

# Trayon White for Ward 8 2016

## Washington Teachers Union

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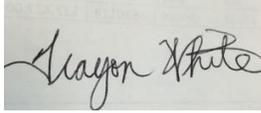
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### 1. Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education in the District of Columbia

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 a fundamental civil right, without which none of our rights can be realized fully. As part of this commitment to public schools, government should establish, uphold 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?

X Yes No

- Ensure that teachers are well-prepared, are well-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?

X Yes No

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

X Yes No

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

X Yes No

**If you do not support all of these policies, why not? Explain how you will support these policies and ensure funding for them.**

I recognize that IMPACT evaluations are not an effect metric to measure teacher performance in the classroom. Ensuring that teachers are well-prepared, supported and have manageable class sizes while also ensuring that children have an engaging curriculum are crucial to improving the students' academic achievement. As the Ward 8 councilmember, I will support these policies by introducing legislation that would reform the teacher evaluation system to properly identify

classroom deficiencies and support the teachers by providing wrap around services to students who are most impacted by the achievement gap. I will push the Mayor and lobby my colleagues to ensure that we are putting our money into developing our future leaders by properly investing in our education system. There is a lot of money being spent in the DCPS Central Office; I will advocate that those funds be redirected to the local neighborhood schools so they can get what they need to provide for students, teaching/learning and to adhere to the importance of satisfying the above referenced policies.

## **2. *Measuring and Closing the Achievement Gap***

**Currently, more than 100,000 students attend our city's public schools. The teachers, paraprofessionals and other school employees who work with these students each day care deeply about the quality of public schools and the education their students receive. While recent press has lauded D.C. schools for growth on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments, the latest Education Week "Quality Counts" report gave District of Columbia schools an F based on those same assessments, underscoring an increased growth in the achievement gap from 2003 to 2013, 38 times the national average.**

### **Why do you believe there is an achievement gap?**

The Quality Counts (QC) report is known to be one of the most comprehensive reports on assessments and on grading state performances in the U.S. educational system. It is quantified in three core areas; Chance for Success, K-12 Achievement, and School Finance. QC's State analysis data previously ranked Mississippi and Washington, DC with an "F" in the K-12 Achievement area. More importantly, there is an equity gap problem because DC does not like to be honest and to reveal real data and statistics. Currently, the District does a great job of only taking a specific positive perspective of acknowledging progress when in fact the reality is very different than what DC promotes. We have approximately a 52% graduation rate, but DC uses the NAEP report to parade that we are one of the #1 fastest growing education systems in the country. Conversely, African Americans and other minority students are falling behind twice as fast as their white counterparts. I believe that the District cannot fix a problem that we pretend we don't have. Indeed, there is a gap because we do not put all our attention and efforts into addressing the necessities of those who most need the services. Education has become so political that no one wants to look bad. As a result, some politicians tend to push transparency under the rug and publically suggest that they are doing an amazing job. Unfortunately, the reality is that half of our students are not graduating from high school and only about 9% of them are graduating from college.

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

Schools are a big part of the community. However, most community members, including parents, feel left out and rejected by the school. I will support policies that change the culture of the schools where they are more community friendly. In the past, our schools did a better job of meeting community needs. For example, Hart Middle, Ballou High, Malcolm X Elementary, and Orr Elementary Schools all had recreation centers that remained open and accessible after 3:30

PM. daily. Today, every single one of those recreational centers are closed in our low income neighborhoods which has the greatest number of school-aged youth and need for after school youth services or programs. As opposed to the year round academic calendar, I support depositing more money into Academic Enrichment for high quality after school programs and education programs on the weekends. This should immediately help to begin to close the achievement gap and to give our students more opportunities to grow academically outside of the traditional classroom setting.

**How are you going to ensure transparency in the budgeting process and make certain school funds are being spent where they are most needed and where they will provide the most benefit to students?**

Education is my heartbeat. I will lobby the Council Chairman to be placed on the Education Committee. As a result, this will give us a strong voice at the table so that we may ask the necessary questions, to request a funding formula for improving teaching and learning, especially in low performing schools and to get accurate budget information out to the public. The students are losing with this present education equation based on the budget process and formula that we currently use. DC spends a significant amount of money on education in comparison to other states. However, I will fight to ensure that those dollars get distributed where they are needed the most. The most important City Council oversight need is to determine where the achievement gaps are the highest and where special needs students are not getting adequate services so that appropriate funding and/or direct resources are provided.

**3. *Implementing the Common Core State Standards***

**The WTU supports the implementation of the Common Core State Standards to address inequalities in public education and to give all students the critical-thinking and problem-solving skills they need to succeed. In order to properly implement the Common Core standards, there must be a deliberate and thoughtful plan of action for introducing new standards into schools, to make sure they are embraced by the community at large. Students need a strong, well-rounded curriculum, and teachers need the time, resources and support required to adapt their teaching to these ambitious new demands.**

**Although the district has made some strides in implementing the Common Core State Standards, our members still are concerned about the quality of tools and supports available for educators.**

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

I would use my influence on the DC Council to work closely with both the Mayor and the Chancellor to thoroughly monitor the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. I would also encourage all interested parties to be patient with the implementation process of these standards prior to proposing any sanctions or negative consequences that are usually applied to schools, teachers or students. I would utilize my knowledge and experience gained from serving on the State Board of Education to properly educate my fellow council members (preferably as a Member of the Council's Education Committee) about the long and challenging

process that we had to undergo with the “Race To The Top” initiative. I would build upon those efforts and create a continuous improvement model that would be implemented overtime through my oversight.

#### **4. *Testing and Accountability***

**Since No Child Left Behind was passed, annual standardized tests have been used to determine student proficiency levels. This testing data has been used primarily for making high-stakes decisions—such as reconstituting or closing schools and terminating staff. Proficiency levels have been criticized as providing inaccurate measures of the effectiveness of schools that serve students who are behind academically. For example, a school that helped all its students learn one year of material still would have a low proficiency rating if those students had started a year or more behind grade level. As an alternative, student growth models have been developed to determine how many years of academic growth students make each year. Such models require that the school system have accurate measures of each student’s skill mastery. This data then can be used to inform and adapt instruction. Acquiring this level of data requires tests that are adaptive — those designed to capture what a student knows, rather than simply whether they are performing at grade level. What do you believe is the primary purpose of standardized testing?**

I believe the primary purpose of standardized testing should be to determine where we most need to help our students academically improve in various core subject areas.

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

Yes, I would support rating schools and teachers based on an average years-of-academic growth model. Washington, DC has penalized and demoralized the institution of education, particularly in the past few years. The proficiency level models used for rating schools and teachers have not been proven to be the successful model that many originally thought that it would be. In fact, I have found that more teachers have abruptly resigned, thereby increasing the number of overcrowded classrooms that are often uncovered and overpopulated. Moreover, this type of proficiency level scoring model has added pressures with less encouragement offered for teacher and individual student development. PL’s create an atmosphere of teaching to the test, and lengthy assessments’ which adversely positions students in harsher, less conducive learning environment.

There are so many factors that go into learning that are outside of a teacher’s control. The growth model allows us to adequately monitor the student’s progress. Simply measuring proficiency does not allow me as a person making a judgment based on proficiency to see the individual progress of the student, teacher, or the school.

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

Despite the controversy around Common Core, it is something that is here for now and Washington, DC has accepted its standards. As a former State Board of Education Member, I was in agreement with accepting the standards. Since these standards have been adopted, we

must use proper measuring tools that are aligned with the standards that we are implementing. However, there also needs to be some flexibility in the implementation phases because this is something new for us all. Therefore, I am not in favor of punishing students and teachers based on these new standards. With anything new, we have to always allow for enough time to iron out any wrinkles and to allow adequate time to transition from those former standards that we have had for decades. DC is using PARCC Assessments, which is supposed to be more closely aligned with Common Core. Learning encompasses more than testing. Humans have not been able to fully grasp how creative and powerful the human mind is. As a result, it's very imperative that we foster a very nurturing and supportive attitude when it comes to education.

5. ***Cultivating Labor-Management Collaboration***

**In order to fulfill the promise of public education, the WTU believes the input of teachers and school employees is critical to the successful implementation of sustainable school reform. The collective bargaining process is the best way to guarantee that educators have a meaningful role in developing and implementing strategies to help students reach high academic standards. This includes the WTU having a meaningful voice in designing and implementing professional development, curricula and evaluation systems. Specifically, what would change under your administration to include educators in the decision-making process, and how would you involve the WTU in the design and implementation of DCPS' vision, school budgets, professional development, curricula and evaluation systems?**

As a Councilmember, I will ensure that I have an education advisory committee consisting of students, parents, and teachers. I will be very involved in meeting with my school's Administrators and LSAT's (Local School Advisory Team's) so that I can make informed decisions that will benefit my community. In addition, I would commit to meeting with the WTU President and designated leaders at a minimum of at least once a month to ensure that your valued views and insights are brought to the table. I fight to be a member of the Education Committee. However, if such an appointment does not occur, I will remain super committed to ensuring that our education system significantly improves, especially for those who have been neglected for so long. WTU can count me in as an ally.

6. ***Ending Neighborhood School Closures***

**In many areas of our city, safe and high-quality neighborhood and community schools are no longer within easy walking distance for all students. In nearly five years, our communities have witnessed more than 40 school closures, limiting access to walkable neighborhood schools and suitable feeder schools for students and families. Research is clear. There are no financial benefits to closing schools. In fact, studies demonstrate it actually costs more to close schools.**

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

Under no circumstance would I authorize a public school closure. As the Ward 8 representative, one of the immediate concerns of my community involves dealing with school closures. I informed my constituents that I did not want any of our schools to be closed. And I would join them in the fight to keep them open. Forty schools have been closed over the last eight years. We have had no significant improvement in our system as it relates to school closing. For those

students affected by the closures, I will monitor the process to ensure that their receiving school would receive the appropriate funding.

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

Yes, I would support a moratorium on public school closures and I also believe that a current assessment would need to take place. In addition, a study that objectively examines the impact of past school closures is required and long overdue. Thus far, DC has neglected implementing an impact evaluation effort. Even the City Council has deliberately pushed back on evaluating the 2007 School Reform Act.

**How will you ensure that high-quality, walkable traditional neighborhood public schools are accessible to every child in D.C.?**

I will work closely with the Chancellor and Mayor to ensure high quality schools are open and accessible. In addition, I will visit each Ward 8 school to ensure that they have the resources, as well as the most qualified teachers and administrators employed, to help our children get what they deserve and that is a quality education.

**7. *Serving Students with Special Needs***

**The district has an obligation to provide students with special needs access to educational opportunities that are developmentally and emotionally appropriate. Due to lack of adequate staffing, oversight and targeted funding, students are not receiving their documented instructional (IEP) services — costing us millions in unnecessary lawsuits. Many of the district’s students with unique needs, including students at Mamie D. Lee School and Sharpe Health School, are experiencing abrupt disruptions in their education due to sudden school closings, consolidations and inappropriate placements. What structures and plans do you have to ensure students with special needs are receiving the services they need to succeed in school?**

Schools need to be equipped with the appropriate personnel, learning environment and/or related resources to achieve success. We have systems in place but little accountability and enforcement. As a former school board member, I often received calls about neglect in services. As a Council Member, I will leverage my influence (just as I did while serving on the DC State Board of Education) by making calls directly to the top officials to make sure we are immediately addressing the needs of students and parents. In addition, and as a Council Member, I pledge to the WTU to work closely with the Education Committee (whether a member or not) to ensure that we have the right policies and people in place to get the job done.

**8. *Holding Charter Schools Accountable***

**Charter schools and DCPS are not operating on a level playing field. The WTU believes accountability and transparency for charter schools remain major problems in the District of Columbia, resulting in mismanaged funds and misplaced student allocations. What do you think are the roles of charter schools in D.C.?**

Through the “No Kid Left Behind” initiative, charters schools became alternate learning institutions for failing public DC public schools as well as specialty schools. While this started as an excellent idea, it has grown – and will remain -- out of proportions without a long-term

strategic plan. As a result, the role of DC Charter schools has become a free for all for those who want to be participants.

**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?**

Charter schools receive the same public funding as other schools so they should meet the exact same requirements. How will you ensure charter school teachers meet the same requirements as DCPS teachers? Should charter school teachers have the right to organize and join a union? The reality is that the DC Council does not have the authority to ensure such. However, I would do everything in my power to make sure that we hire highly qualified teachers. I also believe that charter school teachers should have the right to organize. As mayor, how will you pledge to solve the problem of misplaced and misdirected student allocations due to frequent student transfers from charter schools to traditional public schools? As Council Member, I pledged to work diligently to ensure that check points are in place that matches the needs of students, with payments every three months. This will give us the opportunity to match money to the actual student occupied seat, thereby ensuring greater and much needed accountability.

**9. *Improving Early Childhood Education***

**We know from research that high-quality early childhood education and care programs like Head Start, Early Head Start, child care, preschool and full-day kindergarten increase the likelihood that young children, from birth to age 5, will acquire the language and literacy foundation upon which later school success is built. Yet, as reflected in recent audit reports, universal pre-K has not been realized in the district, as too few children in our city—especially impoverished children—have access to high-quality early childhood programs. How will you ensure all young children have access to high-quality early childhood programs with appropriate funding in all parts of the city?**

I want to ensure all Pre k children have the ability to access early childhood programs in the District. Therefore, I will propose that we open up more available seats to all children, especially those at the most risk.

**10. *Implementing Supportive Teacher Development and Evaluation Systems***

**The best teacher evaluation systems are designed mutually with teacher unions to offer what most teachers are asking for nationwide: a system that supports the continual growth and development of teachers. Punitive approaches to teacher evaluation systems produce a constant churn of teachers through mutual consent arrangements and cash buyout options. Studies show that students, schools and communities are negatively affected by this lack of stability. Furthermore, every year nearly \$2 million of taxpayer funds are spent by the district on early retirement and cash buyout options, leading to the perpetual separation of effective teachers and the rehiring and training of new teachers. Teachers in D.C. lost the right to bargain on teacher evaluation in 1997. This loss has meant that teachers' voices no longer matter in an area that is pivotal to their professional growth, career advancement and effectiveness. As mayor, will you lobby Congress to return the right to collectively bargain on teacher evaluation to teachers? If so, how?**

As councilmember, I will lobby the Mayor to work closely with the new Congress. I will also not be opposed to spend time on Capitol Hill when necessary. I will also meet with the Chancellor and the Mayor to review contractual changes that have occurred in DC and directly impact the rights of teachers to collective bargaining.

**How will you change the current teacher evaluation policy so that teachers are supported in improving their practice, and not simply terminated after a single year due to a sometimes flawed and highly subjective evaluation system?**

The I.M.P.A.C.T. Evaluation system is flawed. I will work with the Mayor and the Chancellor to further reform the I.M.P.A.C.T rating system. There must be policies in place to support teachers. For example, there is currently a high turnover of teachers. So we must look at more flexibility in our current teacher's evaluations. How will you redress those who are evaluated and terminated wrongfully? I will support the rehiring of wrongfully terminated teachers. How will you reduce teacher turnover? First I will require that Teach for America, Teaching Fellows, and all other newly hired teachers are required to sign a five year contract. I will also strongly support keeping tenured teachers, instead of excessing them.

**11. Summary**

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

1. The proposed \$20 million Male of Color Initiative.
2. Building and renovating innovative facilities
3. Opportunities for graduates. As a DCPS graduate, I would not have had the opportunities that I have today with DC Public Schools. I will continue to support DC Public Schools.

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

- 1. One of the major challenges is the achievement gap between the Districts' poor minority students and its' more affluent students;**
- 2. The second challenge in providing walkable high quality schools in every community; and**
- 3. The third challenge is improving our school systems' graduation rate.**

As the Councilman, I will be committed and will work diligently with the community and other elected officials to ensure that every day people are at the table and their voices and concerns are heard as we are being creative in addressing these dire issues.