

Dear Santa Rosa School Board Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Santa Rosa City Schools' passage and implementation of an A -G policy for all students.

I am a former student, graduate, and proud product of Santa Rosa City Schools. I attended Bellevue Elementary School (BUSD), Cook Jr. High, and graduated from Montgomery High School before Elsie Allen HS was built closer to my childhood home. As a first generation college student and granddaughter of fieldworkers, I overcame many odds when I was accepted to and graduated from UC Berkeley, eventually going on to become the first in my family to attend and graduate from Law school. Today, I am proud to share that I work as a Deputy District Attorney for the Sonoma County District Attorney's Office and sit as a School Board Trustee for the Windsor Unified School District.

None of what I have accomplished to date would have been possible had an older sibling not had a caring counselor who strongly guided her and urged her to enroll in A -G courses as she recognized the great potential in my sister. To this day, I am grateful that this one counselor changed the course of my sister's life, and in turn, changed my own. Prior to this counselor's intervention, my sister had every intention of getting a job after high school with no plans for college. College education was foreign to my family as were the requirements for getting there.

Unfortunately, I also had many peers and friends who were steered in the opposite direction towards non A-G coursework. These are the same friends and peers who later went on to attend SRJC, transferring to prestigious universities, and graduating with high honors, including some who were explicitly told that they were not "college material" while at the high school in the Santa Rosa City Schools system. Unfortunately, I am all too aware that this informal practice of tracking students into a non-college track continues to this day in many districts throughout Sonoma County, including SRCS.

Implementing a District-wide A - G policy for all students will allow students to have many options come graduation and will take away the discretion in choosing who to place on the college v. non-college track. While not every student will go on to attend and graduate college, many more students will now have this door open to them should they choose the college route.

I am a firm believer that if you set high standards for your students and truly believe in them, they will often prove you right.

Thank you for your consideration of my letter in support of an A - G policy for all students at Santa Rosa City Schools.

Sincerely,

Esther Lemus