

Ward 5 Candidats for DC Council

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On a scale of 1 to 100: Do you agree with this statement? The primary public agency responsible for the socio-emotional problems of children and youth caused and exacerbated by the pandemic should be the DCPS public schools.	50
Teacher turnover in DC's public schools are among the highest in the nation, and the pandemic has made teaching even more challenging. What do you think can be done to address teacher turnover in DCPS?	
<p>We must pay a competitive living wage that will allow educators to afford to live in the District of Columbia, if they choose to do so. The convenience of a short commute to work cannot be underestimated. In the classroom, we must provide opportunities for professional development and career advancement. We must make the District hard to leave. We also have to take an honest look at our school environment and ensure that the dynamics in the classroom, and between educators and parents are healthy. Education is a calling, but it is also an increasingly difficult profession. Our educator's physical and mental health have to be a priority, and the District must provide the resources to meet those needs. If we don't pay our educators well, and cultivate a healthy personal and work environment, we will never stem teacher turnover.</p>	
The pandemic has highlighted the need to provide equitable student access to technology as part of a 21st-century education. What will you do to ensure DCPS supports comprehensive technology planning and funding to support student learning?	
<p>COVID highlighted the importance of technology and internet access, both at home and at school. I support and would advocate for a 1:1 student-to-device ratio, and the Student Technology line item in DCPS's budget must reflect that. Laptops, for example, can retail from an average of \$500 to more than \$2,800. The District must make purchasing decisions based on performance and durability, not just price. We must hold fast to spending the amount necessary to properly equip and educate our children: assuming 30% of the 51,000 DCPS students need a device, that would mean an expenditure in excess of \$13.7 million, if we purchased devices with an average cost of \$900. I appreciate DCPS's effort to perform a technology audit to determine which families are in need of technology. However, we must make sure to do the same with internet access. A high-quality device and inadequate (or non-existent) internet access only serves to deprive our children. For those families in financial need, DCPS must connect families with city and federal programs that offer low cost internet access, such as the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (https://www.fcc.gov/acp). We must also initiate a comprehensive review of DCPS owned technology every three years, so we can systematically phase out and replace obsolete technology. Our students must become comfortable and proficient in the use of technology from an early age, in order to keep pace with their peers across the country.</p>	

<p>DCPS school communities have concerns with the quality of building repair and maintenance including HVAC systems in older as well as newly modernized buildings. How can the Council address their concerns with DCPS facilities operations and maintenance?</p>	
<p>The Council will need to initiate a comprehensive review of DGS and DCPS, to ensure best practices are being followed. The work of DGS needs to be competitively priced, and of equal quality and longevity, to its private sector counterparts. In 2015 a DC Auditor report indicated the District government failed to properly monitor its school modernization program. This breeds a lack of transparency and accountability. Sadly, it culminated in the 2017 modernization of Duke Ellington School of the Arts, at a cost of \$171 million, approximately \$100 million over budget. The District cannot afford another miscalculation like that. I will advocate for a system wide assessment of all school buildings every 2-3 years, to ensure they are up to current building code and all key systems are functioning. The state of school buildings varies from ward to ward, with the lowest income communities often bearing the brunt of the worst conditions. We cannot ask educators and students to work in an environment we wouldn't tolerate for ourselves.</p>	
<p>The financial outlook for the District has been impacted by the public health crisis, previous years of strong economic growth, and federal Rescue Plan funds. What do you think the three greatest fiscal challenges for D.C. public education will be over the next four years?</p>	
<p>The three greatest fiscal challenges for DC public education over the next four years are: (1.) School budget transparency. I have always advocated that your local school should be your best option, not a last resort. I will advocate for increased budget transparency and equity, particularly in our poorest neighborhoods. The budgeting process is still complex and still leaves schools underfunded in critical budget areas. We need to push for clear, easy to understand, evidence-based funding for all schools so (a.) the buildings are safe to learn in and (b.) students can learn and be competitive with their peers across the city. Without a transparent budget process, equitable access to a high-quality education, we will be a pipe dream, leading to the District spending even more money on education. (2.) A depressed local economy. Hybrid work schedules mean downtown and neighborhood business corridors are seeing less foot traffic that may not return to pre-pandemic levels within the next four years. This adversely affects tax revenue and the funding for public schools. (3.) The lack of continued federal government financial support. Federally based COVID funding is not guaranteed to continue into the future. It was an important and necessary part of sustaining local residents and the economy. COVID has shined a light on the need for mental health resources, while encouraging discussion in many communities underserved by the mental health profession. The District will need to dedicate significant financial resources to address mental health among city employees, District residents and individuals suffering from mental health issues. The ramifications of investment in mental health support, or the lack of it, will be felt in our classrooms.</p>	
<p>Check on the statement below that best describes your position:</p>	
<p>I think D.C. policies should prioritize the DCPS system of by-right neighborhood schools.</p>	x
<p>I think D.C. policies should prioritize parental choice.</p>	

<p>Explain: Parents vote with their feet. Their child's by-right school feeder pattern must be consistent in terms of the quality of the education, staff, administration and the physical plant. If a parent has a child in an excellent elementary school, they should expect the by-right middle and high schools to be of equal (or better) quality. Otherwise, you can't expect parents to keep their child in DCPS. If DCPS is to compete in the long term with public charter schools, all our by-right schools need to be this consistent, so our children no longer have to travel across town because the school down the street is underperforming.</p>	
<p>ON a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the strongest How strongly do you agree with this statement: The most effective system to ensure equitable quality for students and communities is a system of well-planned and supported DCPS feeder schools of right.</p>	1
<p>On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the strongest, how strongly do you agree with this statement: PK4 students should be able to enroll by-right into their neighborhood DCPS elementary schools.</p>	1
<p>Will you support convening a student assignment and boundary review process to be completed by 2023?</p>	Yes
<p>Comments, if any.</p>	
<p>Should DCPS have budget protections because of its responsibilities as the school system-of-right?</p>	Yes
<p>Comments</p>	
<p>The DC Council transferred responsibility for school security in DCPS schools from MPD back to DCPS; DCPS will control its security guard contract this year; and MPD School Resource Officers will be reduced. How should the Council determine whether students are more safe and secure?</p>	
<p>From an oversight perspective the Council would want to ensure that MPD Resource Officers are properly trained, culturally competent and deployed in the most effective fashion to address issues that may present themselves during the course of the school day. DCPS should provide the Council with justification to that effect. I would also call for bi-weekly reports to the Council on incidents, in an effort to address any trends in activity on school grounds. The Council will also call for a security review for all DCPS schools, in conjunction with MPD, to assess any weaknesses in security so they can be identified and addressed. Lastly, we must anonymously survey all onsite students, staff, administrators and SRO's to get their honest opinions about the safety and security of DCPS schools.</p>	
<p>Do you support any changes in the way the District of Columbia governs public education?</p>	Yes
<p>What governance reforms would you support for DCPS?</p>	
<p>A DCPS education policy board, appointed by the Mayor, confirmed by Council, with authority to hire and fire the chancellor.</p>	Would consider
<p>An elected DCPS education policy board of education, independent of the Mayor.</p>	Would consider
<p>Other ideas you would consider or support for DCPS:</p>	
<p>What governance reforms would you support for the State Board of Education and the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE)?</p>	

State Board of Education with authority to hire and fire the State Superintendent of Education.	Would consider
State Board of Education with authority to initiate policy--not just approve it--in areas it already has jurisdiction over.	Would support
Other ideas you would consider or support for SBOE and/or OSSE:	
What governance changes would you consider or support for the D.C. Council?	
An Education Committee for the Council of the District of Columbia.	Would support
Council control over the level of charter enrollment and the number of charter schools.	Would consider
Other changes you would consider or support D.C. Council governance of public education:	
What governance reforms would you support for the Public Charter School Board (PCSB)?	
An elected Public Charter School Board.	Would consider
Public Charter School Board appointed by Ward Councilmembers and 3 at-large members appointed by the Mayor.	Would consider
Other reforms you would consider or support for PCSB:	