

JOSH DANIELS

Seeking Position of: Berkeley School Board Director
www.electjoshdaniels.com

1. If elected, what are your top priorities during your term? What would you like to accomplish and how would you go about doing so? Please be specific.

I'm running for Berkeley School Board to ensure that our schools work successfully for all our children. I will work to expand on Berkeley's remarkable and unique strengths—award-winning schools, a supportive community, dedicated teachers and staff, the 2020 Vision, and a heterogeneous student body that benefits all students—as we develop solutions to our ongoing structural budget deficit and persistent racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic inequities. I will do so by (1) supporting effectiveness in the classroom and in our intervention and enrichment programs by ensuring there are fair and timely evaluations and by the practical application of best practices from one site or program to another; (2) using resources efficiently, including non-financial resources such as UC Berkeley and Berkeley City College; and (3) advocating for more open and transparent decision-making.

I am able to actually achieve these goals (rather than just talk about them) because I bring a unique set of skills, experience, and expertise to the School Board. As a school finance attorney and former financial advisor to districts, I am proficient in the complexities of state and local school finance, including school bonds and parcel taxes. Six years ago I co-founded the Berkeley High Student Court—a successful, alternate discipline program empowering, engaging, and serving students of all academic abilities. I am a Berkeley native and product of the Berkeley public schools; I earned law and public policy degrees from UC Berkeley and I currently serve on the Berkeley Public Library Foundation board.

2. How have you in the past and how will you in the future use your position to expand the presence and influence of Asian Pacific Americans in public policy and politics?

I have helped expand the presence and influence of Asian Pacific Americans in public policy and politics in a number of ways. For example, as president of the Graduate Assembly (GA)—the graduate student government at UC Berkeley which had an \$850,000 annual budget, 10,000 constituents, 2 full- and 25 part-time workers—I reached out to many campus organizations, including those involved in the APA community. The result was an expansion in the number of involved graduate students as well as how well those students represented the graduate student body in degree type, geography, and race and ethnicity. I also cofounded the Berkeley High Student Court, an alternative discipline program at Berkeley High School (BHS), which was launched in response to the high suspension rate at BHS. While the District's official suspension rate among APA students at BHS is relatively low, these statistics do not differentiate between an Asian American student of Chinese descent and an Asian American student of Vietnamese descent. (Vietnamese is the fifth most common

language spoken at home among English Learner students in BUSD.) However, the Court has helped the District reduce suspensions at BHS generally and the anecdotal evidence suggests the same for Asian American students of Southeast Asian descent. As a School Board member I will continue these efforts by reaching out to organizations such as the APA Caucus to ensure that all members of our community are meaningfully included in public policy and politics through means such as advisory committee appointments.

3. What have you done that demonstrates your commitment to and effectiveness in promoting Asian Pacific American interests in the following areas (and if you have not contributed in these areas, please discuss any area(s) in which you have made a contribution):

Education/Civil Rights

Education is a civil right (in fact, in California each child has a fundamental constitutional right to an education) therefore I am addressing these topics together.

*In addition to my work discussed in my answer to Question 2, I currently work as a school finance attorney. In that capacity I spend much of my time on a single lawsuit, *Robles-Wong v. California*. (See www.fixschoolfinance.org for the legal details.) The suit challenges the constitutionality of the school finance system. In particular, we argue that the system denies students, especially English Learner students and students of color, their fundamental constitutional right to an education. We argue that the school finance system does not allow districts to adjust to meet the needs of their unique student population (e.g., districts are unable to expand successful student support programs because of too many restrictions or not enough money), which results in the equity gaps that we see all over the state, including in Berkeley. While the equity gap is usually spoken about with respect to African American and Latino students, there are also significant inequities with respect to Asian American students for Southeast Asian descent. (In BUSD, my experience has been that the inequities are with respect to students of Vietnamese descent.) As a School Board I would use my knowledge of how the school finance system impacts districts to help Berkeley implement successful and sustainable programs that address the equity gaps in Berkeley and that enable all students to receive their constitutional right to an education.*