

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Alix Silva and I am running for a seat on the Vineland Board of Education. I would be honored to receive the endorsement of the Vineland Education Association. I have a significant amount of appreciation for the teachers of Vineland. Aside from my own experience teaching at Vineland High School for four years and in Bridgeton for another two, my father and my brother both taught here in Vineland and my wife is currently a teacher at Winslow Elementary School. Not to mention my sons, Jacob and Lucas, started this year at Petway Elementary School and benefit daily from the hard work of these dedicated professionals. Needless to say, I am aware of the time and effort that goes into the teaching profession and if elected, I would serve as an advocate for our under-represented teachers.

Our teachers have been facing unique challenges recently: growing classrooms, shrinking budgets, and seemingly hostile negotiations with the board of education for an agreeable contract. My candidacy is not the answer to these problems, but I think I can be part of the solution. I firmly believe the success of our students is rooted in the success of our teachers. It seems that in recent years, administration has been demanding more of our teachers and paraprofessionals but providing them with less and less support. I was particularly troubled by the problems facing ESL students and teachers discussed at the October 2nd board meeting. My family escaped from Haiti to the United States. I understand the value of a strong foundation in the English language and the difference it can make for our students when ESL teachers are supported by the board. The board of education needs to do more to ensure support for our ESL staff and professionals.

Another area of concern for me is guaranteeing our special education professionals have the resources they need to educate our differently abled students. I believe a committee on special education is essential to ensuring our students are provided with an equitable education that meets their unique and diverse needs. My platform rests on three pillars: community, inclusion, and academic excellence. All three pillars serve to support all of our students; it's an inclusive platform that isn't tailored for those who excel in academics and athletics. My platform serves to lift up all of our students. I want to hear feedback from teachers—be it praise or criticism. If elected, I can't promise to solve all of our district's problems. I'm realistic in the knowledge that this is a nine-member board that will need to work together to get things done. I think, however, my experience as an educator uniquely qualifies me for this office and this endorsement. I believe the only way to lift up our students and encourage communication within the community, inclusion of our students with different needs, and academic excellence of our students is through supporting our teachers.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,

Alix Silva

Candidate, Vineland Board of Education