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## Meet the Candidates for High School Governing Board

By Cathy Tyson



Kristen Correll

Photo provided

Susie Epstein

Photo provided

Robert Hockett

Photo Cathy Tyson

Nancy Kendzierski

Photo Cathy Tyson

Four candidates are seeking three available seats on the Acalanes Union High School District governing board. It will be up to voters in Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, and Walnut Creek to decide who will win the non-paid, non-partisan four-year positions. Watching over 5,416 students in grades 9-12 at Acalanes, Campolindo, Las Lomas, and Miramonte high schools, along with the adult education and alternative schools, isn't easy. The board acts as the legislative body for the district, establishing policies and goals. Some of the issues board members deal with include conference with legal counsel about existing litigation in closed session, field trip requests, textbook adoption and discussion with union representatives, use of pesticides on campus, staff development and the budget. The district ranks in the top 4 percent of all high schools in the U.S.

The lucky winners will get to donate their time on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at the district office in Lafayette, where the public is always welcome to attend and weigh in on issues of concern. The next board meeting will be on Sept. 17. The agenda is always available online three days prior to the meeting. There are two incumbents, Susie Epstein and Nancy Kendzierski, running, and two new contenders, Kristen Correll and Robert Hockett; the candidates are presented here in alphabetical order.

Kristen Correll and her family moved to Moraga from Texas six years ago; she's been very involved in her kids' education since her arrival. She and her husband Charles have four children, two have graduated from Miramonte, one is currently a senior there and one is a sophomore at Campolindo. She has a background in education, with a doctorate in curriculum from the University of Houston. The family has been busy with a variety of sports teams during their tenure. Her board service credits include Town Hall Theatre Company and Miramonte High School, and she is a special education parent representative for the Moraga School District.

When asked about the biggest issues facing the AUHSD governing board, she cited two main concerns. First is Common Core and how that is implemented. The second is the budget, "Obviously there is a limited amount of money, I want to look carefully at how we are spending it." She wants to continue to provide in the future the great education that her kids received, and stressed the need to provide professional development for teachers.

Susie Epstein has served on the governing board since 2010. She was a board member of the Miramonte Parents Club from 2010 to 2013 and has held a variety of positions supporting Orinda schools – funding campaigns for Del Rey, Orinda Intermediate School and for Miramonte High School; she was also a classroom volunteer. She has two kids who have gone through our public school system. She says her favorite day of the year is graduation day, when she has had the privilege of handing diplomas to hundreds of graduating seniors for each of the past four years. She was awarded the Su Stauffer Friends of Education award, Acalanes Union High School District in 2010. She attended the University of Colorado, Boulder. For more information, see her website at [www.susieepstein.com](http://www.susieepstein.com).

When asked about the biggest issue that's facing the district, she replied, "The biggest issue we

face right now is implementing the transition to Common Core. In addition to curriculum changes, we will be moving to a new set of assessments and we'll need to communicate to students and parents how these differ from previous tests and scores." She added, "While Common Core is a challenge, it is also an exciting time as we are on the verge of delivering 21st century instruction. Teachers are integrating Common Core into their curriculum, working collaboratively and using technology to make the courses come alive for the students."

Robert Hockett is a retired teacher who now lives in Walnut Creek. He was born and raised in Lafayette and graduated from Acalanes High School. For 33 years he was a dedicated teacher of U. S. History and American Government in Yucca Valley, which is about 30 miles north of Palm Springs. He also served on the city council for Yucca Valley. Upon his retirement in 2007 he came back to the area. He says he loved teaching and the opportunity to impact young people's lives; he's a big believer in public education, enjoys reading and jogs every day. He graduated and received his teaching credential from Chico State University.

He believes the biggest issue facing the district is providing a quality education within the existing budget framework. He feels that should include music, the arts and sports. As a teacher with years of hands-on experience, he believes maintaining high quality staff is also critically important. He has realized through his many years of teaching and dealing directly with students, that they need an advocate.

Nancy Kendzierski was appointed to the governing board last September. She's married and has two sons; the elder has graduated from Campolindo, and her younger son is a junior. She received a computer science degree, summa cum laude from Iowa State University. She currently is serving on the executive board of the Moraga Education Foundation, and is the auditor of the Las Trampas Creek Council of PTAs. She was also the treasurer of the AUHSD Measure A parcel tax campaign for the May, 2014 election. She has a long history of donating her time at a wide variety of volunteer positions at Los Perales, Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, the Moraga School District and Campolindo High School.

Kendzierki feels the most important thing for the district is to continue "our strong academic performance with the move to Common Core and new assessments. The district is well-positioned to carry out this multi-year process given our excellent teachers, staff, and administration, plus our invaluable supportive community."

She added, "However, I believe the biggest issue facing the district is to maintain fiscal stability through this process, given the state's current level of funding for education, the many changes with the move to the Local Control Funding Formula, and the significant pension cost increases to school districts recently passed by the legislature. In addition to state funding, we must explore and be open to identifying additional funding opportunities and especially cost improvements."

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 4.

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