

1. Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education in the District of Columbia

The WTU believes that our public schools represent our nation's commitment to helping all children dream their dreams and achieve them. A high-quality public education for all children is an economic necessity, an anchor of democracy, a moral imperative and fundamental civil right, without which none of our rights can be realized fully. As part of this commitment to public schools, government should uphold, enact, and fund policies that fulfill our collective obligation to help all children succeed, including policies that:

- Provide for neighborhood schools, in walking distance, that are safe, welcoming places for teaching and learning; Do you support this policy?

I strongly support said policy.

- Ensure that teachers are well-prepared, are supported, have manageable class sizes and have time to collaborate so they can meet the individual needs of every child; Do you support this policy?

I strongly support said policy.

- Make sure our children have an engaging curriculum that includes art, music and the sciences; Do you support this policy?

I strongly support said policy.

- Ensure that children have access to wraparound services to meet their social, emotional and health needs. Do you support the policy?

I strongly support said policy.

- Explain how you will support these policies and ensure funding for them.

Strong neighborhood schools are a community's greatest resource and it is paramount that government on all levels support said practices. Strengthening neighborhood schools, guards against the unintended social consequences of education our children by other means. I will work to ensure that a holistic education for our children is this city's top funding priority.

2. Measuring the Achievement Gap

- Why do you believe there is an achievement gap?

There are many factors including but not limited to poverty, nutritional health, lack of access to stable housing, the pressing need for strong and comprehensive early childhood programming.

- What policies would you support, and what specific new reforms do you propose to close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

By any measure, the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students is real and we must take meaningful steps to close it. If elected, I will work to improve collaboration between public, private, and charter schools in Ward 8. Teachers, school administrators, students, and their families possess a deep understanding of what works best in education and our government must take full advantage of their experiences and skills.

- Explain how you will support these policies and ensure funding for them.

Education, in all forms, is at the core of the American dream and government must understand its role in determining the pathway forward. If elected, I will vigorously support the aforementioned initiative because “knowledge share” is a critical component of improving outcomes for our teachers and students alike.

3. Implementing the Common Core State Standards

- How would you ensure proper implementation of Common Core State Standards before sanctions are applied to schools, teachers, and students?

Inappropriately levied sanctions can have a detrimental impact on public our institutions. If elected, I’ll work with teachers and administrators to determine what is needed to implement this system change and ensure that their transition is fully supported.

- How will you advocate for and actively support the explicit teaching of functional reading skills beginning in the early childhood years through grade 12 to ensure that DCPS graduates are literate, enabling them to become self-reliant, productive citizens?

Literacy rates in Ward 8 demand vocal support for said policy. If elected, I will dedicate time and resources to raising awareness around this issue. DC is an opportunity rich environment that provides ample openings for inter-generational social mobility and we must prepare our children to take advantage.

- How will you support students who are behind in math to catch up to their peers and graduate with their required credits?

Math proficiency rates in Ward 8 demand Council support for the previously listed aims. Explicit reinforcement of fundamental skills, throughout the life of the student, decreases the likelihood of failure and improves overall confidence.

4. Testing and accountability?

- What do you believe is the primary purpose of standardized testing?

The intended purpose of standardized testing is to objectively measure student performance.

- Would you support rating schools and teachers based on an average years of academic-growth model, rather than proficiency levels? If not, why?

Benchmarking is a necessary resource allocation tool that guarantees monies make it to the areas of greatest need. However, in truth, given that not all classrooms are created equal, good government mandates the exploration of equitable alternatives such as the growth model.

- Would you prefer Common Core-aligned adaptive test over non-adaptive test? If not, why?

I believe the pathway forward should contain a combination of the two. A testing schedule that incorporates adaptive and non-adaptive approaches would allow us to determine how children are doing in relationship to their peers as well as their individual growth YOY. This model can provide a fairer measurement of the educational labor force and provide additional opportunities to positively reinforce our teachers.

5. Cultivating Labor-Management Collaboration

- Specifically, what would change under your leadership to include the WTU in the decision-making process, and how would you include WTU's involvement in the design and implementation of the vision, school budget, professional development, curricula and evaluation systems in DCPS?

I believe that the voices of all educational stakeholders, especially teachers, must be heard at every level of decision making. I will work to ensure that teachers voice is always present when the Council is making decisions that will affect their classrooms.

6. Ending Neighborhood School Closures

- Under what circumstances would you authorize a traditional public school closure? How would you provide for the students affected by traditional public school closure?

I am not in favor of closing public schools at present. Poor performance and fiscal irresponsibility are areas of grave concern, however, I believe these circumstances to be an opportunity for retooling as opposed to closure.

- If you are elected, will you support a moratorium on public school closures for at least five years? Why or why not?

Yes, I support a moratorium. I believe the goal of government should be to provide quality neighborhood schools that educate our children and connect our communities.

- How will you ensure that there are high-quality, walkable traditional neighborhood public schools accessible to every child in DC?

Ensuring access to high quality, walkable neighborhood public schools should be the goal of government at every level. If elected, I will make every effort to make sure that our public schools have the resources and support to improve outcomes for the children of Ward 8.

7. Serving Students with Special Needs

Serving children with special needs a tremendous opportunity and one that I do not take lightly. My sister is deaf and was diagnosed with a learning disability at a young age. If elected, I will fight to implement and advance the gains being made in the areas of special education throughout the District. Families of special needs children deserve the full support of the government and I will work tirelessly to manufacture expansion in this space.

8. Holding Charter Schools Accountable

- Do you support requiring charter schools to meet the same requirements as traditional public schools, particularly as they relate to access for all students (i.e., special education)? Why or why not?

I do not support mirrored obligations in the public and charter space in the areas of access. The real human cost of mandating special needs access, for schools that are ill equipped to handle these students, is far too great. As the brother of a special needs sibling, it's important that we give each child the greatest opportunity to actualize their potential rather than politicize the issue.

- How will you ensure charter schools meet the same requirements as DCPS teachers? Should charter school teachers have the right to organize and join a union?

The role of charter schools should be to innovate within the education space rather than occupy it. Intra-disciplinary gains from all sides should be pooled to develop the path forward in the educational space.

I also believe that collective bargaining is a right of our educational labor force and support unionization efforts.

- As councilmember, how will you pledge to solve the problem of misplaced and misdirected student allocations due to high student mobility from charter schools to the traditional public school?

If elected, I will champion transparency and swift action in the area of allocation. There are a finite number of resources in this city and we must ensure that each child, school, and teacher has access to their fair share.

9. Improving Early Childhood Education

- How will you ensure all young learners have access to high-quality early childhood programs with appropriate funding in all parts of the city?

As councilmember, I will support ongoing efforts to bring quality early childhood education to all and to guarantee that every child, regardless of zip code, has access to a high quality early childhood education. To achieve this result, we must focus even before preschool on childcare programs that are both high quality and affordable.

10. Implementing Supportive Teacher Development and Evaluation System

- How will your office work to retain and respect the current population of DCPS teachers?

The contributions of our educational labor force should never be discounted in the eyes of the government. As councilmember, I will celebrate the great things that are being done in DCPS and seek the expertise of the labor force where there are opportunities. Collective intelligence will give us the best chance at a collective solution and I want teacher input in the areas of curriculum as well as retention.

11. Summary

- What are the three things the school district does well that you would continue to support and expand if elected?

Teacher compensation

School choice

Collection and analysis of data

- What are the top three challenges facing public education in the district of Columbia, and how will you address them if elected?

Closing the achievement gap

Providing holistic services to our children, especially those who are survivors of trauma

Getting the student success out of every educational dollar spent

- If we endorse you and support your election, how will you work with us in the future?

Let me be clear, I want the endorsement of the Washington Teachers Union. A strong public education made this opportunity possible for me and I owe a debt as a result. I will stand alongside the WTU to create the solutions that strengthen our educational labor force and improve outcomes for our students. Thank you for your consideration.