1. Do you have children? Yes / No

Monica Ratliff said, “Over the years, I have often thought about how I would educate my children if I was blessed to have children. I have contemplated options such as homeschooling, a private school, and various public versions (charter, magnet, or public school). Over the last decade that I have taught at San Pedro Elementary, I have realized that I would do what many teachers at San Pedro do and bring any children I have to school at San Pedro. It’s a good public school filled with highly effective, caring teachers. I would be happy to have my children attend San Pedro.”

2. Please indicate your three (3) priorities once in office and explain why:

Monica Ratliff said, “1. The health and safety of our students must be the top priority of LAUSD. Parents trust the schools to return their children to them at the end of the day in the same condition - or hopefully better thanks to education.

2. Our students must graduate from high school and be prepared to succeed in college or a vocation. This mentality must be instilled in elementary school. Education lifts a society up. The longer a child stays in school the greater chance they have of making a difference and not just in their own lives but in the lives they touch.

3. LAUSD must be fiscally responsible. The public has a right to know where the money is going and what is the expected outcome of the expenditure. Often, LAUSD makes decisions that are not good for the classroom, not good for the school, and, most importantly, not good for the student. Schools need more local control over funding.”

3. Quality instruction, reducing class size, adequate funding, school choice and access to quality data have all been cited as policies that impact student achievement. Please rank your opinion of these conditions with 1 being the most impactful and 5 being the least.

Monica Ratliff said, “I would rank them as the following

Quality Instruction: Rank ____1__
Adequate Funding and Local Control: Rank ____1__
School Based Collaboration: Rank ____1__
Reducing Class Size: Rank ____1__
Formative and Summative Assessments: Rank ____1__

All of the above-mentioned have a vital role in providing our students with an effective education. Quality instruction is obviously essential for student success. Schools must receive adequate funding and have the local control to spend the money in a manner that best meets the needs of their students.
School-based collaboration - the parents, teachers, administrators, and community working together - leads to a better, more targeted, and effective education for the students. Reducing class size in schools and grades that are struggling gives teachers more time to meet the needs of the individual students. Finally, good teaching revolves around formative and summative assessments that allow the teacher to quickly and immediately see the students’ area of need and see the students’ progress over time.

The issue of school choice ultimately revolves around parents’ desire to send their children to successful schools. Every student should be able to attend a school that works and we must immediately fix the schools that don’t work. When I started at my school, the school’s API was in the 600s. This year the API hit 814. My school is a Title 1, Title 3 school. If my school can be increasingly successful, every school in the district can be successful.”

4. How would you as a school board member increase parent and community engagement in schools? What have you done thus far to support your vision?

Monica Ratliff said, “School/parent communication is essential. As a teacher, I communicate regularly with the parents. Teachers and parents cannot wait until district-mandated parent conferences to communicate. Every week, parents see how their children are progressing in my class. If there is a problem, I communicate with the parent immediately. There are numerous programs available that allow parents, students, and teachers to communicate via technology. LAUSD should encourage each school to implement a program that allows for increased parent/school communication.”

5. What, in your opinion, is the pathway toward adequately funding the district? Do you believe the funding structure needs to be overhauled?

Monica Ratliff said, “The voters want their money to be used effectively by the district. Part of adequately funding the district is using the funds that we already have wisely. The public has a right to know where their money is going and what is the expected outcome. Often, purchases are made without appropriate investigation and public comment. The funding structure absolutely needs to be overhauled. I am excited about Governor Brown’s plan to restructure the way districts are funded. The current system is byzantine. I sat in a school site council meeting as we discussed how a particular fund could be used for cookies and light refreshments but could not be used to purchase a computer. That’s obviously ridiculous.”

6. Recently there has been a number of child abuse allegations brought against LAUSD. How would you help protect students from LAUSD employees who may seek to harm students?

Monica Ratliff said, “We need to adequately staff the schools to prevent such abuse. For
example, budget cuts have led to cuts in assistant principals and mental health professionals at the school site. The principal of a school should be able to walk through the school and see every classroom at least once or twice a week randomly. No teacher should ever think that they can get away with abusing students. In addition, the tenure timeline needs to be changed. Often, teachers get tenure too early without having been adequately observed. Principals are drowning in paperwork and assignments such as yard supervision that prevents them from doing a vital aspect of their job. It is essential that they know what is going on in the classrooms and the school. We need to rehire assistant principals to share the principal's burden AND free the principal up to walk through the classrooms regularly, but randomly, providing the instructional leadership that a school needs and deserves. The principal should have her finger on the pulse of the school.

In addition, cuts have forced schools to make choices whether to have a school nurse or a school psychologist or counselor. There are schools without the regular attendance of a mental health professional. Currently, students can have a crisis and have no trained mental health professional at hand. A school psychologist or counselor at school sites will provide an additional safety net for our students.”

7. Should LAUSD have a goal of bringing more students back into public education from private and home schools? If so, how would you suggest going about this?

Monica Ratliff said, “I completely respect a parent’s decision to homeschool their child or send them to a private school. A child will have no greater advocate and shepherd than their own parent. As mentioned above, I have often thought about what educational opportunity I would want for my child if I had a child. Because of my experience as a teacher at San Pedro Elementary, I believe in the potential of public education. I look forward to the day when every parent feels confident in their local public school. At the same time, I recognize and respect that there can be other issues besides educational quality - such as religious freedom - that motivate a parent’s school choice.”

8. What steps need to be taken to continue to challenge high achieving students? Are we doing enough to support these students?

Monica Ratliff said, “We are not doing enough to challenge high achieving students across the district. Currently, whether a high achieving student is appropriately challenged is based somewhat on luck. Some students are lucky enough to be in a classroom or a school that fits their needs. Unfortunately, there are too many students who are not so fortunate. We need to bring this issue into the light. We need to speak frankly about the many aspects of this issue. The first step is to have the honest discussion about the needs of high achieving students and not shy away from the complexities of such a discussion.”

9. What role will you have in addressing the resource and opportunity gaps for low-
income students?

Monica Ratliff said, “In many ways, my role will be the same as it is now and has been throughout the last decade that I have been a teacher and the years previously when I was a legal services attorney. I will continue to be an advocate for all students. I became a teacher because I believe that education is the route to a better life. I want your vote for Board of Education because my history shows you my future. I am not running for this office as a political stepping stone. I am running for the Board of Education because I know that my decade as a successful teacher at a thriving school in the inner city and my legal background give me the tools to improve this school district.”

10. What do you think of the teacher evaluation agreement reached between the District and LAUSD labor partners? Explain it and share your thoughts on it.

Monica Ratliff said, “The tentative agreement arose from the lawsuit, Doe v. Deasy. In that case, the judge ruled that under the Stull Act the District must comply "with the Stull Act's requirement that teachers and principals be evaluated by the progress of students toward District standards, however measured, and by the progress of students toward State standards as measured by the CSTs."

I firmly believe that every teachers should look at their individual classes' CST reports every year to see what they taught well and in what areas of instruction they need to improve. The CST reports break the data into bands based on the standards so teachers can see what standards they taught well and what standards they did not teach as effectively. Unfortunately, the Tentative Agreement did not do enough to focus on that valuable information. Instead, AGT was sprinkled throughout the TA. AGT does not give teachers the detailed information that they need to improve. The CST reports do give teachers and administrators the information needed to help teachers improve. The focus of the Tentative Agreement should have been on using the information in the CST reports to help identify and address teacher strengths and weaknesses.”

12. What is your position on school choice for parents and families?

Monica Ratliff said, “Every parent wants their children to have the best education available to them. I have the utmost respect for how hard parents are willing to work to obtain that educational opportunity for their children.”

13. What is your opinion on charter school growth within the district? Should we limit or promote charter school growth?

Monica Ratliff said, “I think the charter school growth is due to a combination of factors that must be respected: 1) parents want the best educational opportunities for their children and 2) charter school operators are extremely motivated to open schools that receive public funds but have more flexibility and, in some cases, less accountability than
public schools. There are some excellent charter schools in the district.

When I first started teaching, I considered opening my own charter school because my main concern has been and will always be educational equity. I want every student to receive an excellent education. Excellent charter schools that are open to all students and serve the needs of all students well should be applauded. But we cannot shy away from the reality that there are also some underperforming charter schools in the district. Currently, unsuccessful charter schools ride on the coattails of the successful charter schools. There is a tendency to lump all charter schools together just as there is a tendency to lump all public schools together.

I seek to neither increase nor limit charter school growth. Schools need to be examined based on their results and their treatment of students - not on their label: charter or public. Every school needs to be effective and every school needs to meet the needs of their students. No school receiving public funds should be allowed to cherry pick their students or “counsel” students out and keep the funds but not the student. All schools - regardless of the type - should be held to the same standards.”

14. How will you engage the community to inform your policy positions and understand the implications of board decisions on the educational experiences of the families and students you serve?

Monica Ratliff said, “The first thing that we need to look at is changing the status quo of the Board. Meetings need to be staggered so that some meetings are held during the day and some meetings are held in the evening. Currently, the only parents and community members that can attend a Board meeting and speak during the public comment period are those that are able to attend a meeting during the day. Meetings should be accessible to the public. Having meetings only during the day does not encourage attendance by the public. In addition, staggering the meetings will allow for greater public comment at Board meetings.

In addition, I will generally be in the Valley visiting schools and engaging in the community. I think a big problem with the current state of affairs is that the Board needs to be more accessible and interested in communicating with the community. My favorite part of this campaign has been meeting voters and discussing their concerns about education. If elected, I have no interest in running for an office beyond school board so I have no need for downtown facetime amongst the politicians. I am running to serve the needs of the students in the Valley. When there’s a problem at a school, I will run to the school not away from it.”

15. How will you work with other members of the board, the administration and members of the community to ensure EL students are reclassifying and gaining access to A-G courses?
Monica Ratliff said, “I have worked with many EL students over the last decade that I have been teaching. I know that LAUSD can do a better job helping students reclassify through academically rigorous targeted instruction. Our students must graduate from high school confident that they can enter college or a vocation. The curriculum at every school must be standards based and academically rigorous or our students will be unable to succeed.”