



**Cynthia Hawthorne
Santa Cruz City Schools Board Trustee Area 3**

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

ANSWER:

As an out Lesbian in our Santa Cruz community for 28 years and a current trustee on the SCCS board, I have worked hard to forge relationships and collaborative partnerships. I am a member of the Santa Cruz City/District Committee, participate in BASTA, am a statewide delegate for California School Boards Association (CSBA) and co-founded the Santa Cruz County School Boards Association (SCZCSBA). By having a seat at the table as an active participant in these and other organizations it is my honor to represent the needs of LGBTQ students and staff as decisions are considered and goals and policy are set.

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

ANSWER:

It has been my honor to receive the endorsement and support of the GLBT Alliance previously.

It is important to me, personally and as a candidate, to have the GLBT Alliance endorsement. It also means that on the school board on behalf of our community, the GLBT Alliance is my ally.

3 - Have there been any GLBT 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:

The GLBT people who quickly come to mind are Wiggys Sivertsen and Kater Pollock. I have been close with Wiggys for the last 40 years. She is my mentor, consultant and friend. Wiggys has guided my philosophical development and my clinical skills. Most recently I have spent time with her discussing best practice to support questioning youth. I am honored that Wiggys endorsed me and encouraged me to continue to serve.

Kater Pollock, my partner of 28 years, has always been an inspiration for her pioneering leadership in our community. Her willingness for our family to be one of the first visible, out families to send our children through our local public schools was a radical act at the time. As we navigated public schools and educated loving teachers along the way, Kater stood proud and insisted on being accepted long before it was a given. Kater has a strong moral compass and a philosopher's understanding of the complex issues in play as our community grows and changes. She inspires me by being who she is and by the contributions she makes to our community.

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

ANSWER:

I came out in 1979. I have always been both a member and an advocate for our community personally and professionally. Professionally I am a psychotherapist in private practice for many years and my clients are primarily from the LGBT community in the Bay area.

My awareness of the issues in the LGBT community has changed as the needs in our community have changed over the decades. In the 80s the big issues were coming out, alcohol and drugs or grief, and loss due to all our friends who were sick or dying of HIV/ AIDS.

The 90s and early 2000s saw a huge increase in gay and lesbian families and coming to terms with being out at work and in our community and local schools and playgrounds.

Most recently and with the passage of AB 1266 it has been all of the above and learning about ways to best support Questioning and Transgender community members and the increase in polyamory relationships. Marriage in our community is now a given.

But the consistent theme is how to live and love with courage and acceptance—and how to be well.

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:

Yes my work as a clinician is focused on supporting LGBT individuals and families. My specialty is LGBT couples with children and supporting LGBT individuals.

As an elected board trustee it has been my honor to write and implement policy to support LGBT staff and students. My focus has been to support and ensure that State Law protecting the rights of student and staff is implemented properly, including the Safe Schools Policy. Recent policy focus in discussions with staff is to ensure that Santa Cruz City Schools (SCCS) implements the law, as well as the intent of AB 1266 the bill passed in December to reinforce and protect the rights of transgender students.

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:

Yes. I address issues faced by bisexual and transgender people in my clinical work and in my community at home. As a board member these are identity issues for both students and staff that are protected by policy and State law. It is my job as a school board member to make sure all people in our diverse GLBTQ community receive support and their rights are protected.

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:

The first step to providing support to bisexual students and staff is to ensure that training has been provided to those who are “first responders.” In our schools this would include teachers like Ron Indra and others who are known to be “safe” and counselors who are trained to understand the specific needs of bisexual youth.

As a board member my job would be to allocate resources to make sure training is available and mandatory for staff. Part of the training needs to include the information that the needs and risks of bisexual youth are higher. Staff will need a clear understanding of the risk factors in order to provide additional support to bisexual youth in our schools. And the best way to address any type of phobia or discrimination is to name it, actively advocate against it through education and behavior guidelines, legislate equal civil rights and provide consistent support to groups who need it.

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:

The community I work hard to support is the English Language Learning (ELL) population, which is a large percentage of our school district. The ELL issues mirror the GLBT community issues such as access, acceptance, understanding and learning how to be effective with folks with a different culture, norms and needs. The ELL community has a right to be acknowledged, to have the needs of their children met and to influence decisions we make as a school district. It's really important for this community as well as the GLBTQ community to have a voice in decision making and how resources are allocated. That is my job as a board member.

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 particularly appreciate the work of the Queer Youth Task Force. The folks who worked on the 40th anniversary of Pride did a great job celebrating the Pioneers and our community. I am always interested in gaining more knowledge.

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 do currently work to support the Safe Schools Project. I helped with a press effort in December to raise the public profile of the Safe Schools Project to get additional funding, and was quoted in an article in the The Good Times. In May, I agreed to help raise the profile of the Queer Youth Task Force. To that end, I helped with a “kick off” garden party and invited John Laird to join me as event emcees to raise awareness of the QYTF amazing work with youth. The plan for next year is to translate the awareness into additional funding for the Queer Youth Task Force.

As a trustee, I believe that it is imperative that State Law and policy is translated into daily practice at all our school sites. In 2013-14 I directed staff with the support of our board to conduct all staff

training on work place bullying and hostile work environment after the Greater Santa Cruz Federation of Teachers (GSCFT) conducted a survey that reported staff experienced bullying. This training is to be conducted annually and a staff task force continues to meet to address the issues raised. Interestingly one of the reported outcomes was some staff feeling bullied by parents. GLBT staff must also be protected by district policy and practice.

Additionally, during my tenure as a trustee, resources were allocated annually to train staff on sensitivity and awareness of laws in place to protect student rights. As State laws evolve so do the curricula for staff trainings. I will always work hard to support GLBTQ students and staff.

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:

SCCS currently does not have a facility use agreement with any organization that formally implements policies that break State and Education Code laws.

Should our district be approached to rent facilities or distribute materials from such a group, I would encourage our school district to undertake legal action. I feel strongly that we should not share our public schools with groups that discriminate against GLBTQ people or any other group.

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 key is for the board to allocate resources on an ongoing basis for staff training and awareness. The trainings conducted annually at the start of the year sets the tone and practice at every site for the year. The board also needs annual training about district policies on anti-bullying and safe places to learn. I attended a workshop presented by the Southern Poverty Law Center and left encouraged to see students learn the skills to lead the effort at their own campus, with support from staff, to ensure a safe place for all. The effort to make schools safe is critical and ongoing and has been a focus of my work for both policy and budget.

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:

I support the staff-led effort at every campus, based on board policy and budget support. Recently staff hosted outreach to staff from other districts to learn and support a countywide effort to support student rights. I'm proud that SCCS is a leader in this effort, though there is still much to be done. I look forward to learning more and being an active participant.

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

ANSWER:

Similar to other Ed code laws and district policy efforts, the board supports staff in working at every

campus to engage students, teachers and parents in understanding how each person can be a part of the solution.

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:

Yes. I'm pleased that HIV/AIDS prevention and GLBT sexuality it is key part of curriculum and is currently offered in all health classes. As a therapist myself, I'm also glad that counselors at each site are trained professionals who have access to referrals and other resources students may need.

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.

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

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

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 LBGT youth precipitated by stigmatization, bullying and other stress factors?

ANSWER:

Thank you for asking this important question. I will follow up with district staff when they return in August to verify the answer. I do know that the district counselors and staff have extensive referrals to community support, such as counseling and groups like AlaTeen and AATeen that offer this information and services.

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:

Yes, this is very important. The new funding law from the State (LCFF) is exceptional in that it mandates resources be targeted to homeless youth. This will be the first year the law is implemented and the district plan approved by the board allocates staff resources through counseling at every site as well as meals, bus passes, clothing and referrals to social supports in the community. This is a work in progress and outcomes will be reviewed and additional resources added as the need arises. Given that a significant percentage of the Homeless Youth are GLBTQ, it will be important for the board to ensure that staff is prepared to understand the specific needs of these students for targeted 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?

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

ANSWER:

The new funding model also targets support to foster youth. SCCS has long been a leader in the collaborative effort to work with local agencies to support foster youth in academic success as well as safe housing. The coordinated effort through a group called Foster-Ed helps prevent students who are often moved from falling off the radar. CASA volunteers often provide support to our students as well as students from other districts. I will continue to work collaboratively, within our district and outside, to support our most vulnerable students.

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. Triangle Speakers is an ongoing partner in our schools and has been for many years. Most invitations come from teachers on an annual basis and are tied to classroom curricula. I'm very supportive of this and will encourage invitations to speakers as part of diversity education.

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:

I support diversity education and have participated on panels to train teachers. I speak with parents to raise awareness about our GLBTQ community. The level of controversy has diminished over the years and is being replaced by acceptance and support thanks to education, activism and support from the GLBTQ community (especially the Diversity Center) and the courage of students.

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:

The most specific LGBT volunteer outreach SCCS does is through the Youth Empowerment Summit. SCCS has sponsored and helped pay the costs for students from throughout the county to attend and present at the annual conference in SF. Principals and Assistant Principals volunteer to organize students and interested parents to attend this event.

Our parent organization participants number in the in the hundreds. Other than SCCS partnerships with PFLAG, most of the volunteer outreach to students is student-led through Gay Straight Alliance, Strange and the Diversity center.

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:

Both of my daughters were in the Gay-Straight Alliance in high school. Though the GSAs are not as active as they once were there is still an important role for GSAs to play. As for our SCCS Middle Schools, both currently have GSAs and Mission Hill hosted the Xtraordinary Youth conference a few years ago, which I attended. I am always happy to meet with GLBTQ youth and allies.

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:

Yes of course. I have attended these events over the years and look forward to many more.

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

ANSWER:

Yes. Loud and Proud.

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

ANSWER:

Yes. Wiggys Sivertsen, Shannan Wiber (NCLR), Elizabeth Birch (former president of HRC), Suzanne

Nicholas, Merrie Schaller, Deb Abbott, Adam Spickler, Stuart Rosenstein, Janet Gellman, Ziesel Saunders, Nancy de la Pena and Kater Pollock.

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

ANSWER:

I am proud of my record of inclusively serving all students, staff and the community in Santa Cruz City Schools over the last few years. If our schools are not safe for all, then they are not safe for anyone. I believe our district still has work to do. But progress has been made, thanks to the efforts of hardworking activists and teachers from our GLTBQ community. Today our schools are more welcoming and tolerant of difference. Our staff is more aware of policy and Education Code that is in place to protect students from bullying and provide a safe space to question and grow. This is an improvement, compared with when I first joined the SCCS board. I have been a part of the effort to move the district philosophically toward safety, equal rights, and acceptance for all. And I am dedicated to continuing this work for students and staff.

Recently, as the president of the County School Boards Association, which is comprised of trustees from every board in the county, I led a discussion on AB 1266. We covered trustee roles and responsibilities of implementing student protections and support in every school in our county. It was a wide-ranging discussion and not every district is on the same page for student rights despite the fact that AB1266 is the law. That night a board member from another district tried to begin an effort to enlist the support of all county trustees to sign a petition to repeal AB 1266. As the chair I quickly rose in opposition and the effort was turned back. I believe it is important to have an out, active, elected lesbian in a leadership position in our county.

One thing I understood inherently when I was in high school was that school was a safe place and teachers, coaches, the counselor and the librarian all cared about me and supported me in being successful. They saw a future in me that I could not see for myself. They knew me, and they knew that as a young and unaware lesbian, I was not going to be successful if I stayed in our small town. The only paths ahead would be to work at the cannery or try for a job at the JC Penny's that was about to open.

So many years later, having graduated from the University of Oregon and then San Jose State, succeeded in creating my own therapy practice, and—most importantly—raised with my partner our two daughters through Santa Cruz City Schools, I have an opportunity to keep making a difference by serving on the school board because there are students out there who are smarter and more talented than I will ever be, and who have even greater need that I did.

I'm driven by a moral imperative to ensure our schools fully support every student's unique needs and potential through an excellent and caring team of education professionals. Because this is what teachers, coaches, counselors, librarians and staff did for me—and I will be forever grateful.

Thank you for the opportunity to share both my ideas and my record. I would appreciate the support and endorsement of the GLBT Alliance to continue my work on behalf of students and our GLTBQ community.