the district per se, I would be working for every student, teacher classified employee, and every member of this community. Far too often elected officials hold a sense of entitlement, as a board member I plan to keep my crosshairs on what matters most and that is taking care of our kids and our community.

Q: What do you see as the District's greatest strengths? What do you see as the District's greatest challenges? And why?

Our greatest strength as a district is our people. We have the best teachers and staff in the country if you ask me. This district is comprised of hard-working, dedicated, and involved members. The ownership that we see is not normal. It is easy to forget just how fortunate we are to have such an outstanding tight-knit community. In this district, the teachers, parents, students, and their siblings are connected, everyone knows everyone. We need to harness the power of our community and figure out ways that we can all help each other in these trying times.

Right now our greatest challenge is dealing with this pandemic. As long as our kids and teachers are required to work remotely, we need to figure out new and innovative ways to help them. We MUST consider other models of education! As an example - Glendale has brought their kids back to school with the teachers working remotely. The classroom structure is similar to what Bonita has created for School-Aged Care, except Glendale has kids from the same grade and classroom together, which improves the children's learning. We must ask ourselves how we can improve remote learning so that we keep our kids both safe and educated?

Q: What do you think it means for students with IEPs/504s to be supported in the "least restrictive environment?"

Children and the families of children with IEPs/504s need and deserve flexibility. I can say unequivocally that this district cares about all our students. It is important that whether a student has an IEP/504s or not that we avoid the cookie-cutter method. Every student deserves the right to an individual and tailored learning experience.

When we look at students with IEPs/504s this needs to be even more of a focus. These students, due to no fault of their own have things harder. We need to support these students to the best of our ability. It is our duty to give all students the best and least restrictive opportunities to succeed.

It is also crucial that as a district we make a concise effort to look for better ways in which to support all our kids. This also means working with our teachers to find out what is and is not working.

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Q: What 3 things do you hope to accomplish as a Board Member? In four years, what do you hope will be the success stories for the Board and District? (things implemented, improved, or expanded)

- 1. Improve communications between parents and teachers/district staff.*
- 2. Implement a program with quantifiable KPIs intended to improve the education of children with an IEP/504 plan.*
- 3. Expand options for middle and high school students to learn about college and college-alternatives.*

In four years, I hope to say Bonita Unified School District is the most supportive environment around for children with special educational needs.

The fact is we do not need to reinvent the wheel. BUSD is already one of the best districts in the state. I feel unbelievably blessed to be a part of this district and community. To be completely honest, after 4 years I will base my success or my failure solely on whether I did everything I could to improve this district. Did I follow my heart when making decisions? Was I open to criticism and critique? Did I put the kids, teachers, and staff first? If I can answer yes to those questions, then my tenure on the Bonita Unified School Board will have been a success.

Q: AB 329 (California Healthy Youth Act) requires comprehensive sexual health education to be provided to students at least once in middle school and once in high school, starting in grade 7. Do you support further implementing these courses / curriculum into grades K-6th as well?

No – additionally we as a district MUST make the opt-in/out process easier for parents.

Q: Do you support CA Prop 15*?

I am currently researching all sides of prop 15 in order to make an educated decision.

Q: Do you support CA Prop 16*?

A: I am currently researching all sides of prop 16 in order to make an educated decision.