

Dear MUSD Community:

I am a mother of three children in the Milpitas Unified School District. I am also a MUSD board member. I am writing this letter because there has been contention on the scoring and ranking outcomes of the top 2 candidates on the recent appointment process. It has been brought to my attention my methods of using the tools are central to this issue. I want to clarify a couple of things, bring our community closer and share the background of the process with you as I have been both a candidate and one of the voting members of the appointment process. In order for me to do so, I will need to take you back in time...

In November 2016, there was a vacant seat after Bob Nunez was successfully elected to City Council. I felt that I was a great candidate because of my strong involvement in the MUSD and the Milpitas community. I was on the PTA Board, School Site Council, Community Board Advisory Committee (CBAC), the Milpitas Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Milpitas Rotary Club, and many other roles. I was also awarded with a number of recognitions including Volunteer of the Year from my children's school. I thought I had a great resume for this vacant seat. I enthusiastically applied for the MUSD appointed board member position.

When I received notification of selection as one of the top 5 candidates to be interviewed, I was ecstatic. In January 2017, I participated in the interview process and thought I had a pretty good chance. I had studied potential questions and even got advice from school board members at other districts. During my interview, I became very nervous and did not do so well on some of the questions. I thought my experience and achievements would have compensated. I was mistaken. The January 2017 interview process was based solely on the scoring system and it did not reflect my other strengths. Needless to say, I was extremely disappointed and upset when I was not selected.

A few months later, Danny Lau, a respected and longtime board member and good friend, had passed away. This left another vacant seat on the MUSD board and again I was passed over for the appointment that I knew I was more than qualified for!

Despite not being selected, I focused my energy on what truly mattered to me...my children. I continued to serve in various volunteer positions at my children's school and within the community to further gain knowledge and experience. As we got closer to 2018, I knew my time had come and I was ready. I was going to run in the November 2018 election to be a MUSD Board Member. I campaigned hard and I won! I even garnered the most votes of all the elected school board candidates!

So...What does this timeline that I just went through have to do with the recent August 2019 interview process? Let me continue...

In March 2019, Dan Bobay, another respected and long-time MUSD Board Member, announced he was moving to another state. There was going to be a vacant seat.

In May 2019, we had a board meeting to discuss the board vacancy position and the appointment process. I shared my appointee process experiences and how I was not a fan of just using one scoring tool because of what had happened to me. After further discussion, the entire board agreed to have another method used to help in our appointment process. Little did I know the amount of confusion it would cause. Shortly thereafter, in a June 2019 board meeting, the Board unanimously voted me onto the Appointee Selection Subcommittee with the Board President Chris Norwood.

On August 5, 2019, President Norwood and I met to review the 17 applicants. We spent approximately four hours narrowing the field down to eight candidates to interview. There were three more candidates than the previous board selected in the 2017 process. During our selection process, we chose a combination of new community leaders, experienced and novice MUSD volunteer parents, MUSD retired teachers who live in the District and others who had made an impact.

On August 11, 2019 at 4:25pm, a memo from Superintendent Cheryl Jordan was sent to all the board members about the two methods of evaluation to be used for the appointment. She explained that a ranking system would be included in the process along with the scoring system. All board members were aware of this prior to the August 13 meeting. These two methods were to be used as tools in preparation for the vote along with all other information provided and discussed.

Now on to my scoring...After the August 13 interviews were completed, I had scored candidates Hai Minh Ngo and Chia Ling Kong both with 31.5 points on my scoresheet. When it came to the final rankings, I had given Ngo and Kong both the #1 ranking. Since two #1 rankings had not been discussed by the Board, Superintendent Jordan asked me to clarify my rankings and choose a #1 and a #2 candidate. At that point, I marked Ngo as my #1 and Kong as my #2.

Superintendent Jordan had no influence on how I scored or rated these candidates. I had to make a clear decision on my top ranked candidate so I did just that. AGAIN, I want to emphasize this one more time: Superintendent Jordan had no influence on how I scored or rated these candidates.

Everything was done in real time in front of the public. It was my first time on the other side of the dais as the interviewer and not as the candidate. Emotions of what I went through during my own interview process in 2017 came to mind and I realized how difficult it was for them. Now as a board member, what was going through my mind at that moment was: Who was the best candidate?

Upon reflection of why I wanted to serve on the MUSD Board, I wanted to make a positive impact in my children's school district. Through this experience, I have learned that each appointment process is unique and it is at the discretion of the Board Governance Team to decide how to proceed in making the appointment. Education Code only mandates that the Board come to a majority vote, which we did on August 13.

In the end, myself and two of my Board colleagues voted for candidate Ngo as the provisional appointee. Although the sequence of events were very different, I can empathize with candidate Kong and how she must feel as I also went through a similar experience. Not unless you sat on both sides of the table could you fully understand this. I can assure you that there wasn't any manipulation, conspiracy, or intentional malice involved in the process. While I admit the appointment process still needs improvement, I stand by the Board's decision.

Sincerely,

Kelly Yip-Chuan
MUSD Board Member