

**Ward 5 Candidats for DC Council**

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<p><b>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.</b></p>	20
<p><b>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?</b></p> <p>I am deeply concerned about the teacher attrition crisis in the District. We should be doing everything we can now to heed teacher concerns, inspire confidence in, and fairly compensate teachers to stay in the classroom. I have long advocated for targeted workforce housing for educators, which will allow more of our teachers to afford to live in the communities in which they work. I also advocated for paid COVID-19 leave for teachers, which had previously expired but has since been reinstated by the Mayor. Childcare is also a critical need in Ward 5, as many teachers are also parents. As costs rise and the gap between need and available seats widens, more and more of our educators are finding it difficult to stay in the classroom. I support building onsite daycare options within schools (that have the space) and providing financial assistance to educators to make childcare more affordable. I also understand that teachers often get frustrated because they feel they have little say in how their school operates. Councilmembers may have limited authority to influence school climates, but I would use the authority I have to work with Ward 5 schools to encourage shared leadership approaches, knowing that it is the best approach for teacher success and school success. Finally, I know our schools will be stronger when the staff, especially the teaching staff, match the racial and ethnic diversity of our students. I support the following steps to increase the share of DC teachers who are Black and Latine, including: increasing Black and Latine representation in senior positions, creating a pipeline for DCPS students to become teachers, staffing schools to adequately address language needs so that Spanish-speaking teachers are not also expected to be translators; and supporting school ratings that include a factor tied to staff diversity compared to students.</p>	
<p><b>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?</b></p>	
<p>The pandemic made clear just how essential it is for students to have access to high-quality technology, including wifi, computers, and tablets. As a Councilmember, I will be committed to ensuring adequate technology in schools and at homes. It is unfortunate that DCPS has not been a leader in this regard and only moved to implement its digital access plan until after being pushed by advocates. We need to make sure that every school has up to date technology for every student, and that the equipment is well maintained. We also need to ensure that students have high speed internet and working devices at home. Addressing those requires a commitment to funding a digital equity plan, one that prioritizes students who are least likely to have technology resources at home. It also requires oversight from the Council to hold DCPS accountable to acquiring, maintaining, and distributing technology equitably.</p>	
<p><b>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?</b></p>	
<p>Parents and students were promised COVID-safety when schools were re-opened for the pandemic, and yet many came back to inadequate ventilation and HVAC systems in disrepair. We have to get this right to continue indoor learning through future COVID variants and other respiratory illnesses. I have worked closely with Ward 5 schools (i.e., Burroughs, Langdon, and Langley) to elevate concerns to DGS to get needed and immediate fixes to the schools' HVAC systems. As Ward 5 Councilmember, I will work collaboratively with DGS to monitor work orders, routinely check-in and report back to schools, and ensure work orders are completed timely. It's been my experience that parents and schools often suffer from a lack of follow-up needed from the Wilson Building. This is something I am committed to changing. Moreover, DGS recently produced a tracker that shows hundreds of work orders that remain outstanding in Ward 5. These work orders range from leaking roofs to unstable structures that are dangerous for students and teachers. Among my priorities as Councilmember will be working across agencies to identify outstanding work orders/claims, coordinate efforts to fix the problem, and actually closing them out as soon as possible. The Council also must maintain strict oversight of (and involve teachers, parents, and students in planning for) school modernization plans. They often run over budget and are changed without consulting all the stakeholders. The Council should require regular updates on the modernization plans of every school, including any information on delays, cost overruns, or changes to plans.</p>	

<p><b>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?</b></p>	
<p>CHANGES TO SCHOOL-LEVEL FUNDING METHODS: DC Public Schools has announced a multi-year effort to overhaul the funding of our schools, possibly moving from the Comprehensive Staffing Model which guarantees schools a baseline level of staffing to a Student-Based Budget Model. The Comprehensive Staffing Model has its issues; however, moving to a student-based budget model would especially harm small DCPS schools and ignore our stated aims of equity. The CSM allows DCPS to equitably distribute money across schools regardless of school size. As Ward 5 Councilmember, I will use my oversight power to require assessments of how new funding systems would play out. I will ask the Auditor to explore core policy and accountability implications, and I will ask them and the Council Budget Office to model the impact of the proposed new system under different scenarios. We must ensure that small schools and schools with a substantial number of at-risk or otherwise vulnerable students are not harmed in the often inhumane process that is city government budgeting. AT-RISK FUNDS: Year after year, our city undermines efforts to achieve equity by allowing, and in fact requiring, DCPS to use at-risk funds in high poverty schools to pay for core staff – staff that higher-income schools get as a matter of right – rather than as a budget supplement. This means that high-poverty schools are having at-risk funds taken away from them. As the next Ward 5 Councilmember, I will make it a top priority to stop supplantation. I will use the Council’s Budget Office and Auditor to identify supplantation in the Executive’s proposed budget. I will demand more transparency around at-risk funds in school-level budget documents so that the Council, LSATs, parents, and teachers can spot and fight against it. I will then work in the budget process to fully undo it before the budget is adopted. A key part of the solution I will also fight for is to make sure base funding in DCPS is adequate for all schools, reducing the incentives for supplantation. TRANSPARENCY: We must ensure transparency in school level budgets. I testified in 2019 for bills on school-level transparency and will work for their passage if elected. School-level budgets should clearly and separately show what a school is supposed to get under the staffing model, what it actually gets under the staffing model, and what it gets in at-risk funds. That will make it impossible for schools to hide how and where supplantation occurs. This school-level data should be immediately available to the public.</p>	
<p><b>Check on the statement below that best describes your position:</b></p>	
<p><b>I think D.C. policies should prioritize the DCPS system of by-right neighborhood schools.</b></p>	<p>x</p>
<p><b>I think D.C. policies should prioritize parental choice.</b></p>	
<p><b>Explain:</b> I believe in parents’ right to choose the best school option for their child. I don’t fault many parents for feeling that they have to enter a lottery to make sure their child’s education is high quality, and I want to protect their right to do so. But everyone should first have a great neighborhood option, even if they choose something else. DC has a system that emphasizes choice above quality and accountability, which ends up reducing the quality and accountability of our choices while overwhelming parents with options. DCPS and the Public Charter School Board operate without cooperation, which means it’s impossible to have a unified vision for public education in DC. It also is detrimental that the number of charter schools grows without cross-sector collaboration, creating inefficiencies and unnecessarily putting neighborhood DC schools at risk. As a Councilmember I will work to shape policies that require cross-sector collaboration, especially on school openings, with a focus on opening schools that meet a particular need in a particular area while maintaining strong neighborhood schools and feeder patterns.</p>	
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>Will you support convening a student assignment and boundary review process to be completed by 2023?</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>Comments, if any.</b></p>	
<p><b>Should DCPS have budget protections because of its responsibilities as the school system-of-right?</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>Comments</b></p>	
<p><b>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?</b></p>	
<p>The Council’s decision to remove the security contract from MPD and placing it under the purview of DCPS was an important step towards DC having police-free schools. The Council’s legislation requires training in trauma-informed and restorative practices to support the well-being and safety of students. This is a breath of fresh air, and as the next Ward 5 Councilmember I will advocate for more of this approach. We must do oversight of this approach so that we can celebrate success and correct for missteps in implementation, training, staffing, and engagement. I support the recommendations of the Police Reform Commission to increase funding for school-based mental health services, require ongoing trauma-informed training for school staff, ensure schools have resources to engage in positive behavioral supports and restorative justice efforts, and have violence interrupters who focus on schools. This may require additional funding, and will definitely require rigorous oversight. Ensuring effective implementation is critical not only for student well-being, but also for creating a healthier environment in and out of schools that allow teachers, parents, and communities to succeed and flourish. As a Councilmember, I will engage in vigorous oversight and in outreach to Ward 5 schools to determine whether these transitions are effective. That includes listening to students by visiting their schools and encouraging their testimony at DC Council hearings. I would also push to require more transparent sharing of data related to school fights and incidents to gauge the safety of students. I would also push for DCPS to conduct annual student surveys on safety and mental well-being. These would also need input from school staff and parents, and I will require DCPS to collect and report on incidents of violence or other trauma that occur inside and near schools.</p>	

<b>Do you support any changes in the way the District of Columbia governs public education?</b>	Yes
<b>What governance reforms would you support for DCPS?</b>	
<b>A DCPS education policy board, appointed by the Mayor, confirmed by Council, with authority to hire and fire the chancellor.</b>	Would consider
<b>An elected DCPS education policy board of education, independent of the Mayor.</b>	Would consider
<b>Other ideas you would consider or support for DCPS:</b>	
I encourage you to review my WTU questionnaire - I believe we need a board of parents and educators overseeing DCPS decisions. I do not support SBOE playing this role.	
<b>What governance reforms would you support for the State Board of Education and the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE)?</b>	
<b>State Board of Education with authority to hire and fire the State Superintendent of Education.</b>	Would consider
<b>State Board of Education with authority to initiate policy--not just approve it--in areas it already has jurisdiction over.</b>	Would support
<b>Other ideas you would consider or support for SBOE and/or OSSE:</b>	
I support making OSSE independent from the Executive by lengthening the term for Superintendent beyond that of the mayor. As I've said before, DC would need to invest a great deal of resources and time to make OSSE reporting to the State Board a viable option. In the DC For Democracy Ward 5 forum, I discussed Councilmember Lewis George's proposed legislation and the need for time to make any such legislation viable. One thing our city currently lacks is a thoughtful, comprehensive, city-wide education plan. I believe the creation of this type of plan is the responsibility of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME). As Ward 5 Councilmember, I will push the DME to produce such a plan. I don't think rushing to move OSSE under the State Board without extensive engagement and planning would improve student learning or make our school system more accountable to educators and parents. I want to collaboratively devise a plan for how our schools will emerge from the pandemic in a better place to serve the needs of students.	
<b>What governance changes would you consider or support for the D.C. Council?</b>	
<b>An Education Committee for the Council of the District of Columbia.</b>	Would support
<b>Council control over the level of charter enrollment and the number of charter schools.</b>	Would oppose
<b>Other changes you would consider or support D.C. Council governance of public education:</b>	
<b>What governance reforms would you support for the Public Charter School Board (PCSB)?</b>	
<b>An elected Public Charter School Board.</b>	Would oppose
<b>Public Charter School Board appointed by Ward Councilmembers and 3 at-large members appointed by the Mayor.</b>	Would oppose
<b>Other reforms you would consider or support for PCSB:</b>	