



# Greg Rodriguez

## for Palm Springs Unified School District

### Greg's Vision for our Schools

I am asking for your vote as a new leader for our schools because I share a vision with most parents and community leaders on how we can improve the performance of our school system and create a better educated workforce and community throughout the Coachella Valley. My experience and passion for children's issues will enable me to be an effective leader for our kids and the Palm Springs Unified School District. I have tried to make my vision as simple as ABC.

#### **A=Access and accountability.**

All students are guaranteed a right to access education. Where we have failed as a nation is that we do not fund that right. More and more burdens are being placed on state and local school districts with unfunded mandates like No Child Left Behind. Due to budget constraints we have also begun to deny access to the arts, music and science which have been proven to assist in learning and child development. Our state's special education departments are severely underfunded and programs for gifted students are not expanded as they should be either.

As your board member I will use my political experience to lobby for increased state and federal funding for the programs listed above and develop grass roots community involvement to increase pressure on our elected officials to fund the programs that are not only legally required, but that are necessary for the improvement of our education system as well. I will also take an active role with community leaders and the Palm Springs Unified School District Foundation to develop funding and increase programs for art, music and science programs in all our schools.

We must also demand accountability. I agree that we must test students to know where they are at, but we must not use tests as the only measure of our school's success. We most definitely should not be teaching simply to pass tests and that is what No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has forced us to do. I would ensure that we change the defective parts of NCLB keeping accountability, but assisting our schools in ways to improve our schools not make them worse.

I also believe that our school districts and schools should be held accountable for how they spend our money. We need to do a better job of communicating the work of oversight committees and what laws are affecting how our school budgets are determined. We need to get parents involved in school site councils and budget processes to make sure that we are not only showing our citizens how our money is being spent, but get them involved in the process to spend that money wisely.

As your board member, I would show my personal accountability by visiting schools and interacting with children, staff, teachers and parents. I would meet with School Site Councils and Parent Teacher Associations to listen to your concerns and communicate the work and visions to the district. We all can work together to increase access and accountability and I want to be a new leader in developing that working relationship with you.

## **B=Build and maintain first-class schools.**

The first step in building and maintaining first class schools is to make sure we continue to support our teachers and staff. As your board member it will be my highest priority to lobby the state and federal governments to provide the required funding for teacher and staff salaries and to treat them as the professionals they are. I will also fight very hard to reduce class sizes and fund the necessary capital improvements our schools need.

Our Measure T and Measure E Bonds fund the building of future schools and improvements to existing ones, it is imperative that we have effective board leadership to communicate the dreams and visions of where and how those schools should be built. We must insure that we take a proactive approach in gaining community buy-in and collaboration when it comes to determining where schools should be placed. This will not only insure community acceptance but will prevent costly law suits against the district in the future. As your board member, I will use my experience in operations management and budgeting to insure that these and any future funds are spent in the most effective way possible providing the greatest return on our investment to our kids and community.

We must also demand that any new schools that are built, or those existing schools to be renovated, should be done to as strict environmental or green standards as possible. We should be employing solar and wind power, using desert landscaping, lighting our buildings with natural light, and reaching out to public and private organizations and industries to develop pilot projects to increase our schools' energy and environmental efficiencies. Employing green technologies in school construction will not only benefit our environment, but our district's financial bottom line as well. It will also instill an environmental conscience in our children and can provide direct educational resources on how green technologies work.

One of my most passionate issues is the use of technology in schools. In many of the organizations I have consulted with, my first priority has been to update the technology systems those groups use. Technology brings so many benefits at relatively low cost. Improving technology can lower costs, provide greater productivity, and more importantly, can be used to increase communication and cooperation within an organization and out to the greater public.

Our schools must insure that we are providing the technological resources our children need to compete in the California and global economies. The 24-7 computer program is a good start, but again this is a program that saddles local schools with funding and maintenance issues. We must be looking at a myriad of ways to make sure that we are increasing technology in our classrooms. Computer labs, roving computer carts and individualized computer stations are just a few ideas that should be expanded.

As your board member, I will work with the district's IT Department, foundation, and community businesses and organizations to develop funding for technological improvements for our schools. I will also work with city, state, and federal leaders to increase the incentives for both environmental and technological improvements.

## **C=Communication and cooperation.**

Communication is by far one of the best ways I see my role as your board member in helping to maintain and improve our school system. As a parent of children in the schools now, my eyes and ears are on the ground. I see what the budget cuts have done. I see what works and what doesn't, and I can help facilitate the communication stream between the schools and the district.

Whether we are deciding where to put a school, what budget cuts we face, what negotiations are occurring with teachers and staff, or whether to adopt alternative school calendars, we must do a better job of communicating to the public. We must not only communicate after the fact, but we must develop ways to get community members and parents involved before decisions are made. Many times people just need to be kept informed.

In many of the organizations I have worked with it has been my chief role to develop communications strategies and implement them to disseminate messages and keep open the lines of back and forth communication. I have developed web sites, email notification systems, newsletters and public forums all to address the need for better communication. I would bring this experience to the Palm Springs Unified School District to enhance and maintain the most effective communication system possible. As I mentioned above, about personal accountability, I would also take it upon myself as your board member to be out in our community and in our schools to further open the lines of communications.

I finally want to talk about cooperation. No organization can function without cooperation amongst it's key players. Our schools' key players are board members, teachers, administrators, parents, community leaders, tax payers and students. It is imperative that all of us are working towards the goal of improving the educational systems for our kids. I want to use my skills and experience to develop this cooperation.

I have a long history of working with many different people to achieve common goals. We are all in this together and can provide top-notch learning centers for our kids, reduce bullying and crime in our schools, increase arts, music and science and obtain the level of achievement we all want for our children and young adults. I am asking you to join me in this campaign and let's cooperate across city lines, across socioeconomic lines, across party-lines and across cultural lines to make Palm Springs Unified School District the best in California.

