



Ken Wagman

Santa Cruz City Schools Board of Trustees, Area 1

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

ANSWER: Many of the students in our population, especially in middle school and high school, are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning. These students may face unusually challenging situations both at home and at school, where they may be misunderstood and discriminated against by their fellow students, or even worse become targets of bullying and harassment. It is my job to help ensure all students have the best possible chance to learn and grow in a safe environment, and to do so I must understand the concerns of the LGBTQ community and the current knowledge about how to best foster a welcoming environment.

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 want the GLBT Alliance endorsement to signal to voters my intention for all students in our district to thrive. LGBTQ rights have been important to me for my entire adult life, because I care about having a world that works for everyone. Since I have chosen to serve in the public education realm, I bring this concern to education. While I have some knowledge in this area, the GLBT Alliance members are experts. Alignment with this group gives me access to the most current information and coaching.

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: When I was 20 and still on the east coast, a student I knew in high school committed suicide after being outed as a gay man. That was my first personal experience of how unsafe it was to be gay in the world.

After I came to Santa Cruz in the late 1970s, I interviewed for a room in a house with a group of people I knew. During the interview, one of the men said he didn't want to live with me because I wasn't gay. At the time, I took that as discrimination, and I carried that thought for several years. I now realize his world did not feel safe, because of the discrimination he must have faced as a gay man, so he was trying to make his home as safe as possible. Having a non-gay man in the house did not feel safe to him. That drove home for me the challenges, even in Santa Cruz, of living as a gay man.

Having lived in Santa Cruz for almost 40 years, many other LGBT folks have impacted my life. While I've admired and learned a lot politically from John Laird, there have been a number of other people who have influenced me in the political realm. Before he died, my next-door neighbor Mo Reich showed me on the political side the power of passion to impact ideas and the cost of taking an inappropriate action. On the personal side, he was a loving, kind neighbor and was very sweet to my children. I've known Jo Kenny since my days as president of the Neighborhood Food Co-op. Recently, we've worked together to get an award for the district and she again demonstrated the power of direct action and carefully analyzing a problem to come to a solution. On the school board, I've been lucky enough to work with Cynthia Hawthorne, whose passion and commitment to support all kids getting a great education is matched by her willingness to work hard to achieve the results.

On a personal note, I've had close friends and neighbors whose kids I babysat or tutored, and these kids realized they were not given the body they belonged in. I've watched them and their parents support each other throughout the process of transitioning to the body they were meant to have.

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: When I was a PTA co-president at Mission Hill Middle School, we regularly supported the Triangle Speakers in coming to our school and advertised it to parents so they would be aware of the opportunity the group provided.

When I first joined the Santa Cruz City School Board, I met with Sharon Papo, the STRANGE program coordinator at the time, to discuss any changes or improvements the district could make in supporting LGBT youth in our schools. Later on in my first term in office, I authored a resolution the board passed supporting the Harbor High Associated Student Body (ASB) and its letter to the Food and Drug Administration regarding the FDA regulations instituting a lifetime ban on blood donations from gay and bisexual males. The resolution said in part

“Be it further resolved that the Santa Cruz City School Board supports the students in encouraging the FDA to ensure that gays and bisexuals are not discriminated against in the process of guarding the safety of the nation’s blood supply and

Be it finally resolved that the Santa Cruz City School Board on this day, January 24, 2007 requests the Superintendent to send copies of this resolution to the American Red Cross, the FDA, our state and federal representatives, and the Harbor High School student council.”

The board unanimously passed the resolution, and we circulated it widely to our elected representatives, the FDA, and the Red Cross in Washington, DC.

At the same meeting, I wrote another unanimous resolution that has been the stand of the board ever since. Entitled the “Reaffirming Safe Schools” resolution”, it stated

“Whereas all students in the Santa Cruz City School District, whether they are gay, lesbian, transgendered, bisexual, questioning, or heterosexual, have the right to publicly express their sexual orientation without fear of harm or bullying and

Whereas the Santa Cruz City School Board has repeatedly affirmed these rights through its policies and support of organizations that empower all students, then

Be it resolved that the Santa Cruz City School Board condemns the cowardly actions of recent letter writers and phone callers who have threatened a student solely on the basis of his sexual orientation and his willingness to speak publicly about it and

Be it further resolved that the Santa Cruz City School Board reaffirms its commitment that all students have the right to a safe space at school sites to express their beliefs, opinions, and who they are without fear of reprisal, bullying, or physical harm ...”

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: I’ve known Adam Spickler for about 15 years. In addition, I’ve had a couple of friends whose kids have transitioned, and I’ve observed and discussed with my friends the challenges they and their kids have encountered along the way. In Santa Cruz, Planned Parenthood has been a leader in supporting people who are transgender and allowing them to express themselves in the way in which they feel most comfortable. As a strong supporter of Planned Parenthood, both in my role as a trustee touring their facilities and meeting staff and as an individual donor in the community, I continue to advocate for Planned Parenthood being available to support those in need.

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

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

ANSWER: During my tenure, our board has always supported safe schools for all kids. Biphobia and bullying are not tolerated between student and student, teacher and student, or coach and student. In addition, the board has supported and authorized funding for certificated counselors at all the schools in the district, and we still are able to have some trained health clerks available to interact with kids and be a strong ear for who they are. Creating opportunities for kids to be safe and have the support of trained professionals is crucial to the success of students. In district health and PE classes, all of the top ten health issues for the bisexual community are addressed and students are given information to support them in making safe and healthy choices throughout their life.

California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson last week sent a notice to school districts emphasizing staff training in suicide prevention. I immediately forwarded it to our district's superintendent and her office.

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 is the same as my philosophy in my regular job as a community college math instructor. For the past 25 years, I've taught math at Gavilan College in Gilroy, a predominantly Hispanic-serving institution. I teach to the students and the challenges they are facing as individuals rather than viewing them as just a class of 40 people. Over the years, this focus on the individual has enabled me to reach many students successfully—some of them understanding math for the first time ever—and enabled the students to overcome their own blocks to understanding math. This has allowed them to succeed in my class and go on in their chosen field or transfer to a four-year school.

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: Over the years, I have financially supported the Diversity Center, the Triangle Speakers, and Planned Parenthood. I came to the Diversity Center to phone against Proposition 8 and my wife and I were quoted in the *Sentinel* when we marched in the No on 8 parade in Watsonville. I've also proudly marched in the Pride parade in Santa Cruz, and we encouraged our daughter when she chose to work with Out in Our Faith, an opportunity for kids of different faiths to meet and discuss their challenges and successes in being who they are. I am always open to learning more about the work of these organizations and others in the community.

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: If re-elected, I will be honored to continue to work with any and all organizations in the community, including the ones mentioned above, that support our students to be safe from bullying and harassment, that support them in who they are, and that make them aware and respectful of others.

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: While the district currently has no agreements with these organizations, I would work strongly

against any such agreements with organizations that discriminate against any group, including LGBT people.

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: The district is continually training administrators, staff, and teachers regarding our zero tolerance policy for harassment and bullying. The board has approved money for outside experts to come in and lead these trainings when necessary. In addition, the district brought in the Southern Poverty Law Center to provide their Teaching Tolerance training for teachers, students, and administrators. As a long-time contributor to that wonderful organization, I was extremely proud of our district for bringing them to Santa Cruz.

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: Currently, our student services staff work with all school sites to support district and board policies. These clearly state all students must be safe and supported, regardless of their sexual orientation. As a trustee, I will continue to make sure this practice is followed.

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

ANSWER: The district has already implemented all the recommendations on page four of the executive summary of The Safe Place to Learn Act (<http://casafeschools.org/SafePlacetoLearnLow.pdf>). Maintaining a safe place to learn for all LGBTQ students is a fundamental concern of the district's board, administrators, teachers, and staff. The board funds ongoing training and one-time, special trainings such as the one offered by the Southern Poverty Law Center (refer to question #9) that work to develop strategies to make our campuses safer.

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: Our district's health curriculum includes sexual health, HIV/AIDS prevention, and LGBT sexuality. I am committed to ensuring the district continues to include these elements in the mandated health and PE classes. Further, I support the district's efforts to have teachers collaborate throughout the district to continue to refine and improve this curriculum. They are able to do this during regularly scheduled staff development days.

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, I strongly support the Safe Schools Improvement Act. Gathering data on incidents of harassment and bullying of LGBTQ students is crucial to finding ways to reduce it.

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, I support the PTA resolution. Giving our students medically accurate information is crucial to providing them with the skills needed to make healthy lifestyle decisions to protect themselves. As every

parent knows, that's crucial towards keeping students safe.

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: Yes, I support the Student Non-Discrimination Act, and even though the US Congress hasn't passed it, I've proudly worked to align our district policies with it. I've authored or co-authored board resolutions that support what the act is trying to accomplish

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: - The district's drug abuse prevention programs are led by Youth Service interns. While there is no specific emphasis on GLBT stresses, stigmatization, and bullying which lead to drug and alcohol abuse, these topics are discussed in general. When the Youth Services interns realize they are interacting with a GLBTQ student, those students are informed about STRANGE. The district's counseling staff is also aware of the specific stresses and bullying LGBTQ students undergo and give support to those students during individual counseling sessions.

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: The first thing the staff does is to identify the homeless and those in danger of becoming homeless. Once identified, students are discreetly given support, as are their families. The district could further improve services by expanding after-school opportunities and academic support.

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: With the change in state funding to include an emphasis on students in foster care, many districts in the state will now provide levels of service similar to what Santa Cruz City Schools has been providing for many years. Our services complement those the county provides to foster youth. Our staff works with outside support people to ensure foster youth are supported to succeed. There is a county-wide effort to assist students in foster care, and the work of district staff is crucial to making sure students are as well-served as possible.

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

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: When I was on the PTA at Mission Hill Middle School, we regularly publicized the Triangle

Speakers when they came to the school. I have continued my support of them ever since and will continue to support teachers and administrators who invite in the Triangle Speakers. Listening to the Triangle Speakers is many students' first opportunity to see LGBTQ folks as people. I believe this decreases bullying on campus.

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: Diversity education is not considered controversial in our district, and it receives unanimous support from leadership. As mentioned in previous answers, I have authored board resolutions that clearly state how Santa Cruz City Schools supports diversity education. These resolutions form the basis of the culture of diversity that's supported and nurtured in our schools.

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 does not have outreach programs containing LGBT-specific cultural competency elements. Most outreach is done through parent groups and the student body at each school. The secondary schools have gay-straight alliances that may address these issues. However, the district offers training that enables counselors, teachers, and other staff to support all students, especially LGBT students, with the challenges they face in school.

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: Absolutely. In 2008, I marched in the Watsonville Pride parade carrying a sign saying I was straight and voting no on Prop. 8. Local high school GSAs were there, and I noticed both Soquel and Costanoa High Schools weren't represented. The next week, I talked to the STRANGE program coordinator and initiated the process to get clubs going at those sites. In addition, when I met with the principals, I followed up to make sure the alliances were formed. I will always be supportive of creating a GSA at all middle and high schools.

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've marched in the LGBT Pride parade, I phoned and marched against Proposition 8, I've attended the Queer Youth Leadership Awards, and my daughter, when she was at Santa Cruz High, was awarded a Queer Youth Ally award. I have attended the BAYMEC dinner and continue to support the work it does.

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

ANSWER: I would display it proudly as I did in previous campaigns. Below is a piece of my 2008 written campaign literature:

Ken's supporters (partial list):

Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee
Democratic Women's Club of Santa Cruz
Greater Santa Cruz Federation of Teachers, Local 2030
Santa Cruz Council of Classified Employees, Local 6084
Carpenter's Local Union 505, Santa Cruz County
GLBT Alliance of Santa Cruz County
John Laird, California State Assembly

and there were 20 more names and organizations following.

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

ANSWER: Numerous teachers from different schools, most principals and managers in the district, many other local politicians, many school board members, Andrew and Kathy Goldenkranz.

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

ANSWER: At Gavilan College, where I teach, I was the founding member of the Stand Together group that came out of a two-day seminar that I attended at the Museum of Tolerance in LA. I strongly advocated with the president to send 25 other faculty, staff, students, and administrators to do the program. We were one of only two community colleges in the state to send as many people.

I am proud of my accomplishments during my years on the Santa Cruz City School Board. In addition to the resolutions and other accomplishments described above in relation to GLBTQ issues, I would like you to know about the following:

- I co-chaired winning local funding measures (P in 2008, I&J in 2012) that provide over \$20 million to provide academic counseling, retain high quality teachers, reduce class sizes, preserve art and music programs, and keep school libraries open with certificated librarians.**
- I understand the district finances and work from my position of budget committee co-chair to make the money benefit our students. During the recent recession, I kept state-imposed budget cuts far away from the classroom.**
- In 2013, I uncovered an additional \$200,000 to increase classroom supplies and other support for our excellent teachers and staff.**
- I co-founded and currently co-chair the district's Green Schools Committee, which has been recognized statewide for its work to reduce the district's environmental footprint and increase environmental focus in classrooms.**
- I have vigorously supported on-going hands-on science and increased access to arts and music for elementary students.**

Thank you for the opportunity and support to examine these issues. I look forward to continuing to work to support all our students, and especially our at-risk students. Our district must continue to be a model where bullying by students, teachers, administrators, coaches, and staff is not permitted and LGBT students find a safe haven where they can flourish.