

Trustee Area 7

Jason Dooley

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1. Why are you running for Trustee and what are your biggest priorities.

The public education system requires a cross-section of committed volunteers to join governing boards to ensure that district resources are used in the most efficient and effective ways to educate students. I am running to combine my experience and passion for education to join the current, high-functioning governance team. As a former board member, I know the vision and hard work that this position requires and am ready to hit the ground running to serve NVUSD students, employees, and families.

My biggest priority is to ensure that students feel they belong at our schools so that they can focus on learning and growing. Schools are in a unique position to provide consistent access to quality food, compassionate counseling, and other supportive services. We need to ensure that all students receive the services they need to allow them to thrive.

In addition, I want to continue the district's focus on professional development for its staff. A good organization fosters a culture of self-improvement and supports all of its employees in their efforts to develop the skills and expertise necessary to serve the students. NVUSD has implemented many such efforts, including district-wide professional development days, participation in management trainings, and stipends for educational programs.

2. What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing public education, particularly NVUSD, in the next four years? What specific actions or programs would you advocate?

As is often the case, financial concerns are the biggest challenge in public education in the next four years. The future of both state and federal education funding policy is uncertain. At the State level, there is substantial discussion of the Local Control Funding Formula and the State's past fulfillment of promised contributions through Proposition 98. There are efforts to change the calculation of LCFF funding from average daily attendance to another, more reliable measure.

At the federal level, there are significant areas of federal funding that may be in jeopardy if the current administration moves forward with its plans to dismantle the Department of Education. Special Education is partially funded through Federal funds authorized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, though it has never been funded to the statutory promise. Also, Title I funding for schools serving substantial populations of unduplicated students may be affected. This funding provides vital additional funding to address educational needs for disadvantaged students. While it is not clear that these funding sources are going away, the threat is enough to raise uncertainty and require Districts to plan for the worst-case scenario. Together with declining enrollment, NVUSD would be in a difficult financial position again.

The Board must continue to have a strong understanding of education funding and a strong fiscal philosophy to ensure that the District can weather any fiscal storm.

3. How do you see the use of school vouchers and the development of charter schools affecting NVUSD? What actions should NVUSD take to ensure its schools meet any unmet needs that vouchers and charter schools may provide?

I strongly oppose school vouchers, as they undermine public education without any meaningful contribution to society. They funnel taxpayer dollars to private institutions with no public oversight or management and they only benefit those who can generally already afford private school tuition. It is wealth redistribution, but in the wrong direction. Thankfully, there is little chance of a school voucher program being viable in California's current political climate.

Charter schools are different. They can play an important role in California's educational landscape, but only if done with purpose and intention. They can be laboratories for educational experimentation or for pedagogical creativity. However, they are often misused in ways that have a significant impact on the surrounding districts. They have a history of replacing district schools in distress, mitigating or eliminating any financial improvement from school closures or system reorganization.

In either case, NVUSD should continue to improve educational offerings, including a variety of choices for the students in the District. The District provides many options, from dual immersion elementary schools, magnet schools, K-8 schools, and comprehensive high schools. Open enrollment opens the doors of all schools to the students in the district.

NVUSD also needs to provide people with a specific vision for how the District can serve each and every student. The Strategic Vision does just that with its Graduate Portrait. It outlines the characteristics that the community wants to see from an NVUSD graduate and guides goals, policies, and practices to ensure the vision can become a reality.

4. If elected, how will you ensure that students have access to libraries and curricula that are diverse, bias-free, and historically accurate? How will you respond to challenges to books and or curriculum?

I am committed to ensuring that curricula is bias-free and accurate. We have a responsibility to ensure that students are prepared to be citizens of the world and are not being miseducated based on political agendas or biases.

To that end, I would ensure that NVUSD's robust curriculum adoption process continues. Typically, District staff review curricula, looking for both pedagogical value and effectiveness. Then potential curricula are tested in classrooms through a pilot. The results of the pilot are then reviewed by staff and presented to the Board for adoption. There are several points in the process where bias, inaccuracy, or other flaws can be identified and addressed by staff before the Board makes an ultimate decision.

Similarly, NVUSD has a robust process through its library services to approve additions to libraries. I firmly believe that libraries should not be limited by small-minded politics. Instead, we should rely on the expertise and passion of our library personnel to curate the books that will resonate with students at all reading or developmental levels. The goal is to encourage a love of reading, which can take many forms and be sparked by many sources. Anything that we do to limit the sources of inspiration is a disservice.

5. What measures will you advocate to address the issues of equity, harassment, bullying, and sexual assault on campus, ensuring the safety and well-being of all students regardless of their ability, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual identity?

I strongly believe that one of the most important indicators of student success and well-being is the presence of a trusted adult on campus. A trusted adult can be a lifeline for students who are suffering from bullying, can be a bulwark against harassment, and can be a source of comfort and stability, regardless of a student's life circumstances. NVUSD's Adult and System Portraits both incorporate a clear vision to foster student safety, well-being, and belonging in every corner of the

District. To that end, NVUSD has developed wellness centers on secondary campuses, staffed elementary campuses with social workers, and fostered professional development for teachers and staff to become a trusted adult.

Statistics show that these efforts are working. Surveys of NVUSD students show that 94.6% of students say they have positive relationships at school and 91.2% of students report feeling welcome at school. There is much we can do to increase those numbers, as nationwide data suggests that a disproportionate percentage of minority, socio-economically disadvantaged, or LGBTQIA+ students do not have a trusted adult on campus. I would advocate for the continued effort to reach these populations of students specific opportunities to connect with the school, with the trusted adults.