



**CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION FOR BETTER CITIZENSHIP**

**2008 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATURE**

CANDIDATE NAME KRISS WORTHINGTON

DISTRICT AD 14 SD _____ PARTY DEMOCRAT

I agree to confer with local CTA chapters prior to recommending candidates for school board or county boards of education.

SIGNATURE OF CANDIDATE _____

DATE _____

This questionnaire is for the exclusive use of the California Teachers Association in determining a recommendation position for candidates running for legislative office in California.

The California Teachers Association welcomes inquiries on CTA positions related to public education. Since many of these issues are complex, any candidate may contact CTA to discuss information about these issues prior to answering questions.

The California Teachers Association supports strengthening public education through:

- Stable and adequate pre-K-12, Community College, and State University funding
- Maximizing the conditions of teaching and learning by providing:
 - Teacher decision-making related to professional development, and textbook and curriculum selection
 - An accountability system that provides adequate and equitable funding to all public schools, including schools of greatest need
 - A fair student assessment system that measures growth in student achievement aligned to California's high academic standards
- Ensuring children's health, safe schools and healthy learning environments
- Respecting school employees by preserving collective bargaining, due process rights, retirement systems, and including educators in the decision-making process
- Ensuring high quality teacher preparation standards
- Preventing privatization of public schools

PART I: YOUR PRIORITIES

What are your top priorities for California public schools? What resources and programs would you advance to support these priorities? What other priorities will you try to advance if elected?

My priorities for California public schools:

- 1. Restore semblance of democracy and reduce budget/funding threshold to 55%**
- 2. Better pay for teachers and support staff**
- 3. Better benefits including health care and secure pensions for education personnel**
- 4. Restoring community college, SU, and UC funding**
- 5. Addressing the achievement gap for low income and minority students**
- 6. Expanding preschool access**

I would certainly support raising taxes to fund public services. The giant federal tax cuts have created a situation where the wealthiest are paying far less of the tax burden. If California could close tax loopholes such as those identified by the California Budget Project and the Legislative Analyst Office, we would have a much more stable budget. The most fundamental budget reform needs to be to change the two-thirds requirement. Even with a Democratic Governor, the two-thirds is a giant barrier. We were successful at reducing the threshold on school ballot measures so we should actively work to lower it for the whole budget. Even if we only lowered it to 55% or 60%, it would be a dramatic improvement. Within the existing constraints, there are still ways to increase fees while making sure that they are tied to fund specific public services. Not only have I voted for tax and bond ballot measures at the city, regional and state levels, but I have often taken a lead role in the campaigns, including fundraising, campaign strategizing, and volunteer recruitment. My commitment to sufficient funding for public services will continue as a State Assemblymember.

I will be a Democrat with a backbone, and advocate for the most progressive state budgets and policy possible. I am passionately committed to working on Education, Environment, Health care, Labor, and Diversity, but I have also demonstrated that I can take on hundreds of projects and keep track of and follow through on them. My advocacy against implementation of the already-approved drastic prison expansion may help win us some delay in the horrible budget consequences that will come from operating the extra prison beds built to incarcerate many more minority youth for drug and minor offenses. My passion

for education funding starts at preschool, includes strong commitment to vocational and career technical education, and goes all the way through to the Community College, CSU and UC systems. Another goal is to use the bully pulpit of the position to support social movements, disenfranchised people and to oppose racism, sexism, anti-semitism, anti-immigrant and any and all forms of hate crimes, prejudice and discrimination. I will continue to speak out and stand up against I.C.E. raids and DEA raids. While I will be willing when it is necessary to be the “Barbara Lee speaks for me” solo principled progressive vote, I will primarily seek to build coalitions to win. While I will actively give encouragement and support to progressive causes, my legislation itself will mostly focus on positive incremental improvements.

PART II: PUBLIC EDUCATION ISSUES

We would like to have a general understanding of your thoughts on issues of interest to the California Teachers Association. Below are listed position statements and open questions to help explore each candidate’s views.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the positions listed by checking YES or NO. Space is provided to explain further. Please feel free to attach any additional comments you would like to make relevant to these questions.

1. Do you support the preservation of the minimum public school funding guarantees provided by Proposition 98 and would you regard 98 as the floor and not the ceiling?

YES NO

YES! Education should be the number one priority of state government services. It is both morally and practically necessary to improve school funding. Economic development and the success of Ca businesses fundamentally depends upon a well educated workforce. I am a strong supporter of preservation and expansion of the minimum public school funding guarantee. Proposition 98 was meant to be a floor for public education. But unfortunately, it has been used by many as an excuse not to allocate more. I have advocated for the restoration of Proposition 98 funds in past years, and I will vigorously oppose future attempts to undercut the minimum in order to balance the budget. Furthermore, I have been opposed to previous attempts to use Proposition 98 funds for facilities and school transit costs rather than just instruction. I have already testified at an Assembly Committee hearing against the Governor’s cuts and cost shifting.

2. Do you support allocating additional funding, above the Proposition 98 guarantee, to be used for compensation, health benefits, class size reduction, instructional materials, professional development, and school support personnel such as librarians, counselors, and nurses?

YES NO

No teacher should ever have to spend their own hard-earned money to provide basic supplies for their classrooms. I believe additional funding above guarantees for instruction is vitally necessary to improve the quality of public education in California. While instruction is at the center of funding priorities, we need to ensure that the workers, support staff, and school employees are all given the compensation and health benefits they deserve. This approach is not only just but helps to reduce turnover and instability in some of these positions and their detrimental effects on the school environment. I am also a strong supporter of professional development, and I support in-service training as long as it is supported by the union.

We can achieve additional funding through budget reforms, changing the 2/3 vote requirement, increased taxes and fees on the wealthy, and fighting back against draconian cuts proposed by the Governor.

3. Do you oppose tuition tax credits, vouchers, or other direct or indirect mechanisms to channel public funds to private, church affiliated and/or home schooling K-14?

YES NO

Aside from the annual erosion of public school funding, tax credits and incentives to move public funds away from public education are hurting the public education system. Individual families always have the option to enroll in private schools, but this should never be at the expense of public funding for K-14 education.

4. Do you support giving part-time higher education faculty the same salary and benefits (pro-rated) as full-time instructors?

YES NO

I support ensuring that part-time faculty are treated in the same way as full-time faculty. I oppose attempts to use part-time faculty specifically as a way to undercut instructional costs because of benefit costs associated with full-time faculty. Full-time faculty should comprise the bulk of faculty time at higher education institutions. This is an effective way to ensure consistency in a specific department.

5. Do you oppose the use of Proposition 98 dollars for capital improvements to facilities?

YES NO

Proposition 98 monies should ONLY go toward instructional costs, as they were originally intended. I support efforts to make sure that capital

improvement money is made more available to schools. I also support creative funding structures to ensure that we are funding not only the school facilities but affordable and workforce housing for teachers and school employees in the very neighborhoods that they serve.

6. Do you support increasing per pupil funding to the average of the ten highest states? How would you fund this?

YES NO

Yes! My personal goal would be to make California the number one state in per-pupil funding. I support policies that will increase the amount of per pupil funding provided for students and that will bring California into the top quartile in terms of funding. I believe in ensuring the baseline funding from Proposition 98 and will advocate for concrete policy changes to generate increased revenue for California public schools to elevate the quality of California public education. Many of my biggest successes as a City Council member include victories for funding for affordable housing, education, increased health care access and services, better pay and benefits for City employees, and catching up on capital infrastructure needs. I strongly supported creating new financing tools and believe we can also do this on the state level.

7. Do you support lowering the threshold for voter approval for school district parcel taxes from 67% to 55%?

YES NO

This is perhaps the biggest move we can make to allow willing districts to help find additional funding for local schools. However, the increase of public education funding should still be a top priority in the budget process, even before we win major structural budget reforms.

8. Do you support the right that parents of English language learners to choose a program of primary language instruction for their children rather than receive instruction in English only?

YES NO

I was actively opposed to Proposition 227 to prohibit bilingual education. While English is certainly the primary language in the United States, I believe it is important to nurture and encourage language diversity at an early age. In particular, for non-English speaking parents, it is especially important to ensure that their children are given access to both languages. This not only improves the level of communication but also the level of parent involvement in their children's education. On a policy level, I support programs that embrace this diversity and opportunities to provide the necessary training

and support to teachers and faculty to be able to teach English language learners.

9. Do you support teacher autonomy in determining their professional development and continuing education goals?

YES NO

Yes. I support teachers' autonomy to seek out professional development opportunities that will help them create a more successful classroom environment that best meet the diverse needs of students. I believe that professional development is an integral piece of creating strong and effective teachers. Individual professional development ventures should be determined by the teacher and should also be supported by school administration and should align with the California statewide content and teaching standards.

10. Do you support a state process to periodically update state academic content standards that includes the participation of a majority of teachers with teaching experience and credentials in the subject matter being reviewed?

YES NO

Yes, I support teacher involvement in a statewide process to update academic content as I believe that as front line workers in the education system, teachers have the knowledge and perspective to ensure that content reflects a well rounded education to foster positive development and educational achievement in all California students.

In addition, I have already worked with union leaders and union members to get them involved in our City budget process. I argued repeatedly with a prior City Manager to allow increased union and employee participation in budget preparation and adoption alike. Multiple union members have contributed valuable insights into the real world operations of the organization. Some of the budget savings I have advocated for came from employee suggestions. On several occasions, pools of available funds were identified as "salary savings" which were brought to my attention by employees who were doing double duty filling in for unfilled positions. I have worked directly with union officials who have strongly and effectively worked with me and with community groups to support tax and/or bond measures to increase needed revenue for public services. I have actively invited unions to participate in budget coalitions and we have successfully lobbied the City for good contracts as well as for saving the safety net of City services. Such coalition building can be very effective. I am currently advocating for SEIU 1021 participation in the selection process for the next City Manager and for major Department Heads as requested in a recent communication. I will continue to advocate for and bring workers to the

table during negotiations and discussions about the budget at the state level.

11. Do you support reducing statewide testing in core content areas for each student in elementary school, middle school, and high school instead of the current assessment system of testing students each school year for grades 2 through 11? What changes would you make?

YES NO

Yes, I support reducing statewide testing because I believe that currently, the standardized testing mechanisms used by the state do not reflect the content standards that are supportive of effective curriculum, instruction, or professional development. In agreement with CTA, I believe that assessments of student performance is most effective when gauging student skills and achievements from a holistic standpoint that includes student portfolios, teacher-selected tests, student-teacher conferences, and observations of student work. No Child Left Behind has created an increased testing burden on schools but done little to provide the resources needed. NCLB needs to be amended or else repealed.

12. Do you support rigorous multiple pathways to earning a high school diploma, including academic, career and technical education options, other than passing the California High School Exit Exam? Why?

YES NO

The CAHSEE (like many standardized tests) has created an environment where educators are pressured to teach students to perform well on a test rather than a much broader set of academic standards that prepare students for post-school rigors. I support ensuring that we develop standards that are responsive to the needs of individual students. I believe we should make available multiple avenues to achieve academic success.

13. Do you support maintaining and expanding career and technical education opportunities for all students? If so, how would you fund this?

YES NO

Career technical education offers a structured alternative for students to achieve success during and after school. I believe these programs are very conducive to public-private partnerships. By ensuring that these programs are leading students to well-paying jobs and leveraging state funding to incentivize private investment, we can expand these opportunities to more schools.

14. Do you support a publicly funded universal access Kindergarten readiness program?

YES NO

YES, YES, YES! I am passionately supportive of universal preschool access. Kindergarten serves a dual purpose of providing childcare and a concrete academic foundation for young children. I was a strong supporter of Proposition 82, and I still believe that an upper-class tax can be a realistic funding option to achieve this goal.

15. School business officials, principals and superintendents are responsible for the financial and academic soundness of school districts. Do you support additional qualifying training in school finance and education leadership?

YES NO

As we have seen in the Oakland Unified School District, it is vitally important for administrators and local school boards to be able to access the necessary resources and training in school finance and educational leadership. I support efforts to create and expand a best practices toolkit for administrators and decision-making bodies to this end. Additionally, given the threat of additional cuts to public instruction and schools spending more on instruction than they are getting from the state, it will be even more necessary to create a package of prevention strategies for school districts to help manage these difficult financial situations.

16. Will you oppose converting CalSTRS and CalPERS from a defined benefit plan to a 401K-type defined contribution plan?

YES NO

CalSTRS and CalPERS remain the State's strongest public benefit programs, and they should continue to ensure that future members are entitled to the same benefits as current ones. Because these programs are publicly managed, they are also subject to accountability standards that private investment firms and 401K options would not have. This ensures that the billions of public dollars in these funds are predictable and are being invested in socially responsible and responsive ways.

I oppose the take away proposals that threaten existing pension agreements. Employers who negotiated these benefits should follow through on their promises. We need to halt involuntary cash balance conversions and all other cutbacks in pension benefits, and we need to secure cost of living adjustments whenever possible. I have supported generous retirement benefits for police and fire employees because it was right for them, and also because I believe it establishes precedent to point to for other unions in

future years. I have supported retirement benefits for part time workers, and opposed reductions to widow/spouse benefits. I have supported multiple efforts of the Pension Rights Center to promote fairer pension policies both on individual employers and on a broader legislative level. I strongly support the Restoring Pension Promises to Workers Act of 2007 to close the merger and acquisition loophole and I am the sponsor of the City of Berkeley's support. We need to protect promised pensions when plans are changed or terminated, to safeguard 401(k) savings, and to establish an office of pension participant advocacy. I will continue to support shareholder resolutions and organized efforts within individual companies by employees, unions and community supporters.

17. Do you support the current "tenure" process, with probation leading to permanent status with due process and just cause?

YES NO

Tenure processes give stability and protection to the academic environment by ensuring that teachers are given the support they need to continue in a school setting. High turnover and an inability to retain quality teachers (due to a longer tenure process and lower salaries) have direct negative effects on pupil achievement. I strongly opposed the Governor's special election attacks on teachers when he proposed Proposition 74 to further reduce the stability that teachers have in the tenure process.

18. Do you support alternative compensation systems for teachers that include pay or incentives for student performance on standardized tests?

YES NO

On average, teachers are already making so little that basing pay on student performance is ludicrous. Additionally, this further punishes teachers who aren't afforded the resources and privileges to adequately educate their students. Schools should create meaningful benchmarks for performance and accountability, but it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that public education in all parts of the state are adequately funded and that all teachers have the same opportunity to achieve success with their students.

19. Should school districts have the right to transfer teachers to schools where they think they are most needed? Why/Why not?

YES NO

Administrators should have to negotiate voluntary placement, not forced transfers. Involuntary transfers can be bad for morale and contribute to a climate of fear rather than cooperation. Management needs to negotiate not push people around.

20. Should student data regarding performance on standardized tests be used to evaluate teachers? Why?

YES NO

While it is important to create a comprehensive system to measure the achievement of students, teachers are not the only (and many times not even the primary) factor in achievement. Rather than penalizing teachers based on student performance on standardized tests, teachers and administrators should focus on creating and improving curriculum, pedagogy, and school environment to better ensure success. Additionally, schools should be actively working to partner with community groups and parents to better tailor educational programs so that they are relevant and encourage success. Where schools are doing particularly poorly, the State has a role to provide resources to ensure improvement of student achievement. Linking performance directly to teacher evaluations and pay only worsens the performance situation by increasing turnover and instability in the classroom.

21. Do you oppose using school take-over, reconstitution and/or conversion to charter school as a sanction based of the accountability system?

YES NO

School takeovers should be the VERY LAST resort for schools, and they should only be used when a clear path to recovery, including realistic benchmarks, has been drawn. As evidenced in Oakland, the takeover often *reduces* the level of accountability in a school district and certainly removes the democratic process afforded the district through a school board. Conversion to charter schools also further reduces the accountability that these schools have to the surrounding community. When schools are in trouble, the state has a responsibility to ensure that local officials are given the necessary tools to prevent takeovers and adequately improve their situations. Additionally, these are conditions that should *encourage* rather than discourage increased community participation in the improvement process.

22. What proposals would you recommend to make schools safer? Do you support strong enforcement of CalOSHA standards in public schools?

YES NO

YES A few proposals to make schools safer include:

- **Community partnerships with local public safety officers dedicating CSOs or police to safety near schools**
- **Expand Safe Routes to School and traffic safety efforts (with transportation funds not taking away education funds)**

- **Job injury prevention education and incentives**
- **Adequate resources for maintenance**
- **Repair and replacement reserves**
- **Link to health services for all students on site or close by which also helps to protect the health and safety of the teachers and staff**

Although schools are primarily populated with students, they are a work environment too, and employees deserve CalOSHA standards and all workforce protections. Promoting a safe work place for teachers also makes it safer for students as well.

When completed mail to:

ALCOSTA Service Center Council
2177 Diamond Boulevard
Concord, CA 94520

FAX #: 925-676-2915

E-MAIL: srovetta-meriot@cta.org