

ALAMEDA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## CANDIDATE APPLICATION AND INFORMATION SHEET

**\*\*Please note: Candidates must reside within the boundary of the Alameda Unified School District to qualify for this appointment. AUSD Boundaries only include the City of Alameda. Candidates please ensure your home address is included below so that your residency can be verified.**

**Please complete and ensure your application packet is received on or before October 1 at 5:00 p.m. at:**

Alameda Unified School District  
ATTENTION: SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE  
2060 Challenger Dr.  
Alameda, CA 94501

OR emailed to [k1onergan@alamedaunified.org](mailto:k1onergan@alamedaunified.org)

*Application packets should include a completed version of this form, a resume, and a letter of interest.*

Date: 9/20/21  
de Vries Katie (Nancy-Kathryn)  
(Last Name) (First Name) (Middle Initial)

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: teacher  
Employer or Name of Self-Employed Business: currently taking time off  
No. of Years Residing in District: 18  
Do you have children in the district's schools? Yes ☒ No ☐  
If yes, what schools? Lincoln Middle School (former school Otis)

1. Do you have prior experience serving on a governing board, including a school district board?  
Please list your prior board experience.

I was former board member (4 years) and President (2 years)  
of the Berkeley Hills Nursery School. I have also been on the  
Otis PTA board (4 years) and the Alameda PTAC (3 years)

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2. Have you worked on any school committees or participated in any school activities recently? Please list them.

2021-2022: Lincoln Middle School PTA fundraising committee

2020-2021: LMS Spanish teacher

2019-2020: Measure A campaign steering committee, Otis 5th grade promotion committee, LMS Spanish teacher

2018-2019: Encinal Jr/Sr High School Spanish teacher

2017: Part of team that conceived of and ran a district-wide event to recruit parents as substitute teachers and paraprofessionals.

2016: Measure B1, Citywide volunteer coordinator & steering committee

2015-2018: Reading specialist, Otis Elementary

2009-present: PTA member Otis & Lincoln; Measures E & A (the *earlier* Measure A) block captain; Otis PTA board 4 years; Alameda PTAC board 3 years.

3. Describe any other community or business activities in which you have participated. Describe your role, and whether your work was volunteer or employment-related.

For better or worse, practically all of my community work and employment has had to do with schools. I do some translation work from time to time (volunteer and paid) and I have also fostered about 100 kittens over the years through the East Bay SPCA.

4. Why do you want to be a school board member?

I want to be a school board member because I want the best possible outcomes for Alameda's students and teachers. I have worked hard to support AUSD schools for well over a decade as a parent volunteer, on political campaigns, and as a teacher. My efforts in all three of these areas have taught me a lot and given me a multi-faceted view of a very complex organization. As a school board member I would be able to put this experience to good use in setting District priorities.

5. What do you see as the basic purpose of public schools?

As I see it, the basic purpose of public schools is to help each student achieve their potential. What a wonderful world we would live in if every child — every future nurse, future politician, future teacher, future green entrepreneur, future parent — were supported, encouraged and enabled to perform at their very best. A quote I read long ago sticks with me: "What would you do if you knew you would not fail?" I'm a realist. That is a tall order, and a real trick given the current statewide funding situation. But we can still work towards it.

6. What is the role of the school board in the fulfillment of that purpose?

The role of the school board is to work with the community, teachers, and professional District employees to set the priorities for the District. We agree we want students to achieve at their highest potential, great. But how do we do that? Do we do it with increased social-emotional support? Family engagement? Raised academic expectations? Computer science classes? A longer school day? The school board listens to and collects information from varied invested parties and evaluates what is most important, most urgent, and most practical.

7. How does the board's role differ from that of the superintendent?

The superintendent is the CEO of the district; this is a huge role that includes administering everything from maintenance work to philosophy statements, overseeing a large staff, and carefully considering myriad student needs. However, while the goal of the CEO of a for-profit company is usually pretty clear (make money!), the goal of a superintendent and thus a district can be more nebulous. Every community is different, this is why local school boards exist. When *Alamedans* talk about what a successful student is, what do we mean and how can we help make that happen? The school board leads effectively when it responds to these questions. Then the superintendent's role is to effect those priorities.

8. What should be the relationship between the board members and administration in the handling of school concerns?

Ideally of course the board members and the administration work together to manage school matters. The school board needs District administration to provide information and to effectively implement policies. The administration needs the school board to be thoughtful in its decision-making, to collect and evaluate community input, and sometimes to make very difficult choices. I have been lucky to work with many board members and administrators over the past decade, and Alameda is fortunate to have an informed and active team that works productively together even if they don't always totally agree.

9. Briefly describe how you believe you will contribute to the educational process.

My contribution to the educational process will be to evaluate and synthesize information in order to make informed and considered decisions for students, teachers, and the district as a whole. The multiple roles I have already played in the district give me a wide view of the needs of different groups, as well as the effects of policies on varied constituencies. I am also, in both my personal and professional lives, an intensely practical person who prioritizes efficiency and achievable goals.

10. What do you see as the strengths of the school district?

As I see it, when AUSD is at its best, the strength of our school community is that we can deploy all of our resources (District, volunteer and community) to provide a strong, supportive and enriched education for all of our students. It should not be a challenge to provide a strong education to a population that is all or mostly privileged; what I love is seeing our community working together to make sure that *all* AUSD students have solid opportunities (academic and enrichment) no matter their background.

11. What do you see as the area(s) most needing improvement in the school district?

What Alameda needs more than anything else is statewide funding reform. That is not something that we are going to be handling at the school board level, but we can work together with advocacy organizations and our counterparts from other districts to advance it.

The biggest challenge that I see as both a parent and a teacher is with hiring. With the support of our community, Alameda has made great strides in compensating our teachers more competitively. However, it is still difficult for us to find all the teachers that we need. This difficulty is shared by many districts statewide, but I have heard and read about new approaches that have been tried other places that we could try too. And let's keep in mind, "finding a teacher" shouldn't mean just hiring someone, anyone, with a bachelor's degree — in August. To get highly qualified teachers we need to have a competitive process that results in our having a choice. Then we can choose candidates who reflect our priorities.

12. What other pertinent information would you like the board to consider?

Besides what is outlined above, three more experiences shape and inform my outlook where schools are concerned. First, long ago, before I had children, I taught in independent schools. That experience, while it was positive, is why I chose to move to Alameda: I wanted strong *public* schools. However, it also means that I have participated in many different kinds of schools, and seen the strengths and challenges of different systems.

Second, my son had his first IEP in 6th grade, so I have experienced this process both as a parent and as a teacher.

Third, I attended high school in Chile during our Northern summers = middle of the school year in the Southern hemisphere. This experience of being dropped into school in a new language and culture (no "SLD" class!) gives me some first-hand knowledge of part of our newcomer students' experience.