



**Radha Balasubramaniam
("Bala"), M.A.
Early Childhood Special
Educator, Berryessa Union
School District,
San Jose, California, USA**



What inspired you to apply for the Board of Directors? Learn directly from Radha!

[Access the video.](#)

Biographical Information:

This is Radha Bala from Berryessa Union School District in San Jose, CA. I have been an Early Childhood Special Education teacher for 16 years and have been working with young children for 20 years. I humbly seek your vote as Member at Large.

I strongly believe in and advocate that all neurodivergent children should be given the encouragement and opportunities to reach their full potential. In order to accomplish this, the environment must have diversity, equity and inclusion.

To be successful in this position the candidate must have ample experience and skills at various levels in working with neurodivergent children.

Personally, I have been in numerous positions where I have been involved in policy making decisions.

1. I started as a paraprofessional and worked closely with the child as a 1:1.
2. As an educator, working within the school policies collaborating with families and other professionals in creating and developing the IEP.
3. At the district level I have been on numerous committees to represent special education such as the LCAP (Local Control and Accountability Plan). School budget committee, MTSS committee, and so forth.
4. As a local Union member, I have held the following positions: bargaining member, VP, and Special Education rep.
5. At the State Level I represent my local union as a State Council member. This is where members discuss policy making decisions regarding education.
6. Aside from my leadership roles in education, I was involved in Boy Scouts as a den leader and Merit Badge counselor and worked closely with children of all ages.

Thank you and I appreciate your vote for me as a Member At Large

Candidate Statements:

What makes CEC's mission meaningful to you? (Limit 150 words)

One question every teacher is asked in their first staff meeting is "Remember your why?" The above statement is my reason, my colleagues are my "why." Throughout the year, I repeat this statement to myself. This gives me the strength to keep advocating for better working conditions for my colleagues. The working conditions I am referring to are as follows: more para support and hiring more service providers to support the development of my students to reach their goals. This above statement for me is two-fold. Providing a more supportive environment can lessen the stress placed on educators. By advocating for the needs of my colleagues, I am also advocating for our students, who are mostly non-verbal and very young. I want to be the voice for both the educator and students.

There is such a great range of individual backgrounds and experiences that cannot be easily conveyed by answering simple demographic questions. Given [CEC's view of diversity](#), what facets of your life provide a context for the various experiences and perspectives you bring to discussions and your work? (Limit 150 words.)

I am Asian Indian and grew up in this country back in the 70's and 80's. People's views of diversity were very different back then and racism was an accepted way of life. At a very young age, I understood that being different was not acceptable and as a person, society treated me as if I did not matter. I remember the feeling of not being part of the mainstream group and somehow, I was not seen as a person with equality. I never want any child to feel as if they are not good enough to belong. For me, diversity, equity and inclusion mean so much more than buzzwords. I chose to be in special education and work with very young children so I can teach my students to feel empowered. I want my students to know they matter and to not question their importance or existence.

Provide three specific examples of how your leadership experiences, including professional and volunteer, have had an impact on fostering change or moving an organization/entity forward. (Limit 300 words)

First: I am a State Council Representative for my local union: I represent over 200 teachers at the state level. I have been a state representative for seven years. Recently, in the last year or so a group of educators from CA and Oregon have formed a coalition to March to Washington DC in 2025 to bring to the attention that IDEA is not fully funded at its 40%. We have partnered with local groups, such as CARS Plus- California Association of Resource Specialists and Educators to help us in this area, and we also are working with our national PTA organization. This is a future endeavor, and the hope is to raise more awareness beyond educators to the lack of funding for special education. We have over 10 organizations that are on board with us

Second: As part of our educational duties, we are required to attend professional development. Most of the professional development classes we are asked to participate in are not useful or helpful for our age group. I have searched other venues and created a list of topics that will be helpful for our students and teachers. . Although this may not seem like a big impact, it does allow our educators to use resources that will directly benefit their students. So, it does make an impact in the classroom.

Third: Our local district PreK program has parent involvement as part of our curriculum. Some topics include speech therapy and how to engage children in language development. Family and caregivers are given resources and ideas on how to appropriately use communication to help their child- use of visual

icons, or using vocabulary to describe actions etc. This makes an impact on how the families interact with their children.

CEC Membership Information:

Years of CEC Membership: 4 years

Division Membership(s):

Division for Early Childhood

California Subdivision of the Division for Early Childhood

Division of International Special Education & Services

