

Candidate Information: At-Large City Council, April 11, 2016

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1. a) Yes, I agree we should provide for neighborhood schools, in walking distance, that are safe, welcoming places for teaching and learning.  
b) Yes, I support this policy that ensures 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.  
c) Yes, I support the policy that will make sure our children have an engaging curriculum that includes art, music, and the sciences.  
d) Yes, I support the policy that will ensure that children have access to wraparound services to meet their social, emotional, and health needs.

As a senior member of the Council of the District of Columbia, I will seek to become a member of the Education Committee. If I become a member of the Education Committee, I will vote for these policies as well as support funding for these policies. In addition, I would advocate these policies to my peers on the Council and encourage them to vote and fund the policies. Whether or not I am on the Education Committee, I will become very vocal on these policies and work with WTU on strategies and funding for these very important policies.

2. a) There is an achievement gap because there has been a lack of will, vision, and commitment to reduce the gap. Additionally, there have not been adequate resources allotted for solving the problem.  
b) First, I support a policy that makes reducing the achievement gap a priority. I would support this policy through funding which includes well prepared and trained teachers equipped with the resources to reduce the gap. I would support policies and funding for initiatives that guarantee preparation, training, and assessments for our pre-school and elementary school populations to read independently and be able to add, subtract, multiply, and divide upon entering the fourth grade. I would also support and fund free WiFi access to the internet to reduce the digital divide. I would also engage WTU to determine other ways to reduce the achievement gap.

- c) I will ensure that there is transparency in the budgeting process and that certain school funds are being spent where they are legally required by providing aggressive oversight. This oversight includes the assistance of WTU, the DC Auditor, the Chief Financial Officer, and the Inspector General. Title I, At-Risk Funding and similar programs require audits that track the funding and expenditures to ensure direct connections to the programs being funded.
3. a) I would ensure proper implementation of Common Core State Standards before sanctions are applied to schools, teachers, and students through aggressive oversight and working with WTU to establish benchmarks.
- b) I am extremely supportive of ensuring that DCPS graduates are literate, self-reliant, and productive citizens. In order to achieve this, I would work with WTU and other stakeholders to review bills that I have introduced such as the Early Childhood Education Act, the Thurgood Marshall Marion Barry Early Education Learning Academy Act, and the Reading Development and Grade 3 Retention Act. I would build a consensus for funding in order to implement the goal of producing functional reading skills for graduates so they are literate, self-reliant, and productive citizens.
- c) In addition to supporting policies and funding that ensures our fourth graders can add, subtract, multiply, and divide upon entering the fourth grade, I support funding for math camps, math tutors, and any other means necessary to help our students catch up. I would do this with the input of WTU.
4. a) I believe the primary purpose of standardized testing is to capture what a student knows.
- b) Yes, I would support rating schools and teachers based on an average-years-of-academic-growth model.
- c) Yes, I would prefer Common Core-aligned adaptive tests.
5. First and foremost, I would make it extremely clear that I welcome the input of WTU in developing and implementing strategies to assist students in reaching high academic standards. I would ensure WTU is part of the Task Force designing and implementing professional development curriculum and evaluation systems. It takes all of us working together to produce a well-rounded student ready to accept and take on the challenges of a very dynamic global economy and world.
6. a) Traditional public school closure should not be taken lightly. I grew up in safe and quality neighborhood and community schools. For me, the circumstances would have to be extremely severe to authorize closure of a traditional public school. Students affected by closure of their school should receive first choice in attending a school suitable for their needs.

- b) I could support a moratorium on public school closures for at least five years based on a sound analysis, evidence, and rationale that it would be in the best interest of the students we serve.
  - c) High-quality and walkable, traditional neighborhood public schools is something that we should set as a goal. I will work with WTU to achieve this goal.
7. My wife, Gwendolyn Orange, worked nearly thirty years in DCPS and primarily in special education. I personally have experience with special needs in education through my role with the National Children’s Center where I served as its CFO. Because of these experiences, special education is very important to me. Along with WTU, I will continue to advocate for adequate staffing, oversight, targeted funding, and adherence to the IEP process. Losing millions in unnecessary lawsuits is unacceptable.
8. a) The roles of charter schools are defined by law. Charter schools in no way should replace DCPS.
- b) Yes, I support requiring charter schools to meet the same requirements as traditional public schools. Our students should have access to all schools, public or charter.
- c) I will advocate for and vote for charter schools meeting the same requirements as DCPS teachers. Yes, charter school teachers should have the same right to organize and join a union.
- d) As a Councilmember, I will work to ensure that student allocations are fair and transparent and follow the student.
9. In order to ensure all young learners have access to high-quality early childhood programs, I will work with WTU to review, modify, and support Bills such as the Early Childhood Education Act, the Thurgood Marshall Marion Barry Early Education Learning Academy Act, and the Reading Development and Grade 3 Retention Act. Our young learners must have access to high-quality early childhood programs with appropriate funding in all parts of DC.
10. My office will work with WTU and other stakeholders to ensure we are implementing supportive teacher development initiatives and evaluation systems. I also will continue to work to exempt DC teachers from DC taxation and to restore the pension exclusion. I would like to increase that exclusion to at least \$10,000.00.
11. a) If elected, the three things that I believe do well and I would continue to support are:  
1) Identifying and getting our young people into early education; 2) Providing assistance for our students to do better; and 3) Building on the perception that DCPS is committed to producing sound results and productive students for the global economy.

b) The top three challenges facing public education in DC are: 1) Funding; 2) Reducing the achievement gap; and 3) Retaining good teachers.

I will address these issues by: advocating and voting to fully fund our schools; supporting and funding policies to reduce the achievement gap; retaining good teachers by exempting them from taxation; restoring the pension exclusion; and providing the resources they need to teach.

c) If WTU endorses and supports my election, I will maintain an open-door policy and seek your input and guidance on all aspects of traditional public school education.