

## Mayoral Candidate

<b>Robert White</b>	
robert@robertfordc.com	
robertfordc.com	
<b>Under mayoral control, what percentage of time should the Mayor dedicate to PK-12 public education?</b>	50%
<b>What will you do to improve the Department of General Services maintenance of the DCPS public buildings?</b>	
<p>I have pushed hard to provide oversight over the Department of General Services as Chair of the Committee on Government Operations &amp; Facilities. Unfortunately, when the executive implements a culture that rejects transparency and accountability, it is difficult to get the information and data that makes oversight possible. When agencies refuse to provide information or answer questions from the Council and from the public, it is time to replace the chief executive. We need buy-in from a mayor committed to accountability, not political spin. As mayor, I will implement a culture of transparency from the very top of government and mandate that agencies work with the Council and with school communities to improve facilities and communication. I have already modeled the kind of accountability I will demand as mayor, implementing a public-facing work order dashboard so that families and school leadership can see the progress of school work orders and conducting unannounced visits to schools to determine what is actually happening on the ground. This level of oversight shouldn't be necessary. As mayor, my focus will be on fixing the underlying problems.</p>	
<b>What will you do to ensure that the public schools have the supports they need from D.C. Department of Health to ensure public health of students, staff, and their families?</b>	
<p>The pandemic has shown us the importance of making sure our schools have the public health resources they need, including a full-time nurse at every school. I have been disappointed by the lack of transparency and communication to parents during this public health emergency. We need to make sure schools have what they need to be able to provide parents with information and keep students safe. That will require collaboration between our agencies and a leader who is focused on the operations of government so we can make sure agencies are communicating and resources are getting into our schools.</p>	
<b>What will you do as Mayor to ensure that the public schools have the supports they need from the D.C. Mental Health and Social Service Agencies?</b>	
<p>One of the most lasting impacts of the pandemic on our city will be the mental health ramifications for students. Yet, despite the urgency of this problem the mayor has yet to make good on her promise to provide mental health support to all students. Currently, only 158 out of 251 schools have a mental health counselor and far fewer have full-time staff. This is unacceptable. We need to invest in mental health services from the Department of Behavioral Health and make sure every school is equitably resourced with mental health supports.</p>	
<b>Will you commit to ensuring that D.C. develops a longrange Education Master Plan for the DC Public Schools which addresses education programs, equity, facilities conditions, grade configuration, feeder patterns?</b>	Yes
<b>If yes, what process will you use to engage the public in crafting this plan?</b>	
<p>Trust is broken between communities and our government when it comes to education and community input. For years, parents and families have felt ignored and undervalued by the mayor. I will start by making clear to families that this is a different kind of administration. I don't view community engagement as a box to be ticked off or as a PR stunt, I prioritize community input because I believe our best ideas come when we listen to the people most impacted. When we come into communities and actually listen, ask questions, and learn from what communities are telling us, people will feel a difference.</p>	

<b>The city currently has 69 Local education agencies and 249 schools serving 93,843 students with no limit on the opening of charter schools, do you think this is a problem?</b>	Yes
<b>Comment on why this might or might not be a problem:</b> We can't keep opening more and more schools without a plan. We aren't using our resources efficiently and it's holding us back from serving our students. Families need options but we also need to make sure our resources are allocated effectively.	
<b>Will you commit to the 10 year update of DCPS student assignment policies and boundaries to be completed by the close of 2023?</b>	Yes
<b>What do you think the three greatest fiscal challenges for D.C. public education will be over the next four years?</b>	
<p>1. Teacher turnover: We lose 20% of our teachers every year to jurisdictions where they are paid less. If we were just able to get our turnover down to the national urban average, we could have saved \$40 million over the last five years - imagine what we could do with those resources to serve students and increase equity. This needs to be a priority for our mayor but Mayor Bowser has treated teachers as adversaries instead of with the respect they deserve. As mayor, I will listen to teachers and treat them as the experts they are.</p> <p>2. Mental health: Coming out of the pandemic, we know more students than ever will need mental health support. In addition, as violence continues to plague our city, many students are coming into school with significant trauma that we must address. So many of our schools still do not have full-time mental health professionals and we must remedy this immediately.</p> <p>3. Central office: We have heard for years that money is being wasted in our central office due to government bureaucracy. We need to evaluate where waste and inefficiency is occurring and reallocate that money to serving students.</p>	
<b>What will you do to ensure DCPS supports comprehensive technology planning and funding to support student learning?</b>	
We have been reactive in this space for too long. We need to be forward-looking and ensure that we are adapting to technological innovation and getting our children the best available technology. That will require investing in technology infrastructure like IT support, support to teachers, and digital literacy training and creating a multi-year public technology plan on how all aspects of school technology will be managed and funded.	
<b>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>	Agree
<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 oppose
<b>An elected DCPS education policy board of education, independent of the Mayor.</b>	Would consider
<b>Other governance reforms that you would consider or support for DCPS:</b> Everything has to be on the table when it comes to education and I will conduct a full review of our education system to determine what governance method best serves our students.	
<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 consider
<b>Other ideas you would consider or support for SBOE and/or OSSE:</b> We need to make OSSE independent of the Mayor in order to ensure accountability and transparency.	

<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 consider
<b>What governance reforms would you support for the Public Charter School Board (PCSB)?</b>	
<b>An elected Public Charter School Board</b>	Would consider
<b>An appointed PCSB with 9 members appointed by Ward Councilmembers and 3 at-large appointed by the mayor.</b>	Would consider