

**Reichi Lee**, board member at a children's law office and Peace & Justice Commissioner

Former foster youth attorney at East Bay Children's Law Offices where I remain on the Board of Directors and Director of Academic Achievement and, Associate Dean of Online Education at Golden Gate University School of Law, Commissioner, City of Berkeley, Peace and Justice Commission

### **1. What specific steps do you propose to begin to close the achievement gap?**

When we talk about the achievement gap, we go right to the fix. But that's when there's already a problem. I want to encourage us to be proactive. That means catching problems before they become too big. For example, we should be providing caregivers more clarity and specificity regarding their child's academic progress - "2's, 3's and 4's" often do not paint the full picture. When students start to fall behind, caregivers should be notified immediately about their options and how to access them. Regular progress updates should be provided on whether services are working.

But none of this can happen unless we invest in the single most important factor in student learning – effective teaching. That means high quality curricula, classroom aides to allow teachers to differentiate, more paid time for teachers to communicate with families, and smaller class sizes, to name a few.

Additionally, the school board has recently approved several innovative programs to address the achievement gap, such as the African American Success Framework ("AASF"), Multilingual Learner Master Plan, and Puente Project. AASF, for example, contains specific action steps mapped to several ambitious goals. What we need now is to ensure these programs are adequately funded and implemented, with a plan to regularly evaluate whether they are effective. Progress updates on these programs should be a standing item on the school board agenda.

This kind of accountability requires difficult work from many different stakeholders. So above all, we need school board directors who are not afraid to ask hard questions, keep pressing the work forward, and keep student outcomes at the center of every decision.

### **2. Do you support charter Schools? How would you regulate the ones we have?**

Let's be fair and look at the facts. Not all charters are equal. Clearly, the ones that scam families of color into these schools and serve them worse than their district counterparts have no place in our society. It's time to shut those down. I don't support

them and will never support them - not in Berkeley or elsewhere. (Regarding how we would regulate them – we regulate by strictly adhering to the law. There are detailed regulations pertaining to charter schools set forth in the CA Education Code.)

But if a family is choosing a charter for the safety of their children - as I have heard first-hand in other places – or if their child is getting a special skill or program they can't afford or access otherwise – I think the question becomes: how do we offer an equally enticing, if not superior product, in every way possible, so that families do not feel like they have to leave? We want families to flock to our public schools. (Right now, they're not. BUSD enrollment is on the decline.) That's what I'm here to figure out.