

Ward 1 Candidates for the 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.	65
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>High rates of teacher turnover in DC's public schools can be attributed to a variety of reasons. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed a great deal of stress on teachers, and the trauma, isolation, and anxiety many experienced as a result are causing them to resign and change careers. I believe increased funding for mental health support services for teachers, as well as oversight to ensure that those services are made available, could improve circumstances dramatically. If elected, I will advocate and support better recruitment policies to attract a more diverse candidate pool. This can be done by increasing teachers' pay, developing growth plans and professional development opportunities, ensuring benefits like retirement plans, healthcare, and paid leave are of the highest standard, and leveraging the local talent pool from colleges like the University of District of Columbia. Teachers have also cited that the top reasons they would stay would be for more flexible working options and leave. These factors may be a little more tedious to implement, especially on the flexible working schedules, but Council can help pass legislation for more guaranteed leave. For the flexible time, this can be potentially implemented by taking better care of our substitute teacher workforce (better pay and benefits), and increasing the number of paraprofessionals at a school. These individuals can help introduce that scheduling flexibility for teachers. I believe if we take care of and cultivate our current teacher workforce, then our students and their families will reap the benefits.</p>	

<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>	
<p>As Councilmember, I will provide extensive oversight of DCPS to ensure that it supports technology planning and funding to support student learning. While listening to hearings on virtual learning and in-person return, I've heard administrators convey that there is only one OCTO IT professional per every few schools. That is an unacceptable baseline at any time period and we need there to be at least two OCTO staff members at each school in every Ward. The digital equity divide is growing every day. We are leaving students, teachers, and families behind. As Councilmember, I will work with the private sector to establish ways to bring WiFi to students who don't have access, to ensure all materials are mobile friendly and can be accessed with lower broadband speeds. I will also communicate directly with students, teachers, and schools about the technology and resources that would be most helpful to them – this will allow me to effectively advocate on their behalf. I believe an essential element of distributing resources like technological access to schools is incorporating input from families and community members into these efforts. School modernization will be a priority for me as Ward 1 Councilmember, and properly equipping schools includes increasing equitable access to technology for students.</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>DCPS facility maintenance and operations are often overlooked, despite them being key to student and teacher experiences and wellbeing in schools. Many HVAC systems in schools across DC have not been in working condition, forcing students, teachers, and staff to suffer through uncomfortable heat and subpar air quality. These kinds of stressful working and learning conditions do not lend themselves to a productive school environment, which is why the Council must address community concerns about DCPS facilities in a timely and effective manner. To do so, the Council should hold regular meetings with teachers, students, staff, and families to discuss concerns, and develop quarterly reports with the Department of General Services (DGS) to evaluate progress on resolving those problems. Furthermore, Councilmembers can advocate for a robust and public dashboard for the Department of General Services (DGS) to publish all of their work orders, plans to complete them, warranty information on equipment, and how often work orders are submitted for repeated issues. This will help to streamline problem-solving for issues with DCPS facilities and buildings, and enables the Council to oversee operations and maintenance.</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 first important fiscal challenge I anticipate for D.C. public education is handling the continuing problem of high teacher turnover rates. The process of constantly hiring, training, and subsequently losing educators puts a strain on the D.C. public school system, which is why the problem of large-scale teacher resignation must be promptly addressed. Resolving this issue and lessening the financial burden on D.C. public schools in the long term involves directing resources toward improved teacher recruitment and retention strategies. Developing growth plans, professional development opportunities, and secure job benefits will help support current and future teachers. The second fiscal challenge for D.C. public education over the next four years is allocating sufficient funding for school modernization. Currently, one in four Ward 1 schools is not properly equipped or in poor physical condition. This issue is also reflected in the overall District – many school communities are in urgent need of repaired or refurbished infrastructure. Funding for school improvements and maintenance is a significant challenge but necessary to create productive and comfortable learning environments. The final financial challenge I believe DCPS will need to address in the near future is the development of exhaustive mental health services for teachers and students. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated issues including anxiety, stress, and isolation for many community members, making mental health support in schools even more important. Improved mental health for students can enhance academic achievement, boost community well-being and engagement, and decrease instances of violence. D.C. public education needs significant funding for counselors, mental health programs, and instruction on mental wellness, and organizing these resources will be a challenge at the forefront of DCPS.</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>	
<p>I think D.C. policies should prioritize parental choice.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">x</p>
<p>Explain: I am a product of public schools and the school system that I was a part of was through by-right neighborhood schools. Although I am in favor of D.C. policies prioritizing resources for by-right neighborhood schools, we need to ensure we have a planned, phased, and accountable approach to do this. I worry that if we make this shift, students, parents and families could face the unintended negative consequences.</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>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p>
<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>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p>
<p>Will you support convening a student assignment and boundary review process to be completed by 2023?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">yes</p>
<p>Comments, if any.</p>	

Should DCPS have budget protections because of its responsibilities as the school system-of-right?	yes
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?	
In situations involving safety, open lines of communication between students, families, and institutions are crucial. I will hold meetings with families, teachers, and school representatives to identify their concerns about student safety and strive to resolve them. Additionally, the Council should work to pass legislation and funding to support evidence-based, proactive alternatives to school security apart from hiring more security officers.	
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 support
An elected DCPS education policy board of education, independent of the Mayor.	Would support
Other governance reforms that you would consider or support for DCPS:	
There are many important points that advocate for shifting mayoral control of education and one key criticism is that there aren't enough checks in place. The Council is one of those checks, and yet that check is relegated to the Committee of the Whole that looks at dozens of issues, making education an afterthought when it should be a primary priority. This is often lost sight of when we think about mayoral control and it absolves Council of its key role in providing oversight. One of the very first things I will do as Councilmember will be to strongly advocate for the reinstatement of the Education Committee. I believe that check is the starting place. It's incredibly important to me to listen to the people who are affected and informs everything I do as an ANC and in my career and center conversations around those who are affected — parents, students, and teachers. We need more flexible, and inclusive hearing times, increased access to Councilmembers, and more transparency on metrics, data and how decisions are made.	
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 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 support
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:	