

## **KAREN HEMPHILL**

Seeking Position of: Berkeley School Board

### **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.**

My top priorities will include:

1. Maintaining core academic programs and student support services in extremely difficult economic times, through innovative but sound fiscal strategies and creative community partnerships.
2. Emphasizing high academic expectations as an integral part of reducing the opportunity gap in education.
3. Strengthening the District's career-technical program by focusing upon a multi-pathway strategy that prepares students for entry into college/university while providing exposure to a variety of careers through internships and hands-on classes that can excite students to consider the wide variety of professional, para-professional, or well-paying technical and/or trade career opportunities.
4. Establishing a District-wide safety/disciplinary system (including addressing alcohol and drug use and truancy) that is based upon prevention and restorative justice.

I am (and will continue to be) a chief proponent and champion of the first and now annually updated District-wide student achievement plan. The result is that the achievement gap is now narrowing in Berkeley while student achievement for all groups is growing. I will continue to be a strong advocate for math and science education and have already begun discussions with our university, community college and trade unions around pooling resources to enhance multi-pathway technical career development. Key to achieving all of this is building partnerships – with other public institutions, the non-profit and business sector; and of course parents and community members – which I have done as a School Board Director and professionally as a local government executive.

### **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?**

In my professional life as a local government executive, I generally have 1-2 interns each year, ranging from high school students to recent college graduates and/or graduate students or post-grads. I have had several Asian-American interns (Chinese American, South Asian American, and Pilipino American over the years working on issues including environmental policy/programs; public education/outreach; and municipal budgeting. After the internships are over, I have continued to be a mentor – in some cases more than 10-15 years after the internship was over.

**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):**

I majored in Asian Studies at Brown University (with an emphasis on Chinese history and politics) which has led to a lifelong appreciation of Asian culture and interest in Asian history, including the immigration of Asians to the United States and consequently the history of Asian Americans. I was a major supporter of Berkeley High's adoption of a Mandarin Chinese language program - to provide opportunities for students to learn a globally important language but also to support literacy in Chinese American students that are verbally fluent but wish to be literate in Chinese as well.

But, more relevantly, I recently have been thinking that the District has primarily emphasized working with the African American and Latino community and that more emphasis needs to be placed on working with other communities of color – especially recent immigrants and communities, such as Southeast Asian and Phillipino, that have also historically not been well-served by our School District. I plan to spend more time reaching out to the District's growing Asian-American and Asian immigrant community so that their voices can be more loudly and clearly heard and their interests can be better incorporated into District policy and programs. I absolutely recognize that all of our diverse voices are important and realize that the Asian American and Asian immigrant community's voice has not always been given enough attention by policy makers.

Finally, I am a proponent of incorporating the role that Asian immigrants, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders have played in our country's and state's history as an integral part of our school's curriculum.