

Ward 6 Candidate 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. | 90 |
| 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? | |
| Resignations and turnover are a problem in every industry right now, and education is no exception. The strain of the past two years has only exacerbated the District's teacher turnover problem, which for many years has been well above national averages.. Retaining experienced educators needs to be a priority in DC, with a focus on ensuring schools are fully resourced to lighten the load on individual teachers, providing flexible schedules, improving the relationship with administrators, offering teachers career growth opportunities, and improving the evaluation process to make it more fair and constructive. | |
| 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? | |
| I believe that DCPS should provide students and teachers the device ratio they need to be successful, but I also believe the larger District government should do more to ensure quality access. As we saw during the pandemic, simply having a device still isn't enough if you don't have a quality, high-speed connection. I've introduced the Internet Equity Amendment Act of 2021 to prioritize and plan for city-wide high speed broadband available in every home. More information can be found here: https://www.charlesallenward6.com/councilmember_allen_internet_equity_bill | |
| 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? | |
| As a DCPS parent and as Councilmember, I know how frustrating and disruptive facility issues can be to teaching and learning. One issue I have raised recently is concerns about the warranties that the District receives from contractors that receive tens of millions of dollars to modernize schools. It is not uncommon for a school's HVAC system to fail within a year of a modernization. We must ensure on the front-end that we are working with contractors that are willing to be accountable for their work. | |

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| <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 top priority facing District schools is ensuring that students have the support that they need academically, but also for their social and emotional well-being to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. During the pandemic, there was possibly no disruption more significant than that to students and teachers. There was no way for the federal and District government to replace lost learning, as it was possible to replace some lost wages for unemployed workers and revenue for shutdown businesses. For many parents, students learning from home meant it was difficult or, for some, impossible to return to in-person work or even to engage in remote work while leading remote learning. Teachers were expected to immediately jump into remote teaching with, for most, no experience or training and, at least at first, without a curriculum designed for remote learning. Black and Latinx students were less likely to have access to computers and tablets needed for remote learning and a broadband internet connection sufficient for their family's remote work and school needs. As expected, preliminary data shows that remote learning had the biggest detrimental impact on Black and Latinx students, students defined as "at-risk," English language learners ("ELLs"), and students with disabilities. The District received an exemption from state-wide standardized testing, but the limited data that is available from school-based assessments shows that academic achievement gaps between students defined as "at-risk" and their peers only increased during the pandemic. For ELLs and students with disabilities there is limited or no data available from school-level assessments, because there was limited or no school-level assessments administered. The Council must use its oversight role to demand that OSSE provide data showing, in detail, how the pandemic impacted academic achievement, and how LEAs and schools are addressing the achievement gaps that grew during the pandemic. The federal government has provided huge sums of money for recovery, and the Council must ensure that this money is being well spent, specifically by ensuring that the significant percentage set aside for high-dosage tutoring is used for programs that are consistent with best practices—especially that the tutoring is done during school hours by trained teachers or tutors and that instruction is consistent with the school curriculum. The Council should fund evaluations of the programming to ensure that students are benefiting. I also believe the Council and the Mayor should work together to expand Medicaid funding for school-based mental and physical health services, as dozens of other states have done or are in the process of doing. During the pandemic, survey data shows that 10% of children ages 12-17 in the District experienced a major depressive episode, and less than half received treatment. Black children and other children of color in the District were more likely to experience events like the loss of a caregiver, or food or housing insecurity, which can worsen physical and mental health outcomes. Ensuring students fully recover from the trauma and learning loss experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic will be the work of many years to come, unfortunately.</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:</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 |

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| Comments | |
| 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? | |
| I believe that some students and educators have very meaningful relationships with both School Resource Officers and security officers in our schools, but I also think DCPS – not MPD – is in the best position to make decisions about school safety. For that reason, as Chair of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, I supported moving the security contract to DCPS and reimagining what safety should look like. I also passed legislation to scale back MPD officers in schools over time. That said, core to these beliefs is that students and educators critically have to have the supports they need. It can't be an unfunded mandate. That means significantly more behavioral health support and restorative justice programming in our schools. Growing restorative justice programs in the District, specifically, has been a core focus of mine as Chair of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety. I personally identified the funding to stand up the Office of the Attorney General's restorative justice program, I've increased its staff every year, including by adding social workers, and I made a large investment this fiscal year to double its staffing. This program alone will single-handedly transform our juvenile justice system into one which actually has accountability, safety, and restoration at its core. I also funded several new Leadership Academies through the Office of Neighborhood Safety Engagement, which are restorative justice and behavioral health-focused programs for our most vulnerable students at District public schools. We started with one high school, expanded to two more, and then added all feeder middle schools for each of those high schools. I want this initiative to grow significantly in the years to come and expand into all DCPS high schools. | |
| Do you support any changes in the way the District of Columbia governs public education? | Yes |
| What governance reforms would you support for DCPS? | |
| A DCPS education policy board, appointed by the Mayor, confirmed by Council, with authority to hire and fire the chancellor. | Would consider |
| An elected DCPS education policy board of education, independent of the Mayor. | Would consider |
| Other governance reforms that you would consider or support for DCPS: | |
| What governance reforms would you support for the State Board of Education and the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE)? | |
| 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 consider |
| Other ideas you would consider or support for SBOE and/or OSSE: | |

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| 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 support |
| 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: | |