



**Alisun Thompson  
Santa Cruz City School Board Area 3**

1- Please tell us why you are interested in reaching out to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender community.

**ANSWER: With a high school age daughter that is active in the Queer Youth Community, I am well aware of the vital role it can play in supporting LGBTQ youth. Our schools need support in understanding the specific needs of LGBTQ youth and our youth need advocacy to ensure that current legislation such as AB537 is properly enacted and that schools are safe spaces. While policy is important, *implementation* is the key to making the changes our students need.**

2 - Why do you want the endorsement of The GLBT Alliance, Santa Cruz County's grassroots progressive gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender political organization?

**ANSWER: I seek endorsement so that my commitment to LGBTQ youth and my alliance with LGBTQ advocacy groups (such as the alliance) can be publicly known. I would like people to know that I am a candidate they can count on to advocate on behalf of LGBTQ students.**

3 - Have there been any LGBT people who've had a significant impact on your life as role models, inspirations, mentors, friends, etc.? If so, please tell us a little bit about how they've influenced you.

**ANSWER: There have been a number of LGBTQ people in my past that have shaped my thinking. Some of these people I have known directly and some have been distant role models. They include Bettina Aptheker, Cindy Cruz, Kate Miller, Gloria Anzaldua, Adrienne Rich and Maria Lugones (to name a few). More recently and much more locally, Queer Youth activists that have had a profound impact on my daughter and have provided tremendous support have inspired me. This includes Stuart Rosenstein and Rory Dillard.**

4 - Please tell us about your history with the LGBT community, and your awareness of issues specific to our community.

a - Have you had any opportunities to address LGBT issues in the course of your community service or professional life to date (i.e., have you helped formulate corporate non-discrimination standards, worked on the board of a non-profit that developed a LGBT outreach program, etc.)? Please tell us about this work.

**ANSWER: As a teacher educator at UCSC I have developed curriculum and resources for teaching preservice teachers about issues facing LGBT youth in our schools and communities. I assist preservice teachers in developing plans for being allies and advocates for LGBT youth.**

b - The queer community is diverse, and we work to represent all elements of it. In support of that objective, we'd like to ask, specifically, whether you know any self-identified bisexual or transgender people, and if you are familiar, at any level, with the issues faced by these specific communities?

**ANSWER: My daughter identifies as bisexual and through her I have explored literature on the specific challenges outside of and *within* the LGBT community. I am very familiar with transgender issues as well as issues of gender-nonconformity with my work in preservice teacher preparation. I stay current on policies via various groups I donate to and use as a resource base for my teaching and advocacy including Gender Spectrum and Trans Student Equality Resources.**

c - As documented in the The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute publication, "Bisexual health: An introduction and model practices for HIV/STD prevention programming" (2007), which is available for download at the URL below, in many cases bisexual people face even greater health risks and obstacles to accessing effective health care and health information than their peers in the queer community, including higher levels of self-harm, suicide attempts and thoughts of suicide. What specific steps would you take to address the issues raised in this report, and elsewhere, that are specific to bisexuals, including "biphobia" and lack of service provider awareness of bisexuality?

[http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/bi\\_health\\_5\\_07\\_b.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/bi_health_5_07_b.pdf)

A summary of the top ten health issues for the bisexual community, sourced from the above report, can be found here:

[http://brown.edu/Student\\_Services/Health\\_Services/Health\\_Education/lgbtq\\_health/bisexual\\_health/health\\_concerns\\_for\\_bisexuals.php](http://brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/lgbtq_health/bisexual_health/health_concerns_for_bisexuals.php)

**ANSWER:** I think one of the best ways to address these issues is through inter-organizational collaboration. I would access resources and via GLSEN (Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network) and see that our local GSAs and the Safe Schools Project is fully supported by the school board and that it is addressing the specific needs of Bi-youth. Another group that I would find resources and support through, specific to the challenges raised in this report is National Association of School Psychologists to ensure that our councilors and teachers are trained and supported to address the needs to bi-youth.

5 - Please describe your philosophy for working with under-represented communities of which you are not a member and, specifically, how this would manifest itself in your tenure in office.

**ANSWER:** My philosophy for working with under-represented communities of which I am not a member is to 1) LISTEN to members of the community and not assume that I know what to prioritize. 2) Act as an ally and advocate and advance the agenda that the community sees as primary through active engagement and democratic process. 3) Be persistent in advancing policies and not let them get marginalized.

6 - Are you aware of the various local organizations which serve the LGBT community; do you support any of these organizations, financially or as a volunteer? Would you like to know more?

**ANSWER:** Yes – I donate to and volunteer for the Diversity Center and Safe Schools Project. I am also involved in PFLAG as a member and support various projects of STRANGE (all of which my daughter is active in). I am currently working with Stuart Rosenstein to create a protocol for how to involved youth in the annual Creating Change project and am helping my daughter organize the Harbor High GSA with the support of Ron Indra.

7 - If elected, will you be willing to work with the GLBT Alliance, The Safe Schools Project of Santa Cruz County, and/or other appropriate organizations, to be sure that the schools in your district have a curriculum for awareness training for staff and faculty concerning LGBT issues?

**ANSWER:** Yes. I already am. One of the reasons I am running for office is to improve the conditions for LGBT youth in our schools. It is a project I am passionate about. From my vantage point as a community member and the parent of a queer daughter, the district has been legally compliant and symbolically supportive but has not truly advanced a coherent agenda for supporting LGBT youth. I would like to change that. I would support and follow protocols made available through advocacy groups such as GLSEN and TSER to actually move this agenda forward by advancing policy and working to create LGBT inclusive cultures at our schools.

8 - It is not unusual for a school district to have a relationship at some level, such as by providing subsidized services or access to district property, with otherwise meritorious organizations (such as the Boy Scouts and the Salvation Army) who have formal policies that discriminate against LGBT people, and a documented history of doing so. If it emerged that such a relationship existed or was proposed to exist in your district, how would you resolve the situation?

**ANSWER:** The school district should not implicitly or explicitly condone or support any organization that discriminates against LGBT people. Period. Even allowing groups on our campuses sends a powerful message to LGBT youth that their dignity is not being honored and protected. This would apply to any group that has publicly or formally challenged the human and civil rights of the LGBT community.

9 - What, in your opinion, is the most effective way for the school board to enforce the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000? What do you know about your district's policy concerning safety from harassment for LGBT students? (If you'd like to know more, see <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/sv/>)

**ANSWER:** Our district has a Safe Schools Project and there are "active" GSAs on all of our campuses. However, not nearly enough has been done to address trans-students rights including access to gender-neutral bathrooms or proper training and support for teachers (specifically Health and Physical Education). As I mentioned, Santa Cruz City Schools is "compliant" but compliance is not enough. It takes a genuine effort to make the kinds of changes that AB 537 required. With the resources available, SCCS could be a leader in this effort and a model program. Working with local agencies, I would like the opportunity to support that because it is certainly not happening with the current board.

10 - How would you encourage schools in your district to apply The California Student Civil Rights Act (<http://www.eqca.org/atf/cf/%7B687DF34F-6480-4BCD-9C2B-1F33FD8E1294%7D/SB%20777%20FACT%20SHEET.PDF>)?

**ANSWER:** Policy is a good start but it takes active and persistent effort to make sure that policies are IMPLEMENTED. I would 1) Access resources and support of local agencies, 2) Educate the board and the

community of legislation protecting the rights of LGBT youth. 3) Convene a committee to see that consistent progress is made and that schools have the resources and support necessary to enact the legislation. 4) Monitor efforts and continue to provide support to schools. 5) Call for an annual review of progress and a timeline for follow-up.

11 – How would you encourage schools in your district to implement The Safe Place to Learn Act (<http://casafeschools.org/SafePlacetoLearnLow.pdf>)?

**ANSWER: I would use the above protocol.**

12 – How would you encourage schools in your district to implement The California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Act (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/se/>)? Are you committed to ensuring that schools in your district are including LGBT sexuality in their sexual health education classes?

**ANSWER: I would use the above protocol.**

13 - Do you support HR 1199/S 403, the Safe Schools Improvement Act, which would amend the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (part of the No Child Left Behind Act) to require schools and districts receiving federal funds to adopt codes of conduct specifically prohibiting bullying and harassment, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity? (You can find information at <http://www.hrc.org/laws-and-legislation/federal-legislation/safe-schools-improvement-act>)

**ANSWER: Yes. Absolutely. I see this as an issue of grave concern that requires our immediate attention as a community. The statistics concerning substance abuse, homelessness, and suicide among LGBT youth should be a call to action for our communities but especially for our schools where harassment and bullying occur the most.**

14 – Do you support the California PTA's May, 2008 resolution calling for school districts to promote current, medically accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive sexual health and HIV/STD prevention education in the schools, taught by instructors trained in the appropriate courses, and for districts to make available current medically accurate educational programs and materials to parents about comprehensive sexual health and HIV/STD prevention education (<http://www.capta.org/sections/advocacy/downloads/Resolution-2008-01-Adopted.pdf>)?

**ANSWER: Yes. Absolutely. And these practices need to be informed by the most current information on the specific needs of trans-youth.**

15 - Do you support S. 1088, The Student Non-Discrimination Act, which would prohibit public schools from discriminating against any student on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, or because of the actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity of a person with whom a student associates or has associated?

(<http://www.hrc.org/laws-and-legislation/federal-legislation/student-non-discrimination-act>)

**ANSWER: Absolutely. Everything I have already written should demonstrate my commitment to justice for LGBT youth.**

16 - Do your district's existing drug abuse prevention programs contain LGBT specific elements that address the high rate of drug and alcohol abuse among LGBT youth precipitated by stigmatization, bullying and other stress factors?

**ANSWER: Not at a district-wide level. It seems that particular schools have specific information but there does not seem to be a coordinated effort for all schools in the district. As a parent and community member, I have found this troubling.**

17 - California contains the largest concentration of homeless youth in school in the nation, disproportionately queer and people of color; what is your district doing to serve these students, and do you have any ideas for improving and expanding existing programs?

**ANSWER: If the district is addressing the needs of homeless youth, it is not doing so publicly or in such a way that the community is engaged. My daughter wrote and directed a play that was on homeless youth and included a gender non-conforming character. I coordinated the outreach for the play. It was performed locally and raised \$3,000. for the REBELE Family Shelter. The money was earmarked for a trauma informed care unit. My daughter was a SCCS student and other than the support she received from one of her teachers, the play and the issue received no recognition from the district or the board. On fact, no one from the board or district leadership even attended the play even though it was performed by local SCCS youth. It was, in my opinion, a missed opportunity to show support of this very important issue.**

b - What does your district do to serve students in foster care, and do you have any ideas for improving and expanding existing programs?

**ANSWER: Again, if it is doing something, it is not doing so in a way that engages the public. This needs to be a real “agenda item” on the board if anything beyond compliance is going to happen. I would advocate a committee be convened and the above protocol used to guide efforts (see question #10)**

Between 2010 and 2011, alone, the number increased by 10 percent. The largest concentration of homeless youth in school are in California, which has about 35 percent of the national homeless youth population, followed by Florida, Texas and New York.

Studies show that LGBT youth are at particular risk of becoming homeless. In 2010 it was estimated that, although only five to seven percent of youth overall in the U.S. identify as LGBT, between nine and 40 percent of homeless youth identified as such. According to a new report from the Center for American Progress (CAP), that number is now as high as 45 percent. (<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2013/09/26/75746/seeking-shelter-the-experiences-and-unmet-needs-of-lgbt-homeless-youth/>)

According to the Congressional Research Center, 32 percent of homeless youth are black, more than double the proportion of black youth in the total population.

[http://colorlines.com/archives/2013/11/homeless\\_youth\\_in\\_focus.html](http://colorlines.com/archives/2013/11/homeless_youth_in_focus.html)

18 – Is Triangle Speakers (<http://www.trianglespeakers.org/>), the LGBT speakers bureau, consistently welcome in all level of schools throughout your district? If not, would you encourage administrators and teachers to invite panels of speakers as part of their diversity education? Would you support teachers who invite Triangle Speakers to their classes?

**ANSWER: Yes. Absolutely. In fact, teachers need the support of the board to combat pressure against open dialogue about LGBT issues. It should not fall to the responsibility of teachers – they need the board behind them to do this work.**

19 – Is diversity education (including LGBT culture) through lectures, speakers and/or the arts considered controversial in your district? Do you support diversity education, and would you take a leadership position in advancing it in your district?

**ANSWER: No. It is not considered controversial but I do think there is “unspoken” pressure to not push the boundary too much. That is the only way I can explain what seems to be subtle resistance to speakers and other forms of outreach.**

20 - What kind of volunteer/outreach programs does your district have in place? Do they have LGBT specific elements? Does the training associated with these programs include LGBT specific cultural competency elements?

**ANSWER: Our district has all the pieces in place but there does not seem to be active advocacy. It needs a stronger board presence or a member of the board who sees this as a primary issue. As far as I can tell, while there are board members that are vocal supporters, there doesn't seem to be a real agenda in place for moving forward. I have already spoken to the directors of the Safe Schools Project to see what it would take to move the project forward. I would like to help make this kind of positive change happen on the board.**

21 - Would you be willing to meet with the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) student clubs in your school district at least once a year? If the middle school in your district does not have a GSA, would you be supportive of attempts to start one as an additional support system for LGBT students and their allies? Please explain.

**ANSWER: Yes. Absolutely. Both of my daughters are leaders in the GSAs at their schools and I would continue to support these efforts. And, as a board member I would have more leverage to see these programs further developed.**

22 - Have you in the past, and will you in the future, attend LGBT events, such as LGBT Pride, Queer Youth Leadership Awards, or the BAYMEC dinner? If you have not attended, why not?

**ANSWER: I attend PRIDE and QYLA every year and will continue to do so. I would like to see more of a SCCS board of trustees presence at these events.**

23 - If you receive The GLBT Alliance's endorsement, will you display it in your campaign literature and on your website?

**ANSWER: Yes. I would be honored to publicize the endorsement. In fact, it would be the endorsement I would be most proud of the parent of a queer daughter, a teacher educator and an ally/advocate.**

24 – Have you received endorsements which you think might be of interest to the LGBT community?

**ANSWER: I have the following institutional endorsements:**

Monterey Bay Central Labor Council

Greater Santa Cruz Federation of Teachers AFT Local 2030

Santa Cruz Council of Classified Employees AFT Local 6084

UC – AFT Local 2199

I have been personally endorsed by Ron Indra and Steph Taylor who are both active in the LGBT community.

25 - Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

**ANSWER:**

**Our LGBT youth need stronger advocacy on the SCCS board. I would like to be that voice. I am committed to working with local agencies to make SCCS a model district for LGBT rights and issues. I see this as a primary motivation for why I am running for the board.**