
Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

John Wright

Q2 District

District 7

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

I believe that strong public schools are essential to Atlanta's future and that every community deserves to have strong schools to educate its students. I am running for office because I'm dedicated to every child having the same opportunity to thrive that I did.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I have 25 years of proven experience in program and project management. I am currently managing over billion dollars (E-SPLOST IV & V) in school construction projects for the DeKalb County School District.

Also, as a founder of a school and former 2-term board president of that local independent neighborhood charter school, I bring the practical knowledge, and governance skills, and abilities required to make a positive impact on the board of education for our children.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

I believe the number one job of the Atlanta Public School system is to make certain every family in Atlanta, wherever they live or how much money they have, is able to send their child or children to a high quality, family friendly, and safe school.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

Governance

- Create meaningful policy and monitor policy effectiveness
- Manage the budget
- Manage the Superintendent

Pre-K and K-5 Education

- Collaborate and mentor with organizations that focus on early childhood development (Ages 0-4yrs)
- Every child reading by 2nd grade
- Reading for comprehension by 3rd and 4th grade

Address Blight

- Work with the City of Atlanta to acquire the deeds to shuttered schools - Work with each community to determine the fate of those shuttered schools
- Work with City Council and Mayor to address abandoned homes and buildings

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

6

Comment::

The district has successfully implemented a coarse correction and is starting to see results.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been moving in the right or wrong direction?**Right,**

Comment::

The district has stabilized and the turnaround plan is proof of that.

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

7**Q10** Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

Both.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

5

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

One of the issues I see of greatest importance is developing a means to continually assess the progress of the turnaround and other initiatives/programs currently implemented across the district. Only then can you say with certainty what's working and what is not working. If something is not working we can address it or pivot before years pass with substandard or negative results.

That critical assessment provides the students, parents, teachers and stakeholders the transparency and accountability needed to instill trust in the system that seems to be lacking in the programs underway.

I would work with the superintendent to develop key performance indicators where we could assess the earned value of all of these programs, and their effectiveness towards every child's ability to learn and thrive in the system.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

Generally, yes

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

I would seek to increase or realign funding to Pre-K and K-5 education

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

I would seek to increase funding in pupil services.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

Generally yes. I like the charter governance structure that pushes some of the responsibility and accountability down to the schools (Go-Teams, Principals, and Teachers/Staff)

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

I don't know yet...

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

Yes, with the proper assessment tools in place and the understanding that this is long-term endeavor.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you **Support** are a supporter of charter schools?

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

They serve as an educational choice, and lab for implementing new or different pedagogy. And depending on its success could exported out to district schools.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

Its a case by case situation.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

Recruitment from top tier institutions and/or organizations and mentoring.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

Recruitment from top tier institutions and removal of some of the extraneous duties that detract from actual classroom teaching.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

There needs to be more collaboration and mentoring with organizations that focus on early childhood development (Ages birth-4yrs). If we can better maximize the readiness of children entering K-5 we can substantially increase student learning and achievement (reading on grade level and for comprehension) which directly translates to student performance and achievement in middle and high school.

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

Work with Superintendent and Go Teams to make parents and community feel comfortable in the schools. Good school are essential to thriving and vibrant communities.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

Through the Schools (PTSA, Go-Team, etc.) Community meetings and an array of digital media tools.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

This is the intent and purpose of the charter governance structure and the go-teams.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Pstreece Hutcherson

Q2 District

District 6

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

“Bringing the Pride Back to APS”

I have been in education for 15 years and a parent for 10 years. I had no desire to run for political office but they brought the fight to my door step. When the current APS school board implemented the “school turnaround plan”, I was there with many community people, pleading for them to not close schools. But they didn’t care. They said they had been asking for help the entire time and no one came to their meetings. Well schools aren’t for sale! The current board needs to realize that. Teachers are fleeing with the threat of losing their jobs and closing down schools. It only makes it bad for our children and communities to have it gutted by people who don’t care. Board members should not just be visible for campaign season. The same way people get in to office should be the same way they campaign about the schools needs and celebrations. Going into the community, knocking on doors, having community events at the grocery stores and malls. That’s where the people are. Share and celebrate APS there, not behind some closed door where schools are being closed and given away for profit! Bring the pride back to APS!

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I am working class parent that wants the best for my child and my community. I have been an educator for 15 years. I believe in people having their voices heard because I want my voice to be heard. This is what qualifies me to run for APS board District 6.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

To bring the pride back to APS. I am a product of the Atlanta Public Schools. We have had great leaders and activist come from our institutions and make great impacts on the world. It is time to stop having people coming in trying to “fix us” and realize that we already have exactly what we need with the proper support and guidance.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

1. STOP SCHOOL CLOSINGS!
2. STOP TERRORIZING EDUCATORS!
3. Bring the PRIDE back to APS by listening and working for the community.

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

Very Good

Comment::

APS was fine before these current big business and unqualified leaders came into our system. They are gutting it out for profit. It has to stop. The system could be great like it always has been with a genuine and caring leadership team to support the schools and communities.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been moving in the right or wrong direction?**Wrong,**

Comment::

The reason the schools have been going in the wrong direction is because of the leadership. Not because of the students, parents, educators, staff, community. But only because of the current leadership that must be replaced.

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

Very poor

Comment::

She has no interest in APS. She is NOT vested in our communities. She hasn't taken residence here and lives in the W hotel. She closed schools in Texas just like she is doing here. She lost her job there and she needs to lose her job here in APS. She should go into a business where she can make as much money as she wants but education is not the place. Schools should not be for sale!

Q10 Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

The school turnaround plan is awful and should be illegal for the mere and distinct fact, that it has closed schools. I can't even look at the other parts until closing schools has stopped.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

Strongly disagree

Comment::

Everything that APS is already there. The educators are well equipped with knowledge to education or students to be college and career ready. We have invested more than enough, millions of dollars possibly more, on private publishing companies. It is time to allow the educators do their craft and be supported in order for them to be successful. They have all the knowledge that they need to education our students.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

The closing of schools, the threats of educators losing their jobs and the current leadership not having the best interest for the community. These things have to stop.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

That is more than enough to invest in our schools, educators and communities. We have to redistribute these current investments in private publishing companies and invest in our educators. They need an opportunity to share outside of their buildings with others in their district to develop viable plans of learning for our students. Not another program, to sit on a shelf to collect dust.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

The educators and buildings would be first. When we have people teach and buildings to teach in our students can be more than successful. That's just common sense. I am angered that the current board and superintendent can not understand that.

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

The decrease would be investing in private publishing companies that do not have coaches in the building and the educators have to modify. The educators have more than enough resources, it is time to invest in the educators.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

Absolutely not! It is currently closing schools and letting go of educators. Making them flee from the system. This hurts the students and community.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

I can't even entertain any of the plan because of school closings.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

NO! not at all. Not even the name because it has negative impact on our community.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Unsure,

Comments:

I do believe parents should feel a sense of pride when they send their students into a learning community. I feel that once the pride is brought back to APS they will want to have their students in their home schools. Schools should not be ran by corporations and big businesses. That is like having one fire station ran by Coca Cola and the other by BigK. Who's fires will get put out the best? That is not what education is supposed to be. It is supposed to be an equal and fair opportunity for all!

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

As long as the charter schools are ran by the local school district and not corporations. Also the public schools are not overly inaudating the community. It should never be 11 charters in one school district and 2 charters in another. That is uneven disbursement that guts our community.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

Only if it is controlled by the local school district and not big business. Also it can not be a skewed amount of schools in each district. That should also be illegal.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

Supporting the educators and staff will help to foster appropriate development to our students and community

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

By giving them the honor, support and stability to do their craft.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

Our students have access to the ga lottery pre-k system. APS can help to facilitate those programs without over extending a budget.

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

Go to where the parents are grocery stores, rec centers, knocking on doors. And not penalize them for not coming to a four wall meeting. We are working class parents that need support and sharing of information where we are.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

The same way politicians campaign should be the same way they get out information. That school turnaround plan would have never happened had they robocalled, knocked on doors, came to the restaurants and recreational centers. It was a devised plan to gut out our school system. And the ones that suffer the most are the ones who could never truly make it to those meetings or even understand the jargon they are speaking in. Had the school turnaround plan been called the school closing plan (which it is) it would have never passed.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

I am glad I am in this political race. What I have learned is that the voice of the people is in that board. The superintendent answers to the people. I plan to make that my goal and priority.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Lewis Cartee

Q2 District

District 3

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

Simply put, in order for us to acquire the equity we all need, the diversity we all want and, quite honestly, the city we all deserve, we must proactively focus our time, energy and dollars up front on our schools and the students they serve.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

During the past 11 years I have served in multiple community leadership roles within East Atlanta, the larger NPU-W and at the Cluster level. I am currently fulfilling my second stint as President of the East Atlanta Community Association (EACA) while also chairing the Education Committee. Under my leadership EACA has focused on advocacy for important issues with the city around public safety, transportation, land use and zoning, economic development, parks and education.

Overtime it became clear that my true passion lay with the role our schools play in creating a better future for our children as well as the greater community. I served as the Local School Council Chair at Burgess-Peterson Academy Elementary School (BPA) for the three years prior to Atlanta Public Schools transitioning to a Charter System, where I was then elected as the current Governance Team (GO Team) Chair. Through my role on the BPA GO Team I was also honored to be selected to represent BPA on the Jackson Cluster Advisory Team. Additionally, I took on roles in Southeast Atlanta Communities for Schools (SEACS) and currently serve as the Education Chair for NPU-W. As a committed community member and APS parent currently involved in the Charter System governance platform, my roles have already given me the opportunity to participate in the larger discussion around equity and academic success for all children to include being involved in our Cluster plan development. This strategy established, among other items, the value and mission of our Cluster, our signature program of International Baccalaureate, and the emphasis on creating an accepting and welcoming culture.

Given my leadership at both the community and school level I am uniquely positioned to address the issues affecting our children and families from both vantage points.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

I believe in Educational Justice which is our obligation to produce an equitable environment that offers the same opportunities of success for all regardless of the color of one's skin, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or economic status. Schools should be a tool that level disparities while promoting and honoring our differences in order to allow for the growth of a child through development of character.

I believe in our ability to provide each and every child what is needed to create a safe, positive and productive learning environment that allows for all students to flourish academically and socially while knowing and loving who they are.

I believe we have taken some fundamental steps toward this reality by understanding that true change comes from those closest to students. I believe that the voice of the school (principal, teachers, parents, students, community and GO Team) should be the strongest voice, the trusted voice and the voice that can effect real change for our schools, our communities and our children.

I believe as a board we are tasked with creating collaborative goals, goals that reflect the needs of our communities and our children. Establishing these shared goals and agreeing on what constitutes success allows us to then hold all accountable for one thing... increasing student achievement.

I believe in strengthening our early learning programs to improve elementary readiness as well as creating robust opportunities for vocational training.

I believe that no one entity can produce the schools our children deserve, the city we all deserve. We must expect and require all our communities, our stakeholders and our elected officials to work together for a shared positive outcome because our children do not care, nor should they, about adults who disagree or worse, bicker about the how's in this process. Our responsibility is to them and them alone.

I believe in our children.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?**Local Governance (Voice of School)**

Building capacity within our Governance Teams (GO Teams) through worthwhile training, relationship building in and outside of our clusters and peer to peer mentoring partnerships should be supported by APS. With intentional training from APS to sincerely produce strong, informed and involved teams, we can construct an environment where decisions related to student achievement and equity come from the bottom up while trustfully supported from the top down.

Accountability

As a board we are tasked with creating collaborative goals, goals that reflect the needs of our communities and our children. Establishing these shared goals and agreeing on what constitutes success combined with increased transparency through program audits allows for increasing trust and effective two-way communication that ultimately produces a school district that is approachable, accessible and equitable for all.

Early Learning & Vocational Training

We need to support all avenues for increasing academic success by strengthening our early learning programs to improve elementary readiness while also offering robust opportunities for vocational training.

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

7

Comment::

Current management of APS vs educational outcomes affects the answer of this question.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been moving in the right or wrong direction?**Right,**

Comment::

As an overall district we have come through a very tumultuous time with the cheating scandal, and the current board has repositioned the focus back on where it should be, with our children. As a school system that has been stabilized, I think we can now build upon the framework that has been put in place.

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

7**Q10** Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

In general, I do believe in the current vision of the district, specifically the movement to a charter system. Under our current operating model we are working to push autonomy and local control down to the school level. No person or group understands the specific needs of the individual students and unique needs of a school community than those closest to those children. Decisions for this students should be made from the bottom up, and supported from the top down. In APS we still need to build greater capacity for local decision making across the city, but the framework is in place for greater engagement at each individual school.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

Neither agree nor disagree

Comment::

As a community leader advocating for our children prior to the current board and superintendent, I would have previously strongly agreed with this question. While always open to discussing any idea that supports the ultimate goal of increasing student outcomes, we have in many ways, stabilized our system which will now allow us to grow.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

Equity: This is not only the single biggest issues facing public education, but the number one issue facing our city. By working to create equity in our schools, we will also, concurrently, do the same for our city.

In order to address our equity issue across the district, we first have to adequately define what this means for our students and our communities. Once this definition is agreed upon we can then focus on the following three areas:

A. Early Childhood Education – The current board has worked to create increased opportunities for early learning, and I believe that we should continue to reach more children through a universal birth to pre-k early childhood education model.

B. Local Governance – Through sincere training APS can work to build a stronger and more productive voice within each of our schools. There is no entity that knows how to produce greater results for our students than those closest to our children. Teachers, principals, parents and community members can quickly make specific changes to impact the educational equity of their individual students.

C. Partnerships – By electing public servants across the city, mayor, city council and board of education, that truly believe that in order to produce an equitable, tolerant and understanding city we must focus at the root of our society...our schools. We can no longer go about our work with blinders on. We must form and build trusting relationships that put our schools at the center of our equity issue.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

In general, yes. As a district with a high level of generational poverty, a higher level of per student expenditure is expected.

Early Childhood Education, Turnaround Plan, Teacher Professional Development

As APS has decreased central office expenditures, while pushing dollars and decision making to the school level, I would continue to look at all budget line items for their direct corellation to increasing student achievement.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

Yes. Our chronically failing schools require additional services and the current turnaround plan created a menu of options from, to name just a few, extended day and Saturday school to additional reading and math specialists and high impact tutoring that allows for our turnaround principals to select the needed intervention that best serves their specific school communities.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

No

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

Yes

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Support,

Comments:

I support our current charter schools, not necessarily new additions. Understanding the past need for more local control I can appreciate the history of our current charters. However, with the ability to now sincerely affect real change and create a real impact at our schools through our GO Teams, I believe we now can create that desired positive control at all our schools.

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

Charter schools should be small schools of innovation, not separation. By staying nimble a charter school can more easily shift in day-to-day operations based on something not working. When a charter school does produce innovation that leads to success, APS has to do a better job of sharing these results with all schools.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

Generally, no. Where we have a unique situation in a community that warrants partnering with a not-for-profit provider that can bring distinct innovation, my preference is for all children in the service area to be included.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

As a system we need to create a Leadership Academy that will focus on developing our current promising faculty through a combination of management training, vision creating, deeper budget understanding, etc. along with mentoring with current successful principals.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

Increased teacher quality starts with assuring we hire the right principal for the right school at the right time. A quality principal will create a positive and successful culture, hire and develop top tier teachers and assure that these teachers will be a part of the growth and success of the school while also allowing for these principals to continue to be a part of the decision making as it relates to appropriate professional development for his or her staff.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

APS needs to continue to grow early childhood education both internally as well as through service and governmental partners while striving for a universal birth to pre-k offering for all students.

Engagement (4/4)**Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?**

We have taken some fundamental steps toward this reality by understanding that true change comes from those closest to students. I believe that the voice of the school (principal, teachers, parents, students, community - GO Team) should be the strongest voice, the trusted voice and the voice that can effect real change for our schools, our communities and our children. We must continue to build the capacity of all our GO Teams across the city through stronger, more relevant training combined with peer to peer mentoring.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

As a board member I will continue to make myself available (as I have been as both a community/school leader and as a candidate) through monthly open invitation coffees, one per month in both the north and south part of District 3. Additionally, I will create a focus group of community education leaders from across the District that will serve as a sounding board for ideas and issues. Lastly, I will be very present at community meetings allowing for me to hear the issues of individual communities as well as share my questions and concerns.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

Serving my fifth year chairing a combination of the Local School Council and GO Team, I will champion the continued growth of the individual voice of our schools while seeking to increase the local decision making autonomy. Seeing what we were able to accomplish through our local GO Team structure that we were unable to do as an LSC, we must continue to strengthen, through training and support, a better understanding for what these teams can and cannot do.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Leslie Grant

Q2 District

District 1

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

Last term, I ran and won because I believed more active participation was necessary from District One. This term, I am running to ensure that some important work I've put into play in my first term continues to move forward including: audit function enhancement, partnership schools growth and support, governance process improvements, accountability and customer service enhancements. AND I am running for a second term because there is a very steep learning curve and many hidden issues that continue to trip up our mission fulfillment and attainment of our goals and I am in the best position to hit the ground running in order to bring attention to those issues.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I am the mother of a 2017 APS graduate, a current APS ninth grader and the wife of a GO Team member, I served in a governance capacity at a startup charter school in my community when my children were small. This past term on the board I: I HOSTED over Fifty Community Coffees so that CONSTITUENTS ARE CONNECTED

I LEAD the board's participation in the Atlanta Pride Parade so that ALL STUDENTS, FACULTY AND STAFF KNOW THEY ARE SUPPORTED.

I BROUGHT innovative ideas forward for board consideration, including a TWO-WAY Customer Service platform and development of a specific African American Male Initiative TO ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE MORE ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENGAGEMENT WHERE IT IS CRITICALLY NEEDED.

I INITIATED, CHAMPIONED AND DEFENDED partnerships that deliver a better quality education to District One's most at-risk schools so that MANY OF OUR MOST DISENFRANCHISED STUDENTS RECEIVE THE MAJOR INVESTMENT THEY NEED, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

I SUPPORTED equitable implementation of the International Baccalaureate or other Signature Programming throughout ALL clusters so that ALL STUDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO QUALITY GLOBAL STANDARDS OF LEARNING AND THE PUBLIC RECEIVES GREATER DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY.

I RE-IGNITED the Internal Compliance function which, when properly resourced, can bring enormous accountability and return on investment in the future so that THE BOARD'S OVERSIGHT ROLE CAN BE PROPERLY FULFILLED.

I SERVED diligently with inquiry and integrity on the following: Accountability Committee, Chair 2014-2015, Audit Committee, Chair 2016-2017, Council of the Great City Schools, Board Representative, Atlanta Youth Commission, Beltline Affordable Housing Advisory Board, Fulton and DeKalb County Student Attendance Protocol Committee so that THE ATLANTA BOARD OF EDUCATION IS COMPETENTLY REPRESENTED.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

I want APS to be a healthy, caring workplace for all of our employees, run by an effective, transparent Governing Process and that ensures that investments in our schools are really working for ALL of our students.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

1. Ensure that the Governance Process is cleaned up, simple to understand and follow and accountable to the public.
2. Focus on closing the Achievement Gap between our school populations.
3. Build more autonomous, community-centric, school clusters.

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

6

Comment::

We have improved in many ways, but we MUST work harder to identify and fix systemic operational issues and to create a "caring culture of trust and collaboration."

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been **Right** moving in the right or wrong direction?**Q9** How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

6**Q10** Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

Vision, yes. However, we (the board and the administration) need to work on our accountability for the effective implementation of our mission in order to achieve the vision.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

Strongly agree

Comment::

There are many things that we continue to do because it's the way we've always done it, not necessarily because it's the best thing to do. We need to listen closer to our school communities and give them a path towards success that includes more direct ownership of their success.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

Collaboration with City of Atlanta. This past term has been fraught with many issues that have taken MUCH time, attention and legal fees to work through for petty political/egotistical issues. Generational Poverty, Housing, Transportation, Medical/Mental Health Care, Jobs, Growth and Inclusion all are major issues that negatively impact APS and we must have a more respectful relationship and more consistent invite to the table, if we are to build a collaborative and effective team. We need to be working from a common playbook and understand and share information and data with municipal leaders so that we create asset maps of each of our communities. I would recommend thinking about planning at the top levels, with a school-cluster overlay, rather than simply the Council Districts, or NPU mindset.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

Somewhat. We have allocated more to Signature Programming to provide external accountability/quality credentials to our clusters, we have provided additional funds to target some of our lowest performing schools and we have invested heavily in pay-parity and compensation improvements for our teachers.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

Audit. It is an incredibly important function that, for a minimal increase in funding, could provide greater accountability assurance in order for the board to fulfill it's oversight role and can provide substantial ROI if done properly.

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

I think the board needs to understand more about the efficacy of our spending – an objective analysis of what our expectations and outcomes are for each departmental budget should be undertaken asap.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

YES! It provided a desperately needed investment into some of our most vulnerable school communities.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

Only that it didn't go far enough.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

YES. And once Mathematica's independent analysis is complete, and feedback from communities and schools is analyzed, perhaps we will expand.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Support,

Comments:

I believe there is a saturation point, financially - beyond which the infrastructure of the central/traditional system must make dramatic changes and I haven't seen APS prioritize this. Many are still stuck in the "privatizer" loop and until we decide that we are going to allow creative, innovative educators and community members to engage more productively in our traditional schools, we will continue to have a contentious us/them relationship. I am VERY encouraged by the evolution/hybrid model we've approved with Purpose Built Schools and Kindezi/Gideons.

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

They serve 9000 students very well with deep wait lists at almost all schools. They SHOULD serve as models of innovation and best practices.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

As long as students are learning, teachers and staff are fulfilled, and communities are supportive and engaged, I think we should entertain new proposals. HOWEVER, we must have a conversation about the real effects approval has on neighboring traditional schools and what can be done to either collaborate or mitigate any negative impacts.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

This would be the Superintendent's plan. The board, or individual board members, do not formulate plans. I would be willing to support a plan put forward by the Superintendent that is developed and informed by our quality school leaders.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

Again, the plan should be developed by the Superintendent. I would support a plan that was based on proven practices, with high-quality sources for recruiting, on-boarding, support and professional development such as the CREATE model currently used in the Jackson Cluster :: <https://atlncs.org/create/>

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

I would support a plan, if submitted by the Superintendent, to map all early education providers, locations and align them with needs throughout the city beginning with our most vulnerable communities. We have been working with many organizations to build a cohesive network of early learning, but much more outreach and enrollment/attendance assistance might be a necessary component of such a plan.

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

Support Customer Service improvements. On such suggestion is for the Board office to pilot a platform that is being used in districts throughout the state and country such as: <https://www.k12insight.com/lets-talk/#>

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

I have Twenty Community Coffees a year. Opportunities for me to hear directly from community partners and groups. I would like to employ a less time-intensive option for input, as well - such as the platform recommended above - but the full board would need to support that. I am always responsive and accessible through phone, text, email, and social media.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

I believe we need to create a model through earned autonomy, for independent charter clusters to operate. This would empower decision making at the K-12 community level and eliminate unnecessary administrative layers.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Michelle Olympiadis

Q2 District

District 3

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

I have decided to run for Board of Education in my eleventh year as an APS parent because I believe the district is now poised to begin the good work of creating a sustainable and vibrant functioning school system - one able to deliver an exceptional educational experience for all students.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

As an APS parent since 2007 with three children - one each in high school, middle school and elementary school, along with my experiences at the state and local levels of education and leadership roles in Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) at the local, council and district levels, as well as, service on local governance teams, state, district, and cluster advisory panels and committees, I am positioned as the longest, most engaged and active candidate.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

My vision is that the Atlanta Public School system is the pinnacle of all urban school districts and I believe we can get there with a strong focus on the following:

Budget. An audit of the budget is imminent. Supporting the audit department in understanding where dollars go and how they are spent is the only way we can begin to provide more flexibility and support to clusters and schools, as well as understand where economies of scale make sense.

Birth to Pre-K. Collaboration and communication between the Mayor, the Superintendent, the City Council, the Board of Education, and private and public partners are how we can expand Pre-K to birth. We must ensure that all children receive a quality preschool experience and are "Kindergarten Ready" on day one.

Human Capital. We must invest in strong leaders for our clusters and schools, and promote the fact that teaching is a profession — not an occupation — and like any other profession, demands quality professional development and continuous improvement.

Technology. For our children to be competitive in tomorrow's job market, we must provide them with solid technology foundations in K-12. Teachers also need better tools to assess student performance in real time so as to provide additional instruction when needed. Standardizing hardware and software with quality products that scale well and allow for "Future Proofing" across our various schools is a must.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

1.) APS' greatest priority is the budgeting, accounting and auditing of the budget to reflect APS' educational mission and goals. We know APS is a high-need, high poverty district - over 75% qualify for free and reduced lunch.

We must do a better job of driving dollars into our clusters and schoolhouses to address the unique wants and needs of our schools and communities. When the budget is aligned to the programs and needs of the clusters and schools; when the accounting structure is clear on how dollars are being spent; when an audit determines that funds were used appropriately, we should see a direct correlation between money well spent and great educational outcomes for students.

2.) Universal PreK for all children throughout the city that is free and/or affordable depending on our various communities needs to ensure that children are "Kindergarten Ready" on the first day of school.

3.) We must invest in strong leaders for our clusters and schools, and promote the fact that teaching is a profession — not an occupation — and like any other profession, demands quality professional development and continuous improvement.

Governance (2/4)**Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?**

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

7

Comment::

The district's 2016 CCRPI is 66.2. We have seen incremental growth over the past three years and I believe we will continue to see improvements.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been moving in the right or wrong direction?

Right,

Comment::

We have seen incremental growth with the most recent being the increase in the 2017 graduation rate. The district is stable and work needs to begin to build out a strong foundation for all schools.

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

8

Comment::

Dr. Carstarphen is a transformational leader who is clearly committed to seeing her work through. I also believe that there is always room for continuous improvement and development.

Q10 Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

I do believe in the current direction of the district and in the charter system and its structure. It is time for there district to look at the many successful initiatives in our charter schools such as public and private partnerships, the positive results of providing birth to preschool education, offering Saturday school, as well as, an extended calendar and school day, the benefits of extra recess and the options of various extracurricular activities, the requirements of family engagement, and the power a community can have in driving the direction of its school with strong leadership and flexibility.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

Neither agree nor disagree

Comment::

I think it is time for APS to work with its communities and understand the deficits facing each and address those needs through reforms, ideation and other resources.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

APS' greatest challenge is the budgeting, accounting and auditing of the budget to reflect APS' educational mission and goals. We know APS is a high-need, high poverty district - over 70% qualify for free and reduced lunch.

We must do a better job of driving dollars into our clusters and schoolhouses to address the unique wants and needs of our schools and communities.

When the budget is aligned to the programs and needs of the clusters and schools; when the accounting structure is clear on how dollars are being spent; when an audit determines that funds were used appropriately, we should see a direct correlation between money well spent and great educational outcomes for students.

First we audit the past year's budget which may suggest that previous years be reviewed to understand spending in various departments. Determining the efficiency and effectiveness of a department's function will reveal where areas are functioning well and where there is opportunity for improvement.

We also need to acknowledge that there are five mandatory obligations of the district which take approximately \$300 million dollars from the budget which include: \$100 million to APS charter schools to educate approximately 8,500 students; the unfunded teacher pension at \$53million; current healthcare insurance costs; current teacher pension; maintenance of effort.

While APS has received recognition for excellent financial reporting from the Georgia Department of Audits, we need to truly assess how to move funds to impact direct educational instruction and supports to students.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

My priorities are in having a better accounting and auditing of the budget to drive more direct dollars to clusters and schoolhouses, invest in universal Pre-K, invest in our human capital and in technology. First we audit the past year's budget which may suggest that previous years be reviewed to understand spending in various departments. Determining the efficiency and effectiveness of a department's function will reveal where areas are functioning well and where there is opportunity for improvement. We also need to acknowledge that there are five mandatory obligations of the district which take approximately \$300 million dollars from the budget which include: \$100 million to APS charter schools to educate approximately 8,500 students; the unfunded teacher pension at \$53million; current healthcare insurance costs; current teacher pension; maintenance of effort. While APS has received recognition for excellent financial reporting from the Georgia Department of Audits, we need to truly assess how to move funds to impact direct educational instruction and supports to students. First we audit the past year's budget which may suggest that previous years be reviewed to understand spending in various departments. Determining the efficiency and effectiveness of a department's function will reveal where areas are functioning well and where there is opportunity for improvement. We also need to acknowledge that there are five mandatory obligations of the district which take approximately \$300 million dollars from the budget which include: \$100 million to APS charter schools to educate approximately 8,500 students; the unfunded teacher pension at \$53million; current healthcare insurance costs; current teacher pension; maintenance of effort. While APS has received recognition for excellent financial reporting from the Georgia Department of Audits, we need to truly assess how to move funds to impact direct educational instruction and supports to students.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

The Atlanta Public School budget process should annually review where it can allocate more flexibility in funding to support strategic waivers at the district, cluster, and school levels which will increase student performance, support and enhance student experience. Until a more thorough accounting and audit is completed, I cannot support the increase of funding to any particular department. APS' greatest strength is its budget. When the total of government funds are added together APS has roughly \$1 billion to serve approximately 50,000 students. Both Fulton and Dekalb counties receive roughly the same \$1 billion and serve closer to 100,000 students.

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

As I stated above until a more thorough accounting and audit are complete, I cannot support increasing or decreasing any particular program or department. However, I do not necessarily agree with an across the board percentage decrease in managing a budget and believe that there are departments and programs that are effective and efficient with others needing a more comprehensive examination.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

Yes. It addresses students today in some of the lowest performing schools in the district. As we continue to look for strong leaders and at the budget to find dollars to go directly into schoolhouses, we must support our current population.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

The biggest controversy with the Turnaround Plan was the lack of direct involvement with the communities involved. That is an important takeaway that needs to be better implemented in the future.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

Currently there are 13 "targeted" schools and 6 "intensive" schools being supported by the Turnaround Plan. Knowing that there were several contractors interested in the request for proposals, one can only hope that the options were properly vetted by the Board of Education. Clearly the innovations being implemented in these schools are some of the best practices we have seen across the nation in both traditional schools and charter schools - addressing community deficits such as housing, medical needs, etc.. as well as extended day and calendars, fun and enriching after-school activities, tutoring during the school day, on Saturdays or after school, providing more teachers to address academic deficits in smaller group environments and strong professional development with continuous improvement. And while we are addressing students today with these partners, we must continue to explore ways in which we can support these initiatives in-house.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Unsure,

Comments:

Charter schools are meant to offer opportunity, choice and be responsible or accountable for student results by being waived out of state and local processes governing traditional public schools. Atlanta Public Schools is a district of choice. Any school that is not at capacity offers families the option to apply to transfer. Since the opening of APS' first charter school in the early 2000's, we have seen the benefits of public and private partnerships, the positive results of providing birth to preschool education, offering Saturday school, as well as, an extended calendar and school day, the benefits of extra recess and the options of various extracurricular activities, the requirements of family engagement, and the power a community can have in driving the direction of its school with strong leadership and flexibility. Now that we are in a charter system, the ability for clusters and the schools within them to gather to ideate and innovate on an educational framework which works best for its community will leverage the "best practices" we see in successful charter schools. By allowing communities the flexibility to define their expectations and deliverables - Strategic Plan - with the BOE and district making it a priority to provide the resources and supports necessary for clusters to succeed, we will see new processes evolve and yield the excellence we know can be achieved for all students in all schools.

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

Since the early 2000's APS' history with charter schools, has seen successes and failures as we have seen with our traditional public schools. The successful charter schools in the district have shown us that when we address the deficits of a community and its children we can have success. We should continue to work with our charter school partners to learn from their experiences in raising student achievement and in their challenges in serving students with special educational needs, and with emotional and behavioral disorders.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

Over the past four years, the Board of Education (BOE) has not expanded charter schools in the district. The district and the BOE did enter into contracts with educational providers to help address the immediate needs of some of its lowest performing schools. Given that the district formed clusters and is in a charter system contract with the state where schools can ask for flexibility and waivers, I do believe that we need to give the system some time to prove itself in this new model and contract. However, with that said, we must also remember that each child only has one K-12 experience and if needed, the district should bring in resources to ensure that every K-12 experience, charter or traditional school be a successful one.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

- 1.) We should start with recruiting quality teachers who view themselves as professionals with a willingness to continuously improve.
- 2.) Leaders at the district, cluster and school levels should define clear expectations, offer strong mentoring and opportunities for leadership development.
- 3.) The district must continue to work on building a strong culture of collaboration and positive learning environments.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

- 1.) Allow principals the flexibility to evaluate teachers. Our school leaders should know what a meaningful evaluation is for each teacher - from those who are high performing and can peer-teach to teachers who may need a professional development plan to increase quality and performance.
 - 2.) Have more teachers gain gifted and talented certification to increase differentiation in the classroom.
 - 3.) Find funding streams to support teachers to gain special education teaching certification. This will increase specialized instruction and inclusion practices.
 - 4.) Provide teachers with the resources they need.
-

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

Collaboration and communication between the Mayor, the Superintendent, the City Council, the Board of Education, and private and public partners are how we can expand Pre-K to birth. We must ensure that all children receive a quality preschool experience and are "Kindergarten Ready" on day one. There is no framework to follow from the Ga DOE, so this can be done within each cluster or if needed, school to address exactly what is needed from free to affordable options. We have good models to follow at Drew as well as this year's opening at Whitefoord.

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

As an active member of the Parent Teacher Associations and Organizations, as well as a member of the Go Team and representing these organizations on various school foundations, I know the importance of community and parent engagement is key to the success of a school, cluster and district. When we look at the majority of our district we see communities with high poverty and high need. We as a school district and in tandem with the city must address the deficits in communities through the wraparound services needed. Once we begin to support communities, we will see an increase in positive engagement and trust ensue.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

Attending community meetings and being an engaged stakeholder is demonstrated throughout my experience. Once I become a board member that level of engagement does not cease it expands across the district. Answering emails and telephone call as well as being proactive with school leaders from the administration and the community are the best ways to work collaboratively and collectively to move our good work forward in improving our district and schools.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

Since the Go Teams began, I have advocated for more flexibility in dollars to be driven to the school budgets. The two departments/programs where I see and advocate for the greatest need is in Professional Development and Technology. I sincerely believe that the budget process should annually review where it can allocate more flexibility in funding to support strategic waivers at the district, cluster, and school levels which will increase student performance, support and enhance student experience.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Dr. Charlie Stadlander

Q2 District

District 8

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

I believe that we have a moral obligation to ensure every student is provided a high quality education while spending taxpayer dollars wisely.

My experiences in the classroom, as a bullying awareness advocate, and during my doctoral studies in Health Law and Policy, helped me to realize the intricate link between an educated society and a healthy society.

An educated and healthy society translates into financial success, upward mobility, lower crime rates, lower homelessness rates, increased numbers of citizens participating in their communities, a decrease in drug addictions and overdoses, an improvement of race/gender/sexual orientation inequalities, and many other positive metrics used to assess quality of life.

To end the cycle of poverty, systemic racism, implied bias, and income inequality, and disparities in health care, we must not only realize, yet also forcefully implement, the ideal that education can be the key to overcoming these challenges.

We must also recognize the unique circumstances of each individual student, teacher, and parent. This will allow us to develop personalized solutions rather than continuing to implement a "one-size fits all" institutionalized approach.

I have never met a student who said that he/she did not want to learn. I have never met a parent who said that he/she did not want for their child to learn. I have met many parents and students who are simply overwhelmed or are facing significant challenges outside of the classroom. Once we help to address those challenges, we will find that all students want to learn and to be successful.

Bullying, harassment, and inequality in our schools is a problem. It must end. Students are afraid to attend school because they are being tormented due to ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, special needs, etc.

I saw first-hand as a teacher: if a classroom is not a safe and welcoming environment for all students and teachers, no learning is taking place.

Bullying policies are paramount, but they are only as effective as their implementation. Administrators will be held accountable for not only implementing bullying policies, yet also assessing whether said policies are working, rehabilitating offenders, and making modifications for their unique environments.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I am an Atlanta business owner and former metro-Atlanta public school teacher. In 2009, I came close to winning the Atlanta School Board District 3 seat from the incumbent.

After graduating from the University of Missouri, I moved to Atlanta to teach in the public school system.

During my teaching career, I taught 3rd Grade, as well as 9th & 10th Grade English Literature.

While serving as a public school teacher, I also attended Georgia State University, where I earned a Masters Degree in Public Administration.

I'm proud to have served in numerous education leadership roles including, Bullying Awareness Coordinator, Faculty Sponsor of H.O.P.E. (Hispanic Organization Promoting Education), and Debate Team Coach.

After completing my 5th year of teaching, I went back to school full-time and obtained a Doctorate of Jurisprudence in Health Law and Policy from Loyola University New Orleans.

I continued my education by obtaining a post-doctorate degree in Health Law and Policy from Loyola University Chicago.

I have been a committed and passionate advocate for equality and accountability in public education. In addition to my work as a teacher, business owner, and advocate, I have also:

- Testified as an expert before the Georgia General Assembly in support of anti-bullying legislation;
 - Served on the Board of Directors of AID Atlanta, the largest HIV/AIDS nonprofit organization in the Southeast;
 - Assisted legislators in multiple states with crafting and passing anti-bullying laws;
 - Served as an Analyst for the Chair of the Missouri House of Representatives Judiciary Committee;
 - Worked in the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia Health and Professional Regulations Division;
 - Volunteered for numerous nonprofit organizations including, AID Atlanta, YouthPride, Interfaith Legal Services for Immigrants, and College Mentors for Kids.
-

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

Once we recognize the unique challenges faced by our students, we can start to develop and implement policies tailored for these needs (eyeglasses, supplies, dental care, health care, nutrition, safety, shelter, mental illness, language barriers, etc.). Having been a teacher in a Title I school for 5 years, I absolutely believe that addressing each individual student's needs will accomplish a great deal toward closing the achievement gap.

Ensuring that each and every student has a safe and welcoming learning environment is critical. If a child does not feel safe or welcome, he/she is not learning. Implementing, accessing, and strengthening anti-bullying policies/non-discrimination policies must be a top priority.

We should examine and adopt best practices from high-performing districts with similar demographics to APS. It is disgraceful that the APS budget has continued to increase significantly year over year, while teacher salaries and student performance have decreased.

Both charter and traditional schools should receive an equal commitment of financial resources from the Board. Students in charter and traditional schools are all APS students. It is with this ideal that we must approach all policy decision-making.

Overall, the current APS System is failing too many students, teachers, parents, and taxpayers. We must not be afraid to take innovative and bold steps to provide every student in APS the high quality of education he/she deserves.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

1. Establish a joint education commission consisting of members of the Atlanta BOE, Atlanta City Council, Atlanta Mayor's office, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders to develop a desperately needed plan of action to repair a tarnished relationship and to move forward in the best interest of our students and taxpayers.

2. Undertake an accounting of all financial activities by APS through an independent auditing agency--specifically, to include,---

-Immediate market research survey to ensure that teacher, support staff, and other personnel are being paid salaries and benefits which recognize the value and importance of their jobs;

-Suspension of raises and further hiring of any non-essential central office employees. All Administration job descriptions will be modified to include minimum direct interfacing with students and teachers. Once a financial accounting has been completed, based on recommendations from said third party auditor, an immediate reduction of central office staff and a relocation of many central office employees into schools will likely occur

-Audit and account for all ESPLOST monies, capital commitments, and proposed/ongoing infrastructure projects to ensure that all clusters and all students are receiving fair treatment.

We owe it to our students, parents, teachers, taxpayers, and other stakeholders to operate the Board's budget with fairness, transparency, and great care.

3. Provide Student, Parent, Teacher, and Other Stakeholder Support:

We must recognize that all students, parents, teachers, and schools have unique challenges. The first step will be to end our philosophy of a one size fits all approach. Instead, we will seek input and guidance from those stakeholders on the ground and on the front lines. We will no longer push institutionalized policies from Central Office. Instead, we will listen to what our teachers, students, and parents tell us that they need. The Board will become responsive to these needs.

Once we recognize the unique challenges faced by our students, we can start to develop and implement policies tailored for these needs (eyeglasses, supplies, dental care, health care, nutrition, safety, shelter, mental illness, language barriers, etc.). Having been a teacher in a Title I school for 5 years, I absolutely believe that addressing each individual student's needs will accomplish a great deal toward closing the achievement gap.

The Board will work to serve the teachers, students, and parents. Our policies will be designed to set students up for success, not failure. Teachers will have our support. Parents will have confidence in the Board and Administration. Students will know that we not only want them to succeed, but we are committed to giving them the resources needed to do so.

The Board must rebuild trust and confidence. Once we have this trust and confidence back, compassionately and equitably distribute resources, use realistic accountability standards, and reaffirm our commitment to being the world-class school system we should be, our performance metrics scores will undoubtedly improve.

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

Average

Comment::

We must do better to live up to our moral obligation that each and every student in Atlanta Public Schools should receive a high quality education while spending tax payer dollars wisely.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been moving in the right or wrong direction?**Wrong,**

Comment::

The budget has continued to increase, taxes have continued to increase, yet results and the quality of education have remained stagnant at best, and in many cases, have declined.

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

Average

Comment::

The Superintendent works for the Board of Education. The Board of Education works for students, parents, taxpayers, and all other stakeholders. I am concerned that the current Superintendent and BOE Members may be confused about their roles in Governance vs. Administration.

Q10 Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

All options for improving the quality of education, fiscal responsibility, and transparency in APS should be on the table.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

6

Comment::

Until each and every student in APS receives the high quality of education he/she deserves, and every tax payer dollar is spent wisely, we must continue to seek out new reforms, innovation, and accountability. We must not be afraid to seek innovative and bold solutions to the low quality of education occurring in many APS Schools.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

1. Recruiting and hiring a superintendent willing to stay for a long-term contract;
 2. Driving dollars to the classroom, not to the Central Office;
 3. Increasing accessibility and transparency to the public;
 4. Spending monies effectively and wisely;
 5. Ensuring that all schools are safe and welcoming learning environments;
 6. Changing a one-size fits all approach;
 7. Recognizing that all students face unique challenges and that students and parents should be met where they are;
 8. Address budgeting challenges through efficiency, accountability, and effectiveness, not on the backs of teachers, students, parents, taxpayers, and other stakeholders;
 9. Improve and rebuild the relationship between the Board and City Administration/City Council officials.
 10. Implementing data-driven and fact-based solutions.
-

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

The total budget is closer to \$1 billion and roughly 20k per student. This is about the same, if not more, than private school tuition. Something must change.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

Increased resources to charter schools so as to provide pay parity for teachers, infrastructure outlay equity, maintenance, etc. for all APS schools...regardless of legal designation. Wrap around services; After school and summer programs; Unfunded Pension Liability Payments

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

The Central Office excess. The Superintendent's corporate apartment housing and driver allowances. Any program which does not produce positive and measurable results should be cut and/or eliminated. The cost for substitute teachers will decrease because Central Office employees will be required to work in the classroom one day per week.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

I support innovative and unique approaches to improve the quality and equity of education, however I do not blindly embrace any proposal as the silver bullet solution. I believe that we must re-evaluate the policies and decisions made by the current Board of Education and Superintendent. The turn-around plan, as well as any other proposed solution, must be based on the criteria that quality, equity, transparency, and fiscal responsibility are our objectives.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

N/A

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

N/A

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Support,

Comments:

Charter schools have a unique and important purpose in providing a high quality of education to students who would otherwise not receive such.

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

See above.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

I support any, and all, innovative approaches which produce positive and measurable outcomes for our students.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

N/A

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

Empowering teachers and students to take on innovative teaching/learning methods is crucial. Recognizing that differentiated instruction—using a variety of teaching methods to reach learners of all types—works. We should properly train teachers in differentiated instruction methods and compensate teachers for these additional skills. It is vitally important that the student to teacher ratio and/or classroom sizes decrease.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

Data shows that students enrolled in Pre-K programs have a demonstrably higher chance of success in the education system. Therefore, we must work to ensure that every student has access to a quality pre-K program.

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

The Board has a responsibility to make itself accessible to the community and constituents. When many people participate in the process, the policies are better developed and supported by the community. Therefore, I will work to establish the following three goals to increase accessibility:

1. Staggered and Alternating Board Meeting Times: Most of our parents work one, if not multiple jobs. Students may want to attend Board meetings, yet are expected to be attending classes during the day. Taxpayers also deserve more accessibility to Board actions. By staggering and alternating meeting times including weekends and evenings, many more stakeholders will be able to participate without having to sacrifice income or arrange child care.
2. Launch An Interactive Online Portal: The Board should implement an online portal through which stakeholders may communicate with Board members and participate in the meeting process. This online portal should be free of charge and be compatible with both computers and mobile devices.
3. Relocate Board Meetings to School Buildings Across the City: It is difficult for many parents, students, teachers, and taxpayers to find transportation to the Central Office Building. If transportation may be found, parking is almost non-existent and expensive. We will end the philosophy that constituents must come to the Board and instead, take the Board to the constituents. Board meetings should be held regularly moved outside of the Central Office Building and held in school buildings across the City. This allows more stakeholders to participate. It also puts the Board "on the ground" to view first-hand the results of policies it is making.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

The role of the Board is to govern. The role of the administration is to manage. These are clearly different jobs. Board members are tasked with developing policy, setting financial objectives, and hiring top administration officials to implement said actions.

The Superintendent is tasked with properly and effectively implementing the policies set forth by the Board.

Individual board members are expected to work collaboratively and in the best interest of each and every student. Board members are also responsible for ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent appropriately and efficiently.

Having served on the Board and in Board leadership positions of a multi-million HIV/AIDS nonprofit organization, I saw first-hand that Board interference in day to day management can be detrimental.

The Board has a mandated responsibility to ensure that the Superintendent and/or other top Administration officials are doing his/her jobs competently, fairly, and appropriately.

The Superintendent works for the Board of Education. The Board of Education works for the students, taxpayers, voters, and all other stakeholders. These roles are intricately linked and must operate smoothly for productivity to occur.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

All schools, students, teachers, and parents have unique challenges. The philosophy of pushing institutionalized policies onto schools from the Central Office will end.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Kandis Wood Jackson

Q2 District

District 7

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

Because of my family's sacrifices, education is a large part of who I am. My parents worked hard so that they could provide me with what they believed to be the best education available. They understood from their own experiences growing up poor and black in the years following school desegregation and during the Civil Rights Movement that education is the most valuable tool we have for our success. My family understood that, even though all children in this country are promised a quality public education, not all of us receive it.

My story is not unique. I know that every parent wants the same thing for their children that my parents wanted for me: the best education available. But not every student is as fortunate as I was; some parents work hard and make unimaginable sacrifices, but still have to worry about whether their children are getting the best education possible. That is unacceptable. All parents deserve to be able to send their child to their local public school and feel confident that, in so doing, their child will receive a high-quality education. Parents should be able to sincerely believe that the city prioritizes their child's education in the same way they do. That's why I became a teacher here in Atlanta. And that's why I'm running for the School Board.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I am native Atlantan committed to achieving educational equity for each and every student in the Atlanta Public Schools (APS). At a young age, a strong family, excellent teachers, and influential mentors instilled in me a love of learning and a deep appreciation for education. A graduate of Duke University and Harvard Law School, and a former APS teacher, I also understand the value of a quality education. My experiences in the classroom as both a student and a teacher form my belief that various social, political, and economic factors can often undermine the community-wide goal of providing quality public education to every student. This is unacceptable to me because equal access to quality education is a fundamental human right. As a former APS teacher and practicing corporate attorney, I have the right passion, experience, skills, and background to give every student equal access to high-quality education -- no matter their neighborhood.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

Atlanta is on track to being a world-class city, so it needs world-class schools. On the Board of Education, I will work tirelessly to ensure that every child in this city has access to high-quality public schools, no matter where they live. I will work to improve literacy rates, increase wraparound services and community partnerships, and focus on excellent leadership - from the top down. I will focus on preparing our students from cradle to college and career. I will work with elected officials to make sure they prioritize our public schools and work just as hard as our parents do to provide our children with a great education. I will hold them accountable when they lose sight of that all-important goal. Just like my parents, I am willing to work hard and make sacrifices for the sake of our students' education.

Our public schools should reflect the diversity, excellence, and power of our city, and be a source of pride. The promise of quality public education should mean that no parent has to choose between providing basic needs for their children and providing them with what they believe to be the best education available. Let's improve upon Atlanta's tradition of excellence by increasing access to top-quality public schools and thus ensuring that every child has the tools they need for success.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

(1) Leadership: Recruiting and retaining effective, excellence-driven, entrepreneurial leaders.

(2) Literacy: Implementing strategies proven to increase reading and math literacy rates.

(3) Learning: Minimizing external barriers to a child's ability to learn.

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

7

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been **Right** moving in the right or wrong direction?**Q9** How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

Very good

Q10 Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

I believe in the vision of the current district leadership in that it appears to be kid-focused, disciplined, strategic, and focused. Of course, if elected, I will challenge the district in various areas -- including transparency, trust-building, collaboration, and decision-making -- so that we can become an even stronger school district.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

5

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

I believe equity is the greatest issue facing APS. We have a system that, in many ways, is inequitable along various lines, including race, class, neighborhood, and socioeconomic status. That's unacceptable because ALL students deserve excellence.

I will focus on 5 "L's" to address the inequities in the district: Leadership, Literacy, Learning, Life, and Love.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

A healthy budget is of course a good starting place to achieve major gains across the district. However, as a Board member, I will be a faithful steward of our taxpayer money, and will continuously look for ways to reduce the budget. For example, I'd like to consider a reform to the unfunded pension, among other items, to help reduce costs.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

I would like the input of the community to determine if any program should receive an increase in funding.

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

While I'd like to further discuss this with members of the board, the superintendent, and community members, I think various aspects of the Office of Communications & Public Engagement may need consideration.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

Yes. At the time the plan was approved, many schools in APS were low performing and in need of urgent attention. The Turnaround Plan was developed to address those needs, with a sense of urgency and strategic prioritization.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

I do not "oppose" the plan, but would challenge the district to consider and streamline its procedures for major decisions such as school closings, consolidations, and similar community-impacting acts. I would also encourage the district to continue striving to build trust with the communities the plan impacts the most.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

Yes.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you Support are a supporter of charter schools?

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

Charter schools should be just one of several types of excellent, free, public education centers in Atlanta.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

I support most systems of public education that will provide our kids with an excellent education.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

Every classroom in APS should have a quality teacher in it. This has to be a top priority for the next board. Recruiting and developing top talent requires several things, including competitive salaries and benefits, top-notch training and development, retention incentives and support, and the flexibility and autonomy to feel trusted.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

I would focus on the items outlined in response to Question 17 and establish a culture of excellence among teachers. This would include holding teachers accountable if they are not aligned with our student-focused goals.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

Early education is critical. I intend to focus on increasing access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta by: (1) collaborating with city and county officials to streamline the process; (2) strengthening APS's partnerships with early childhood education providers and non-profit organizations; and (3) increasing early childhood options, such as the Whitefoord Early Learning Academy (particularly in early childcare deserts).

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

While the GO Teams are an excellent start - and need to continue to operate, we need to also think about meeting parents and families where they are. As a teacher, I tried to visit each of my students in their homes. I went to them. While it's not realistic to ask for such conduct district-wide, I will do the next best thing: partner with wraparound service providers to bring services and resources to our neighborhood schools. This will increase community involvement.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

Listening. We undervalue listening, and assume that we have all the answers. The first step to engagement is listening to others - hearing all sides. I will then take what I hear into consideration and earn trust and respect in my decision-making process.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

By: (1) continuing the charter system; (2) recruiting and retaining entrepreneurial school leaders; and (3) using the law and crafting policies to maximize autonomy and minimize oversight. This is important because every classroom, school house, neighborhood, and cluster has different needs.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Cynthia Briscoe Brown

Q2 District

District 8

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

My four years in this office have been among the most significant of my life, as I have worked with colleagues, parents, teachers, students, and the community to right past wrongs and move forward to provide a world-class education for each and every child. Now that we have stabilized the district after some very difficult times, I want to continue contributing my skills and experience to giving our students opportunities for growth and success.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I have 30 years of both deep and broad experience as a volunteer, parent, and community leader in APS schools across the city. I have held numerous PTA leadership positions, helped found 14 school-based foundations across APS, served 3 years as co-President of North Atlanta Parents for Public Schools, and served on the Boards of countless organizations which benefit our kids. My proven commitment to our kids, and my knowledge of how we as educators can help them thrive, are valuable assets as we continue to move every student and every school to higher levels of success. Further, as a veteran BOE member, I know what the job entails and how to achieve our goals quickly and effectively.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

My vision is for a school system where every child, every day, gets everything they need to be successful in school and in life. We must equip our students to think critically and deeply, communicate effectively, and contribute responsibly to their communities.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

- A. Closing achievement gaps by continually committing to equity in every area of APS, so every child can achieve their full potential. B. Ensuring full and faithful implementation of our operating model, including meaningful school- and community-level control, completed rollout of signature programs, and effective training of teachers and administrators.
- C. Continuing to support and strengthen initiatives such as Social Emotional Learning and No Place For Hate so every child experiences APS as a safe, welcoming learning environment for themselves and their peers.
-

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

7

Comment::

Performance varies dramatically from school to school and neighborhood to neighborhood, which is why we must move towards equity in all we do.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been moving in the right or wrong direction?
Right,

Comment::

In the past four years, we've restored stability and credibility to APS, pushed tens of millions of dollars away from central administration to where they do the most good for kids, given flexibility and autonomy to principals, teachers, and parents, and awarded teachers \$45.2M in raises, all without raising the millage rate. APS is stronger and healthier than ever, but there is still much work to do.

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

Very good

Comment::

I was privileged to serve on the search committee which hired Dr. Carstarphen, and I continue to believe we made the right choice at the time. She has been supportive of my ideas and responsive to my concerns. Under her leadership we have spent the past four years righting past wrongs and moving toward ensuring every APS student graduates ready for college and career. Our successes have been significant and measurable, especially in getting APS back on track academically, culturally, and financially. Our future challenges are different in some ways, but I am confident the BOE and the Superintendent will meet them together with the same level of creativity, collaboration and commitment we have demonstrated during this term. I am also committed to continuing the long-range and strategic planning we have already begun, to ensure we progress regardless of who is leading the District.

Q10 Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

I have been deeply involved in crafting the current vision and am generally very supportive. Further, what we are doing is yielding positive results. Since we started work test scores are up, the graduation rate has improved 18 percentage points, and more students are going to college. By every measure the vision is making a positive difference in the lives of kids.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

5

Comment::

We have implemented many good, strong, successful reforms over the past four years. While I am always open to new ideas which will move our students farther and faster, I do not believe we need to make drastic changes to proven reforms such as our Turnaround Strategy. We have shown success and need to continue implementing current programs with fidelity.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

A. We must provide every child, at every level, with the highest-quality education. I will work with my colleagues on the BOE, the Superintendent, parents, teachers, APS employees, and the larger community to insist on equity in every area, meaningful school-level autonomy, and full implementation of proven signature programs and teaching strategies. Further, I will advocate for greatly expanded early-childhood education offerings to give every child a great start.

B. We must recognize and address issues of intersectionality among our students. APS students have so many factors impacting their ability to learn and be successful: poverty, race, class, ability, family structure, food and/or housing insecurity, gender identity and sexual orientation, etc. I will work to expand wraparound services, support and advocate for affordable housing for APS students and employees, and continue to champion social emotional learning at all levels of the organization.

C. Our relationship with City leaders has made our job more difficult. I look forward to working with the new Mayor, City Council, and all city leaders for the benefit of our kids and our city.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

My colleagues and I have had significant input at all levels of the current budget. While we must always balance priorities and resources, the current budget generally aligns with my priorities.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

I have and will continue to advocate for full funding of signature programs, CTAE, and social emotional learning initiatives. We must continue necessary funding for turnaround of our lowest-performing schools. We should also discuss funding for early education.

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

Over the past four years, we have redirected tens of millions of dollars away from central office and into schools where they touch kids for good. I would continue examining central administration closely for areas we could decrease funding in favor of school-level spending.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

After careful study and a great deal of input, I voted with my colleagues to approve the APS Turnaround Strategy. While not perfect, the strategy gives us more human, financial, and emotional resources targeted to our students and schools which need them the most. At the end of its first year, the Turnaround Strategy is clearly yielding positive results. I look forward to further refining and adjusting our strategy as we assess results.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

No.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

Yes, I support continuation of the plan. The results are positive and real, including 15 of 16 schools with improved scores.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Unsure,

Comments:

I support great schools which provide opportunities for all our kids to succeed. There are good and bad charter schools, just as there are good and bad traditional schools. Charter schools as a group do not outperform traditional schools, however, and charter schools are not the answer to every ill of education. This BOE has not approved a single new stand-alone charter application in the past four years. We actually have one fewer charter school than we did when I took office. We have made great progress in strengthening both charter and traditional schools by cooperating, sharing and integrating best practices. Finally, our partnerships allow us to take advantage of the innovativeness of proven providers while keeping the traditional structure of schools which meet the needs of every child in the community. Our first year of results demonstrates the success of the partnership model in our schools of greatest need.

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

Good charter schools have been an important part of APS for over a decade and should continue in that role as long as they serve our kids.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

I support great schools which provide opportunities for all our kids to succeed. There are good and bad charter schools, just as there are good and bad traditional schools. Charter schools as a group do not outperform traditional schools, however, and charter schools are not the answer to every ill of education. This BOE has not approved a single new stand-alone charter application in the past four years. We actually have one fewer charter school than we did when I took office. We have made great progress in strengthening both charter and traditional schools by cooperating, sharing and integrating best practices. Finally, our partnerships allow us to take advantage of the innovativeness of proven providers while keeping the traditional structure of schools which meet the needs of every child in the community. Our first year of results demonstrates the success of the partnership model in our schools of greatest need.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

One of my priorities for my next term on the BOE is the development of a Leadership Academy, which will allow us to grow school leaders from proven, dedicated, and effective teachers. APS is a unique environment, and our most successful principals have experience at other levels. A Leadership Academy will also allow us to attract teachers from elsewhere, who will know they have opportunity for advancement if they commit to APS longterm.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

We have made great progress in improving meaningful professional learning opportunities for our teachers. Full funding for signature programs means we provide IB and STEM training for every faculty member. Every employee (not just teachers) are receiving social emotional learning training to help them manage students, de-escalate conflict, and model appropriate inclusive behavior and attitudes. I will work to continue and improve these initiatives. In addition, I want every elementary and middle school teacher trained in proven reading-instruction methods such as Orton-Gillingham, so all our kids become strong readers.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

Early education is a particular focus of mine (see responses to earlier questions). Universal early education, including 0-5 year olds, is an important part of achieving equity and closing achievement gaps. We have some schools where 80% of kindergarteners start on Day 1 as independent readers, and other schools where the same percentage don't yet know their alphabet letters. Early education is the answer to getting every child to reading competence by 3rd grade, and then to an on-time high school diploma. We will need strong community partners to increase early education offerings to serve every child, and I look forward to working with community leaders to achieve this goal.

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

As a parent and community volunteer for 30 years, I consider this work critical to the success of our kids and APS as a whole. I was a champion and drafter of our new Family Engagement Policy and believe the leadership provided by the policy emphasizes engagement at every level of APS. Our GO Teams at each school provide substantive, meaningful engagement opportunities across the system. Going forward, I want to strengthen our Office of Engagement. I will continue to seek out partnerships with businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies to provide more and better opportunities for our kids.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

As an At Large ABOE member, I represent every student and every citizen of Atlanta. I am sworn to act in the best interests of every child in APS, and I take that very seriously. I try to visit every school every year. I meet with every stakeholder who reaches out to me. In addition, I actively seek out opportunities to engage with civic associations, small groups, nonprofits, businesses, retirees, and young professionals to educate them about our triumphs and challenges in APS. I have spent many years involving stakeholders in our APS schools and programs so they have firsthand knowledge of how APS benefits our city. What I have done works, and I will continue it.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

As a supporter of our new operating model, which is built on the fundamental principle of school-level autonomy and flexibility, I am committed to its full and faithful implementation. Four years of budget decisions, the creation of GO teams and Cluster Advisory Teams, the removal of prescriptive language from policies and regulations, and consistent advocacy for school-level decision-making prove both my commitment to this principle and belief in its results. I look forward to seeking additional areas in which we can give parents, teachers, and community members control of their local schools.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Eshe Collins

Q2 District

District 6

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

I am not running for office. I am running for our children. We must continue to create a new culture in Atlanta Public Schools – a culture of high expectations for our students, talented teachers and leaders, challenging curricula and a system of supporters that makes all students feel like they are cared for. To have the greatest impact, we must address the issue of equity within our school system. We must unify school leaders, students, parents and community around a common mission and a commitment to quality. We must effectively align Pre-K-12 education with the knowledge and skills students will need to succeed in college, career, and life. Our children can do better, and we can do a better job supporting them. I have the knowledge and experience, in and out of the classroom, to make sure all of Atlanta's children succeed.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

An Atlanta native, attorney and former teacher in Atlanta Public Schools, my work within urban settings has been the combination of my classroom, policy and legal experience. Currently, I serve as the Program and Community Director for Jumpstart, a national, early education non-profit, where I work with organizations and communities to provide high-quality early education to all children. Prior to joining Jumpstart, I taught at A.D. Williams Elementary School, as a Teach for America corps member.. As an attorney, I analyzed national education issues and advocated for accessible healthcare at the Children's Defense Fund. Also, I worked in Cape Town, South Africa, where I helped refugee women and children access quality services and enrollment in local schools and communities.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

My vision is for every child to receive a world-class education in Atlanta. To achieve this, we must create wholistic, equitable, accessible opportunities for our children and their families to thrive. As stated before, a challenging curriculum, a system of great teachers and leaders and strong community engagement will ensure the preparation of our children for college and/or career.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

1. Continue to build on APS's turnaround strategy to support our most struggling schools
2. Continue to expand and transform early learning opportunities for all children
3. Continue to strengthen our family and community engagement and communication

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

6

Comment::

Over the last four years, APS has worked hard to stabilize the school system. The investment of more resources for schools and classrooms, recruitment and retention of great educators, a more fiscally responsible budget, heightened transparency and engagement has served the district well. We have made significant improvements, but still have some work to do. Rebranding and external communications are the areas of improvement.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been moving in the right or wrong direction?**Right,**

Comment::

The increase in our graduation rate (based on cohort calculation), cluster model and strategic planning, and signature programs are some of the key initiatives that are moving APS in the right direction. Additionally, the decision to move more resources to schools and support more autonomy at the school level has moved APS in the right direction.

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

8

Comment::

Dr. Carstarphen, and her leadership team, has addressed alot of issues facing APS. From selection of an operating system to the creation of the district's first Family/Alumni Engagement Department, Dr. Carstarphen has been a true champion for our children. She has taken on addressing equity, cheating scandal remediation, social emotional learning, and many other programs to support everyone in APS. There's a lot more work to do with the district's culture, and I'm pleased with her performance so far.

Q10 Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

Yes, I believe in the vision of current district leadership.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

6

Comment::

I agree APS urgently needs more new ideas and reforms to address to student achievement. However, we must ensure that all stakeholders are involved in the process, and the community is informed completely every step of the way.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

Equity - Equity is the major issue that I see facing public education. It is the driver of all other issues. From classroom resources to school closures to accessibility to high-quality schools, equity is the common denominator. If we do not make decisions from an equitable lens, we will continue to perpetrate the same system in need of change and further marginalize children with the greatest needs.

Engagement – Over the past three and a half years, APS has worked hard to stabilize the school system. The investment of more resources for schools and classrooms, recruitment and retention of great educators, a more fiscally responsible budget, heightened transparency and engagement has been key areas of improvement. Now, restoration of community trust and true partnership is one of our most pressing issues. We must create and implement a plan that welcomes our community and partners back into our school system. Allyship is pivotal to the future success of APS and the way we engage communities in our schools helps achieve this factor.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

Yes, the current budget aligns with initiatives that support our schools and staff, such as signature curriculum, turnaround strategy, teacher pay, social emotional learning and school safety.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

Increase in early education and literacy programming, special needs, family and community engagement and school-level autonomy

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

Not necessarily a decrease, but we need to examine look at "new ideas" to address our pension issue

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

Yes, I support the Turnaround Plan. It is a solid, comprehensive start to addressing some of our most struggling schools. The plan encompasses a variety of interventions such as consolidations, intensive tutoring, talent development, extended learning opportunities (extended day and vacation academies), and partnership with other education organizations. While everyone does not agree on every strategy of the plan, the plan provides strong opportunities to support our struggling schools.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

No one loves school consolidations and mergers. Although I believe consolidations where necessary for turnaround, this was a part of the plan I struggled with.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

Yes, I do. It is my hope that some parts of the plan will phase out as schools improve.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Support,

Comments:

I am charter-neutral and believe that families should have the options to choose the best entity to educate their children. It is our responsibility to ensure that all of schools are high-quality. I've had, both, great and unfortunate experiences with some of our charter schools. I've supported expansion and partnership, with community support, of some charter schools. I've had tough conversations about the closure of charter schools.

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

Charter schools expand school choice by offering more options to educate children. As educational leaders, we must ensure that all of our school choices, whether traditional or charter, are high quality options for our families. Every family wants a great education for their child, and it is our responsibility to make that happen in any form.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

Yes, but we need to create a comprehensive, inclusive strategic plan to support our traditional and charter schools. We must strive to have a healthy balance of school choice options for our families. Also, we must ensure that community buy-in supports the school as well.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

It is important to identify solid, strong leaders and support them fully. To achieve this, we must rebuild a culture that supports this pipeline and collaborate with organizations and entities to assist in this rebuild.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

To increase teacher quality, we must revise our recruitment efforts and support our teachers fully. We cannot hold teacher accountable for quality if we do not support them when necessary. We must start with rebuilding a culture where APS is a district of choice for educators, and our current educators are empowered to seek support when desired.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

First, we must start by addressing quality first. We have vacancies in our current ECE programs. As we improve quality, the demand for slots will increase as well.

Engagement (4/4)**Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?**

With the creation of APS's family and community engagement office, we have the opportunity to intensify involvement. We need to create a solid communication plan, and fund it, to increase involvement. Also, as a board member, it is imperative that I remain responsive and visible as well.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

I utilize all modes of communication from digital to in-person meetings to ensure I gather as much input as I can. Responsiveness is key to engagement as well.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

We must remove all barriers so school leaders and staff feel empowered to make decisions at the school level. This may require significant training, support, and continuous development. As a board member, it would be my goal to ensure that we've made policy and budgetary decisions to drive school autonomy.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Antoine R. Trammell, MD, MPH

Q2 District

District 3

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

I am running for the school board because I am a parent of children in Atlanta Public Schools and I am invested in the best interests of Atlanta. I recognize a decrease in the value of public education in our city that is evident by unequal education outcomes. Atlanta Public Schools spends nearly double the amount per student as other school districts in the state. However, less than half of our graduates are prepared for college, our students have poorer performance on end-of-course testing, and graduation rates among schools range from single to double digits. A shift in the policies that guide our school system is necessary to achieve the equal and high-quality education outcomes that will prepare our children for productive adult lives and establish a foundation upon which our city can thrive for years to come.

As a physician, the effects of unequal education are real. I engage people of diverse economic, cultural, and education backgrounds each day. In this capacity, I work with the effects of education differences and limited resources each day. Examination rooms become classrooms as I witness the impact of differences in education attainment on the opportunity for advancement that is part of the promise of our nation. Differences in education drive larger societal effects of unequal health status that become public health issues. Low education attainment is associated with greater rates of chronic illness, increased health spending, and lessened productivity of our workforce. Simply, a society with poor education attainment gets less for more.

As a parent and proud resident of Atlanta, I am invested in our city. If our children do well then, our city shall do well. It is incumbent upon us to improve public education outcomes as our children and our city depend on us. I seek to partner with EACH OF YOU and offer my experience in public health, research, and advocacy to educate for success through effective and evidence-based policy, community partnerships, and engaged people.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

First, it is important to know the purpose of the Atlanta school board relates to the policies that govern the school system. The foundations of effective policy are the alignment of evidence-based information with the needs of stakeholders, i.e., constituents and their children. Among the school board candidates for district 3, I offer the unique combination of physician, educator, researcher, and policy advocate. As such, I am the only candidate with the education, training, and professional experience to identify problems and approach them with evidence-based solutions at the individual and population levels. Further, public health training imparts the ability to evaluate and interpret the suitability of data to formulate effective policies that would govern the education of our children. Ours is an age of information wherein data impacts every aspect of our lives from placement of traffic lights, funding of services, and the policies guiding the education of our children. Well-formed policy requires highly-skilled policy-makers. It is thus an asset to the school system and larger community to have my expertise and qualifications impacting the decisions that protect the interests of our most vulnerable population. Let's work together for our children and educate for success because they deserve the best.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

My personal mission for education in Atlanta Public Schools is to promote a productive and stable future for our community through innovative and student-centered education that yields academic excellence and competency in a diverse society. This mission recognizes the importance of well-educated children in establishing the foundations of future leadership and positive direction for our city for generations to come.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

Top priorities for the school system include reducing education differences (end-of-course performance, dropout rates, and graduation rates) and increase the impact of existing programs for students and families. This task can be accomplished by:

- 1) formal program evaluation to assess effectiveness,
 - 2) developing models that capture social barriers to achievement within clusters and associated communities, and
 - 3) increasing cultural competence that has been shown to narrow achievement gaps. It is also important to leverage industry and businesses to invest in Atlanta by funding education and community initiatives to lessen the reliance of education funding on the property tax structure.
-

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

2

Comment::

Atlanta Public Schools received a grade of D from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) over a three-year period that includes 2016. Last year, the school system budget exceeded \$685 million dollars for 50,399 students that equates to \$14,242 per student. However, the average expense per student for the state of Georgia was \$8,686. Despite a greater level of spending, our school system is characterized by achievement gaps and differences in educational outcomes per academic performance and graduation rates. This is not quality performance and warrants a change in direction to improve obvious deficiencies. Different educational outcomes indicate the school system is not meeting the education needs of every learner hence only 41% of APS graduates are college-ready. Poor system outcomes at significant financial expense is not an acceptable trend. Moreover, I recognize the role of quality education in addressing the root of many social problems on local and national levels. Thus, working to provide quality education for our children is also a larger investment in the well-being of our city for the foreseeable future. We must have properly skilled policy-makers working with our system.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been moving in the right or wrong direction?**Wrong,**

Comment::

Our schools have been moving in the wrong direction and there is ample evidence supporting that trend. Data from the APS Office of Research and Evaluation and demonstrates that a majority of clusters experienced worse CCRPI scores from 2015 to 2016. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement demonstrates consistently poor CCRPI scores from 2014 to 2016 is D. Our school system has worse end-of-course performance than the rest of the state. While overall graduation rates in the school system increased from 2011 to 2016, the rates remain lower than the rest of the state. Further, unequal graduation rates remain between schools and dropout rates in APS compared to the state. The persistence of unequal outcomes between schools in our district and worse performance than our district overall compared to state results is not moving in the right direction. We are not receiving the value of public education relative to the financial investment as the budget continues to grow. Graphics demonstrating education outcomes within APS and compared to the state can be found at www.antoineforatlanta.com/apsresults/

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

Average

Comment::

The role of school superintendent is not an easy position. It is a job subject to the scrutiny and ire of parents and communities concerned about decisions impacting their children and stability. I recognize the demands of the position and appreciate the dedication of the current superintendent in moving APS forward following the cheating scandal. Beyond the effort and dedication of any individual, the mission of APS is for every student to graduate prepared for college and career. However, success in achieving this mission is in doubt when only 41% of graduates were ready for college in 2016 and the system consistently receives a grade of D from the state over a three-year period. Differences in education with unequal outcomes remain as some schools perform well while others consistently perform poorly. The superintendent does not bear the responsibility of educating our children alone. I opine the most effective strategy to be a collaborative approach that adapts evidence-based methods to design policy meeting the needs of our children and communities.

Q10 Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

Governance by skilled and well-trained policy-makers is critical to the success of the school system. It is important for the school board to establish effective policy and maintain oversight of its implementation. Per the APS organizational chart, all positions currently report to the superintendent. Since all information is provided directly from one source, the existing structure presents a challenge for the board to oversee and assess the effectiveness of APS' policies and programs. In effort to achieve impartial governance, I suggest a different direction by creating an independent quality control office that reports directly to the school board.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

Strongly agree

Comment::

It is anecdotally suggested that the definition insanity is approaching a problem the same way while expecting a different outcome. The outcomes of the district evidence the need for different perspectives and skill-sets at the policy-maker and leadership levels. It is established that our school system has poor outcomes. The impact of poor educational outcomes is reduced longevity that can be addressed by policy intervention. I am the only candidate with the training and knowledge to successfully accomplish the needed policy interventions.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

The greatest issue facing APS is restoring value to public education. The current school system budget (\$777 million) exceeds the budget for the City of Atlanta (\$605 million). However, the differences in education outcomes for the financial investment undermines the value of the education return. Our school system has received a grade D over a three-year period (2014 to 2016), spent more per student than the rest of the state, had lower CCRPI scores compared to state performance, and lower EOC results compared to state performance.

I embrace a multi-faceted approach to identify factors limiting the consistent delivery of education, address those factors, and investigate strategies to decrease spending while providing quality education. The purpose of the school system is to educate our children. However, education must also occur in the context of fiscal responsibility that requires comprehending the APS portfolio for its capacity to meet short-term needs without compromising long-term growth. However, balancing short and long-term needs may not be a straightforward endeavor. Although, APS has an asset management department, the City of Atlanta owns the deeds and titles to APS properties and they accordingly are managed by the mayoralty. It is possible to approach fiscal responsibility without sacrificing education quality with budget review to trim non-essential spending and increase business partnerships to improve education funding. Establishing collaboration with professional partners has the potential to ease dependency on the property tax structure for education funding. Developing creative and flexible frameworks through stakeholder engagement can stabilize communities, keep businesses intact, and protect the long-term investment in our children's education.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

No. The existing poor performance and prior unequal outcomes do not align with the need for fiscal responsibility. The school system has not justified high spending by providing a product of quality education. The budget must be reviewed for non-essential spending to promote more fiscally responsible education. Areas of non-essential spending have the potential for redirection to education for teachers and students.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

Effective Teacher Initiative, Family Engagement, and Social Emotional Learning. Increased funding could be used to improve the functional frameworks of these program as well as perform evaluation to assess their effectiveness.

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

I would first need to review the budget for non-essential areas and review the effectiveness of existing programs before deciding funding reductions.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

Yes, in part. Local governance brings the potential of adapting programs and services that fit the needs and character of communities served by schools. As such, I support addressing factors identified by social frameworks that limit the success of students and communities.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

I do not support the privatization of clusters. In accordance with the charter system contract, the governance structure of schools should be the local governance council, superintendent, and school board with the exception of the charter schools specified in the agreement. School governance should not be the responsibility of private entities as this may defeat the rationale supporting local governance.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

Yes, in part. It is important to work with constituents, their children, and communities to maintain local governance instead of private entities.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Unsure,

Comments:

The label of a school system is secondary to the goal of preparing children for college or career and seamless societal integration as productive members of the workforce. Whether public charter or traditional public, education must be student-focused and student-centered. This objective can be achieved by adapting an evidence-based, cutting-edge, and industry-leading curriculum to the needs of our students. Both models have advantages and disadvantages. Regarding the underlying issues of accountability and governance, public charter schools are granted waivers aimed at improving accountability but are managed by non-profit boards thus local governance is not promised. Waivers can facilitate flexibility and autonomy for curricular innovations, but a subtle potential to fail students and communities remains. Prior to the current school year, 19 charter schools either closed or gave up charter contracts. In comparison, traditional public schools although not immune to closure offer operational stability, local governance, and less flexibility to implement curricular changes. In contemplating the more favorable model, the water problem in Flint, MI offers a poignant lesson on local governance. The unanimous decision by the Flint City Council to return to Detroit water was overturned by an appointed city manager that resulted in the exposure of many residents including children to lead poisoning. Constituents have an investment in their schools and local governance affords stakeholders greater participation in processes impacting their children and community.

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

All schools in the district, regardless of the label, should be student-centered. The goal for charter schools should be the same for traditional schools: to prepare students for societal integration and successfully navigating challenges in the next phases of their lives whether college education or career preparation. Offering flexibility and choices in student education is important for families, but reduced oversight, transparency, and accountability need not occur at the expense of our children's future.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

No. The priority should be focused on improving existing schools, either traditional or charter, within the district. The aim of education within Atlanta Public schools, charter or traditional, should be the preparation of students for societal integration and successfully navigating challenges in the next phases of their lives whether college education or career preparation. Once the goal is achieved for all students in APS, expansion of charter schools warrants further consideration.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

I plan to work on leadership development initiatives such as implementing a leader tracking system that incorporates insights from the Principal Pipeline Initiative.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

A) Recruit leadership and classroom talent from local sources to develop an education work force with community ties and investment in the best interests for Atlanta.

B) Continued professional development including the impact of demographic differences in educational attainment, ecological frameworks, and learning theory.

C) Support innovative teaching methods through funding opportunity and provide grant-writing sessions with successful members of the academic community.

D) Leadership development initiatives

E) Improve teacher retention with improved compensation packages and changes in the operational culture of the school system.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

- A) Invest in publicly funded early education through partnerships to improve education and services at pre-school centers.
 - B) Increase community/business partnership to decrease reliance on property taxes for school funding.
 - C) Teacher retention
 - D) Support professional/leadership development
-

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

- A) Be a liaison to local businesses and community groups.
 - B) Provide more opportunity to interact with community and parents on cluster or district level, support message as ONE APS to unify school district, not operate in silos, and ensure meetings occur at times of minimal conflict with work schedules. Engage parents as stakeholders in the development of communities and their child's education.
-

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

- A) The first step of engaging stakeholders is to identify the them. It is evident that the city as a whole is impacted by school board decisions, but groups immediately impacted include learners, parents, teachers, and community members such as local leaders and business partners.
 - B) Stakeholders from all districts within APS must be engaged for opportunities of improvement across the entire system.
 - C) I would utilize multiple methods in effort to capture a large and diverse respondent pool including town hall meetings, small group discussion, social media interaction, web-based platforms, and increased community presence at seminal functional units such as churches, parks, and recreation centers.
-

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

- A) Capturing information correctly is an important component of data collection. Thus, I would expand the net from which school-level information is received as broader perspectives can provide more information about problems limiting success. In addition to engaging teachers and parents, it is important to have input from our learners.
 - B) Collected information from school stakeholders (learners, parents, teachers, community members, etc.) can identify 2 - 3 areas of greatest need along with the support of objective information (e.g., percent ESOL students, percentage of students that qualify for reduced lunches, or percentage of students with access to computer/internet outside school hours) to support the need for resources from the school system and business partners.
-

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Byron Amos

Q2 District

District 2

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

I am running to retain my seat on the Atlanta School Board because we still have work to do. As a graduate of the Atlanta Public Schools System, I never would have fathomed that I would play such a pivotal role in the rebirth of public education in my hometown. I understand the need to continue to advocate for strong and visionary leadership in our schools. The need to advocate for access to a more equitable education system. The need to increase the number of students reading at or above grade level and to push for fully funded Vocational, Technical, and Entrepreneurial Education in APS. Finally, we must find ways to continue to address the discipline in our schools.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I am a native Atlantan who has been involved in community organizing for over 30 years and has established deep-roots in the Atlanta community. As a dedicated father, community leader, product of APS and a father of an APS student, I have a keener insight on what it is taking and will take to move the district forward. My years on the Board, where over the last four years, we have made some very difficult decisions, we are now seeing the results of them. We have M. Agnes. Jones Elem. The first STEM certified school in APS. The Junior Achievement Academy at Frederick Douglass High School, where our children will learn entrepreneurial skills. The multi-million renovations of Brown Middle School and the creation of the Michael Hollis Innovation Academy where our children are learning computer coding, robot technology, and our student-teacher ratio is about 1:12. Simply put... "Hollis represents public education done right."

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

My vision is very similar to the one of APS. To become a high-performing school district where students love to learn, educators are inspired, families are engaged and the community trusts the system. I would add to this that we must become a system that implements a strategy of continual growth and equitability.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

1. Access to an equitable education for all.
 2. Must increase the number of students reading at or above grade level
 3. Vocational, Technical, and Entrepreneurial Education in APS
-

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

6**Q8** Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been **Right** moving in the right or wrong direction?**Q9** How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

7**Q10** Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

Yes, I believe in the vision of the current leadership. If I were to change directions, I believe that it would be detrimental to the system. The only change that I would make is that we become more equitable to the delivery of services to our diverse population.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

2**Q12** What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

The two most important challenges Atlanta Public School students will face in the next two years are the access to a more equitable education system and the need to improve the number of students reading at grade level. To provide an equitable education system to all, I will propose that we develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for every student. This plan will insure that the education that each student will receive is custom to their specific need. I would also continue to advocate for early childhood education. Our children come to APS with a deficit of words, so they are naturally behind those that are not. Early childhood education programs and a comprehensive strategy to address reading must also be implemented.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

Yes, the current budget aligns with our priorities. This board has funded the initiative that were important to us and to the citizens of Atlanta that was needed to turn our system around. Once we prioritized our needs, we ensured that the four strategic goals of Academic Programs, Talent Management, System and Resources and Culture were funded.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

If there were additional funds, I would like to see the Goal of Academic Programs funded more. Putting more money into the class room to serve our students.

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

None

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

I support the Turn Around plan because it was approved by a majority of the Board. There are some things that I would have liked to see done differently, so in the future we may have a chance to address my concerns.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

I would have like to see a different approach taken instead of the one that included Partnership Schools. I feel as if there were still school turn around options available to us that did not include turning our schools over to others.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

I support the continuation of the plan with strict Board and Superintendent oversight

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Support,

Comments:

I am supportive of quality Charter Schools that offers unmet needs of our population

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

Charter Schools should play the role of filling unmet needs of our students' populations by offering specialized educational products in which our population would like to take advantage of.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

I support the creation of a better educational environment for Atlanta. I would support start up charters only after we have exhausted all possibilities, including the model that is showing success at the Hollis Innovation Academy. At Hollis Innovation Academy, we took the best of both worlds, Charter and Traditional schools to create the best educational environment for our students. We started with the foundation of "that we will serve all students that cross our threshold". Then we took the ideas of autonomy, flexibility and accountability and merged them with the support of social and economic wrap around support to better serve our children.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

My plan to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders in APS is to support the Superintendent's plan to do so. As the leader of the School system, it is her duty to bring a plan of action to the Board. It is our responsibility to critique that plan against best practices and be knowledgeable of other organizations that have a proven track record of producing the results that we seek. Once we support the Superintendent's plan, we must make sure that the policies and funding is in place for her to implement it.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

Just as I mentioned in the previous answer, the board must be knowledgeable of best practices, standards and other data sets to be able to support or critique the Superintendent's plan. Creating a plan of action together is the only way.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

Collaboration is the answer. APS cannot solve this issue alone, but we can and have taken the lead on it. Working with other organizations like Bright from the Start, Jumpstart, United Way and Sheltering Arms, only to name a few, we will see gains in this area.

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

We must do a better job of engagement and empowerment. The first step to this plan is to hold monthly meeting in various places around the district that would be pre-set so that people can plan their schedules ahead of time. Then we must empower our parents to be involved in the process, our PTSA's and GoTeams would be the first layer of engagement. Then we must make sure that once we are engaging the community, we must give them something to do. We must make them feel that they are a part of the system and their input is needed.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

I have started the process of sending out to the leadership of my District, NPU, Neighborhood Organizations and others, the presentations to be made before the Board. I also send out and ask questions about topics that I think would impact my District or that would be controversial. This process is to seek questions and concerns about the topics, but is also a way to be engaging as well.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

I will continue to critique, support and push for funding of our Charter System Model adopted a few years ago. Our GoTeams should act as the governing team for our schools, they should be empowered to be just that.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Jatisha Marsh

Q2 District

District 5

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

I left my corporate career to positively impact the lives of Atlanta's children. My purpose and passion in life are to touch the lives of students. Purpose, passion, and preparation are my motivators for serving the children of Atlanta.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I worked ten years in Atlanta Public Schools as a teacher, homeless tutor, after-school program director, virtual academy teacher, and human resources analyst. I earned a Master of Public Policy from the Andrew Young School at Georgia State University, and I completed my graduate internship in the APS Office of Policy and Governance. This experience gave me the opportunity to shape policy in my roles in human resources and as a graduate intern.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

My vision is that Atlanta students will have the opportunities and options a world-class education brings.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

- Raising the graduation rate
- Improving school safety and climate
- Increasing Transparency and Equity

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

4

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been **Right** moving in the right or wrong direction?

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

6

Q10 Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

I understand that being the superintendent is a tough job. As an HR professional in a school district, I have a pulse on the talent in the field. I believe it is essential to work with the superintendent in a collaborative fashion. I am willing to work with the superintendent.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

Neither agree nor disagree

Comment::

In my experience of being involved in APS, APS has implemented many new ideas and reforms. Few were done with fidelity, given the time to work, or continued to be funded. APS needs more focus; with too many priorities, too little gets done well.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

Many APS schools do not have the right conditions for learning. School climate must be addressed. As a board member, I think school climate data should be part of the superintendent's evaluation. I would vote for budgetary outlays that would improve school climate.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

When federal funds and SPLOST are factored out, APS is spending closer to \$9,000 per traditional student.

Traditional school students also have other revenue that is counted in the overall per-pupil spending. There is also the unfunded pension liability that must be considered.

There is not enough money in the budget for all the worthwhile properties. However, my priority of transparency has a minimal cost. There many academic interventions that have no cost. It is important that we consider the academic return on investment of programs.

Programs that improve school climate and safety.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

There are certain salaries which are not in line what is the market rate for positions. The district must take a closer look at salaries that are not providing direct instruction to students. The district must also search for new strategies to battle rising healthcare cost.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

The turnaround plan is in effect and contracts have been entered with charter partners. I believe in seeing the plan through.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

There has been additional investment in the school targeted for a turnaround; if these investments are effective, they should be available to all students. I am not in support of the way teacher positions were "abolished." Teachers have a contract with the district; they are moved at the pleasure of the district during leveling. They should have been placed or non-renewed if they were ineffective.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

I believe in seeing the current plan through.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Unsure,

Comments:

I am neutral. Many parents in the district want their children in charters because of the climate of their neighborhood schools. There are also legitimate concerns from other community members around inclusion, student dismissal, etc.

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

Charters are to be incubators or innovation. The innovation should be replicated in traditional schools if effective.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

Each charter application must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

It is my understanding that the district aspiring leaders program has restarted. I am in support of expanding the program. HR has talked about succession planning for some time. It is time to implement.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

I worked with the teacher evaluation process in APS for almost three years. If the TKES process is implemented with fidelity, it gives a process for helping teachers grow. It is important for the district to support calibration training so what is considered quality teaching in one school is considered quality teaching in another. APS stopped too soon in the evaluation role out process with this initiative.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

It is important for APS to partner with organizations and the City of Atlanta on quality childcare. Many mayoral candidates have provided ideas on how to provide funding from the City in this area.

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

It is essential to go out to the parents and community. It is important to engage the voices that do not always show up to a BOE meeting. The home visiting program the district is launching seems promising; it worked when I taught in the district.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

I will use social media. I will use or make new contacts. I will visit the faith communities and community organization meetings to provide updates. If it is a significant issue, I will partner to canvass.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

I will support building the capacity of the Local School Governance Teams.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Jason Esteves

Q2 District

District 9

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

I am running for re-election because I know that our work to make APS the school system Atlanta's families deserve is not done. Since you elected me three years ago, I have worked hard with my colleagues to stabilize a school system that had been rocked by scandal and dysfunction for years. We shored up APS's finances and redirected more money than ever to school sites and classrooms. We reduced the size of the central office, and empowered school leaders and neighborhoods to drive the direction of their schools. And we developed and have begun to implement a plan to turn around APS's lowest performing schools.

Because of these actions, we have seen positive movement. The graduation rate has increased by double digits in four years.

Approximately 2/3rds of our schools improved on state-mandated exams last year. We have increased our partnerships with non-profits and business, which has significantly increased access to needed wraparound services. And there is more interest to join APS as a teacher or staff member to help our students thrive.

The school board's next term will be pivotal to ensuring that APS remains on an upwards trajectory.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I currently serve on the school board and have had several successes as briefly mentioned above. I am also an attorney, where I am constantly confronted with complicated problems and work to problem solve in a way that makes sense for the company I represent.

While both of those experiences are valuable and make me qualified to be on the school board another term, no experience is more valuable than my experience as a teacher. I experienced the bureaucracy of a school system and the inequities that my students faced. I also battled those issues every day to ensure my students received the education they deserved. It is that experience that I carry with me every day in this work.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

My overall vision is aligned with the school system's: to be a high-performing school system where students love to learn, educators inspire, families engage, and the community trusts the system. I worked hard with my colleagues to draft that vision!

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

- A. Ensure every classroom and school has a great teacher and principal; recruit and retain the best talent in the state.
- B. Provide universal early learning and summer learning for all children in Atlanta.
- C. Engage key stakeholders to improve culture in APS and community.

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

Average

Comment::

We have cleaned up a lot of the foundation of a school system. Now we have to focus on how everything works together, including improving talent across the organization.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been **Right** moving in the right or wrong direction?**Q9** How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

7**Q10** Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

Being that I am part of the leadership, I believe in the vision of the current district leadership.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

6

Comment::

We are still evolving. While I believe we need to implement the turnaround plan with fidelity, I fully realize there is room to improve and that we will need to innovate along the way.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

APS still has a trust issue. Because of the cheating scandal, it has taken years to improve that trust, but that work is not complete. We still have to get our key stakeholders, including our parents and community, to trust in our decisions and hold us accountable. We also have to instill confidence with families that have not enrolled in APS for a variety of reasons.

To address this issue, we have to continue to work towards the first part of our mission: With a caring culture of trust and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college and career. Building a culture of transparency, engagement, and collaboration with our stakeholders is what we've focused on since the first day of our term. But there is still work to be done to ensure parents and community members are fully engaged in our work and the results of that work. That will take a lot of communication and feedback, so we have to provide opportunities for that to occur.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

It does in that I've helped craft it. But there is a lot of work to be done and we are moving in the right direction. I am excited about the work we are doing around a student funding formula.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

Early learning; school flexibility dollars.

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

We need to find more inefficiencies in the Central Office. We also need to assess programs that we currently spend money on and cut those that aren't effective. Adding accountability measures on all spending would help with that.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

Yes. To provide every student in APS with a quality education, we have to improve our worse performing schools. The APS School Turnaround Plan, while not perfect, is our best shot of doing that and it will be on the next school board to ensure the plan is implemented with fidelity and that any adjustments be made as we receive information from schools and the community. I believe that, if implemented with fidelity, the Turnaround Plan will lead to a significant increase in quality seats across the system.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

No.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

Yes.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you Support are a supporter of charter schools?

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

I believe charter schools should be labs of innovation. To the extent we can, we should be examining those best practices and replicating them across the district. I also believe that they are helpful in increasing quality seats in the district much quicker than if APS tried to do it alone.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

I believe in increasing quality seats across the system and charter schools are part of that. I do not, however, support approving charter schools without assessing the impact of those schools on the system and its students. Further, I think there are opportunities to expand partnership schools, which I like even more than charter schools because they address many of the criticisms charter schools receive.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

Yes, we recently received a grant to build a leadership pipeline and improve teacher quality with Relay in the Jackson cluster. I want to assess that program and expand assuming it is successful. I also want to partner with organizations like KIPP, that have well known leadership programs, to explore ways APS can incorporate similar strategies.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

We need to revamp our HR department. We have to improve teacher recruitment and retention. We also need to do a better job of firing bad teachers. That will take training and encouraging school leaders to evaluate teachers more effectively.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

I will follow this basic framework:

1. Assess need - map access across the city
2. Create a culture that promotes early learning and essentially makes it feel like its mandatory
3. Ensure affordable and accessible options are available across the city

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

I will hold more meetings and listening sessions around the city. I have done them quarterly, but am committing to do them monthly. I will also proactively reach out to various stakeholders and meet them where they are. I will be making more appearances at rotary club meetings, chamber meetings, and young professional organizations.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

I will proactively reach out to various stakeholders to get their opinions prior to decision points. I will also keep my constituency informed on whats going on so that they can have a constructive dialogue with me. Finally, I will implement feedback loops to ensure that once a decision is made, the exchange continues.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

Money--we have to drive more decision making and flexibility over budgetary matters to school sites

Hiring--I want to give school leaders more flexibility and autonomy in who they hire

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Donta A. McMichael

Q2 District

District 6

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

Having been involved in community engagement and youth development for over ten years, I have long worked for positive change and outcome for children within the metro Atlanta area and other surrounding cities. My efforts as a board member would center on serving all of the children in the community; one child is no more important than another. We are a diverse city and have to celebrate that diversity. I feel that the time has come for me to seek elected office and use the skills that I have acquired for the betterment of our local government. By working together we can all share in the knowledge and satisfaction that we can provide for the educational needs of all children, and build a district where students, parents, teachers, and staff feel they are appreciated and that they are assets to the lives of our children within APS. I ask for your support because IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I absolutely love children and work hard for them to get the best outcomes possible. My wife and I have 3 sons that I'm a proud and active father for, which we plan on having them attend schools within APS once they reach school-age. Professionally, I've worked as Co-Chair of Policy Council for Easter Seals of North Georgia, Teacher and Gym Instructor for The Boys & Girls Club, Counselor for Youth Villages; I've also engaged with students as an After-School teacher for Charles R. Drew Charter, APEC Learning Center, and T.H. Slater Elementary. In 2009 as a sophomore in college, I started a collegiate organization that focused on community engagement, which was recognized as Georgia Southern University's "Best New Student Organization" in Spring 2012. Currently, I'm a Lead Youth Mental Health Assistant for Peachford Hospital where I enjoy working with young people to overcome traumatic experiences through therapeutic approach. Having the skills to work with children in different settings gives me the drive necessary to produce results that will shape our district for the better. As long as the children remain our top priority, I am beyond confident that my work ethic will have what it takes to be the best candidate for the job.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

The vision I have for Atlanta Public Schools recognizes our students as learners who succeed through personal initiative and collective effort to reach high academic goals. Our students will embrace diversity, act responsibly, and contribute to our community. Our educators will believe that all students can meet or exceed rigorous academic standards. Teachers, staff, and administrators together will form a rich professional learning community where they can sharpen their professional craft for the betterment of our student's educational experience. As the Board, we will be responsible in the stewardship of our fiscal resources while being fair and equitable as it relates to distribution. Our Families and Community will be active, engaged and welcoming to partners invested in their child's overall development. Each classroom will offer engaging and culturally-relevant curriculum that builds on students' interests and abilities. Overall, APS will offer an enriched learning environment and a system of supports to address the needs of the whole child.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

1. Primary/ Secondary Math & Literacy Rates increasing, especially at our lowest performing schools.
2. High School Graduation Rates increasing, as well as promoting workforce development programs that prepare students for high-demand jobs to assist with breaking the cycle of poverty within our communities.
3. Developing strategies that increase Student Retention Rates.

Governance (2/4)**Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?**

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

4

Comment::

My rating reflects the past three years of the accountability system known as the College and Career Ready Performance Index.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been moving in the right or wrong direction?

Unsure,

Comment::

It's a collection of both right and wrong. Efforts have been made to increase student performance, but at the expense of schools closing or merging for the sake of "saving money".

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

6

Comment::

APS is fortunate enough to have a superintendent whose given our district a lift, but I believe we can do much better with someone who will invest in short-term solutions that compliment more long term goals (which excludes the closing of schools).

Q10 Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

Although I appreciate anyone's effort to make sure our students of APS gain the tools necessary to succeed, I can't say that I support the superintendent's best course of action known as the current Turnaround Plan. I am a firm believer that there are alternatives to bridging the achievement gap, which does not include the closing and merging of schools nor should it depend heavily on outside entities such as charter schools and other Education Management Organizations that focus more on profiting and privatizing our schools instead of prioritizing our students. To be a product of APS and see how it's being treated like some sort of experiment is a disgrace. All of our children deserve those who will not just implement a plan, but keep in consideration the demographic and socio-economical backgrounds that a lot of our children come from. I want to see our school system go in a different direction, one that is data-driven and promotes equity across the entire district.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

Strongly agree

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

Atlanta Public Schools in certain areas of concentrated poverty and minority background are not being fulfilled in an equitable manner. Unfortunately, high-poverty districts spend less per student than low-poverty districts do, according to U.S. Department of Education. Lower spending can irreversibly damage a child's future, especially for kids of poor families. Some of the changes that I wish to implement once elected include; finding the resources necessary to provide underfunded schools with technological equipment, and furnishings to support state-of-the-art teaching and learning. I also wish to promote academic and workforce development programs that prepare students for high-demand jobs to assist with breaking the cycle of poverty in our communities. Other approaches to overcoming such hurdles include promoting early childhood education and care, providing additional resources for 2nd language learners, improving language training and strengthening teachers' professional development to deal with multiculturalism.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

Yes, I believe the current budget aligns with my priorities. One of my goals is to develop cost-efficient approaches to how we serve our children.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

After school programs, as well as partnerships that will be established within our own communities.

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

At this current moment, I don't have specific programs I would like to reduce funding for. I prefer to collaborate with the entire Board (if elected) first, to see what plan works best for the overall district.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

I do not support the current turnaround plan. I believe there are other options that are proven to truly uplift a school system, options that aren't as risky as the one before us today.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

Closing down schools would have to be my primary opposition.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

If the superintendent is willing to revise the plan, then I am open to new ideas that help rather than hurt our children and the communities in which they come from.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Oppose,

Comments:

I believe public schools have the capability to exceed expectations set for charter schools. Taxpayers would be able to trust public schools more instead because of charter schools flexibility and autonomy, which allows them to conduct affairs as THEY see fit and not the community in which they serve.

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

I believe that charter schools should be used to place our over achieving students and also our handicap students. I believe both would benefit from the idea of being able to learn in a more flexible environment.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

Only if it doesn't mean closing down schools that are already established, as well as taxpayer money not being their primary source of income so that we can fully utilize funds originally provided of our children attending public schools.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

I want to keep all lines of communication open and have a mutual sense of initiative to make things work for the betterment of our students. Being sure to keep an open-mind and be a team player will allow me to work with a diverse group of leaders that will be willing to do what it takes to nurture great leadership within our district.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

We must be sure to attract quality teachers with a wide range of things to consider, such as (but not limited to); Attractive salary package, healthy school climate, and strong leadership within administration.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

We must first take a look at the budget and reach out to organizations that specialize in developing early childhood programs. Coming up with a solid plan, one that is foolproof in hopes of only advancing the programs in which we seek to establish.

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

I believe that more emphasis must be placed on the important roles that parents, families, and communities can and must play in raising student performance and closing achievement gaps. Policies must be in place to assist and encourage parents, families, and communities to become actively engaged in their public schools and become an integral part of school improvement efforts.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

In hopes to engage more community stakeholders, I want to secure workspaces to gather information, share ideas or contribute to a common project. Team collaboration would be of utmost importance, using tools such as co-authored documents, custom online databases, RSS feeds, discussion forums and more would bring us closer together in order to work as a team.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

I believe it all starts with finding the right leadership within these schools, leadership that's focused on supporting, evaluating and developing autonomy initiatives that reflect the mission of the school.

Basic Information (1/4)

Q1 Candidate

Adzua Agyapon

Q2 District

District 3

Q3 Why have you decided to run for Board of Education?

When I was eight years old, my mother was faced with one of the most difficult decisions a young parent could make. She believed that schooling was the key to improving our quality of life and escaping the cycle of poverty. Unfortunately, the cost of a private school education proved prohibitive for a single parent without a college degree, and in my New York City neighborhood, attending public school was no guarantee of attaining a quality education. My mother refused to lose hope in the face of this grim reality. She carefully researched alternative scholarships and support programs until she found relief in the Milton Hershey School in Pennsylvania. I left our home in the projects of New York City in pursuit of a quality education and a brighter future at MHS.

Today, MHS is a cost-free, K-12 coeducational boarding school serving thousands of students from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. I believe no parent should ever have to choose between their child's education and keeping their family together. I know that the best way to repay what MHS has done for me and so many other students is to work towards making such schools unnecessary.

A fair shot at the American Dream depends on access to an excellent education. While APS have made significant strides recently, Atlanta is currently one of the most inequitable, least socially mobile cities in America, and this is partially due to our chronically failing schools.

But I believe that with high-quality early learning programs, strong leadership, teacher support, and resources--dedicated communities of students, families, and educators can transform students' lives and propel them toward an opportunity-rich life. I know this because I live it.

As a teacher at KIPP STRIVE Primary (KSP) school, I work toward this vision with students each day. KSP is just one of many schools, both traditional and charter, that are creating transformational outcomes for students in Atlanta. These students are gaining the academic and social skills they need to successfully navigate the path to and through college, but many students in APS do not.

District 3 contains a diverse mix of schools with an even more diverse set of challenges ranging from school closures and underenrollment to annexations and overcrowding. Our district needs an experienced educator and leader who knows firsthand how policies made in the boardroom affect our children in the classroom.

This is why I've decided to run for Atlanta Board of Education, District 3. I would like to employ my experience and work collaboratively with the community to make sure that our students have the same opportunities I've had to succeed in life.

Q4 What in your background makes you qualified to serve on the school board?

I am uniquely positioned to serve on the school board because I am a community driven experienced educator. Every day, I walk into the schoolhouse and witness at a granular level how a good, quality education can transform a child's life. I have seen kids enter school without basic phonemic awareness (one of the strongest predictors of later reading success) and walk out at the end of the school year reading above their grade level. This classroom experience coupled with my past tenure as an elected leader in the city of New Haven have prepared me to serve as a school board representative. All students should benefit from talented teachers and rigorous curricula. I will fight to make this a reality.

Q5 What is your overall vision for the district?

All students should have access to an equitable and excellent education.

Q6 What are three top priorities you hope to achieve if elected?

Teacher and School Leader Recruitment, Training, and Retention. In order to ensure we have the best classrooms, we must start by having our best teachers. Teacher turnover is a not a problem unique to APS (47% of all Georgia teachers leave their schools within five years), and we must create a system of recruitment and retention by taking a close look at our incentives to keep our best teachers at APS. During my first six months in office I will make sure that APS executes a talent strategy plan that provides meaningful professional development to returning teachers and grows new teachers who are eager to drive student achievement. We should bring in the voices of our best teachers as we examine our efforts to recruit new teachers and retain our high performing educators.

Expanding Early Learning Programs. Cities and localities around the country are expanding access to early learning programs because they know a rigorous educational experience before kindergarten can dramatically improve a child's learning outcomes. But access to this pre-k is uneven and not uniformly accessible in our district. We must fix this by creating public and private partnerships that will fund pre-k programs so underserved communities can access high quality early learning. Consider the new early learning center at Whitefoord. This center was negotiated through a private-public partnership and will provide free pre-K for children in District 3. During my first six months in office, I will make sure the board prioritizes funding so we can expand access to pre-k, which I will do by creating and maintaining external partnerships.

Increased Local Control and Autonomy. We must support the empowerment of APS GO Teams for budget decisions and school board policy recommendations. The needs of our schools vary greatly, and those closest to the issues should be empowered to address them. In my first six months in office, I will work to leverage our local governance teams by creating a more comprehensive structure of collaboration; a chain-of-command that ensures we hear the team's ideas well before policy comes before the board for a vote. We must also train GO Team members in the intricacies of the board so they are prepared to serve and be most effective in this role.

Governance (2/4)

Q7 How would you rate the overall district performance of APS?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

3

Comment::

Although significant strides have been made, APS is still underperforming. Atlanta Public Schools mission is to ensure our students are ready for college and career. Too many of our students are not yet equipped with the necessary skills we promised and they deserve.

Q8 Over the past few years have schools in Atlanta been moving in the right or wrong direction?**Right,**

Comment::

Over the past several years, APS has been moving in the right direction. Graduation rates have increased from around 60 percent to 72 percent. New programs and partnerships have begun to serve the social and emotional needs of our students. The board has implemented local governance teams so parents, community stakeholders and teachers can collaborate & make critical recommendations on how to improve their schools. These community partnerships will ensure everyone is a vested stakeholder in our kids and their education.

Q9 How would you rate Atlanta School Superintendent Carstarphen's job performance?

(1- Very poor, 5 - Avg, 9 - Very Good)

7

Comment::

Dr. Carstarphen has worked hard to stabilize APS in the aftermath of the cheating scandal. She has taken bold steps and made some unpopular decisions to drive student achievement and help repair a broken school system, and the data reflects that, under her leadership, APS is making progress.

Q10 Do you believe in the vision of current district leadership or do you want the system to go in a different direction?

Yes. The district's current leadership is committed to creating a high-performing school district where students love to learn, educators inspire, families engage and the community trusts the decisions of the board.

Q11 Do you agree with this statement: "I believe that APS urgently needs more reforms and new ideas"

(1- Strongly disagree, 7- Strongly agree)

3

Comment::

APS has a strong strategic plan that needs to be executed with fidelity. If we find that current reforms and ideas are detrimental to student achievement, then we should adjust accordingly.

Q12 What are the greatest issues or problems facing APS and how would you work to solve them?

One of APS' biggest challenges is educational equity; a lack of consistent high-quality instruction in many schools across the district and uneven access to early learning programs.

To ensure equity and excellence in every school I will make sure that APS executes a talent strategy plan that provides meaningful professional development to returning teachers and grows new teachers who are eager to drive student achievement. We should bring in the voices of our best teachers as we examine our efforts to recruit new teachers and retain our high performing educators. I would also build and prioritize external partnerships & funding that support access to early learning programs for all students in Atlanta Public Schools.

Policy (3/4)

Q13 District spending - One of the most important jobs of a school board member is the adoption of the budget. Atlanta's FY 17 operating budget allocated \$745.3 million in spending. This is roughly \$14,600 per student and the second highest per pupil of any school district in the state.

Does the current budget align with your priorities? How so?

The current budget aligns with my priority to put students first, because APS has reduced central office spending to increase school-level funding.

For which programs, if any, would you seek an increase in funding?

I would seek an increase in funding for the currently underfunded transformational parameters including: pre-k through third grade literacy initiatives, whole-child development programs, and expanded early learning programs.

For which programs, if any, would you seek a decrease in funding?

None at this time.

Q14 School Turnaround - In 2015 the Atlanta Board of Education approved a plan aimed at turning around some of the city's lowest performing schools.

Do you support the turnaround plan? Why?

I support the turnaround plan because, so far, it appears to be working. The turnaround plan provides intensive support to our most struggling schools and students by leveraging the strengths and proven leadership of educators in our city and providing them with the wraparound supports needed to ensure equitable access to an excellent education.

Are there any aspects of the plan you oppose?

None at this time.

Do you support the continuation of this plan?

Yes.

Q15 Charter Schools - Generally, would you say that you are a supporter of charter schools?

Support,

Comments:

I support the high-performing charter schools in our community that are serving our kids and driving student achievement.

Q16 Charter Schools - Of the 51,000 enrolled in public schools in Atlanta, nearly 9,000 of them attend one of the districts 15 public charter schools. However, these schools also have a combined waiting list of more than 10,000 students who wish to attend them.

What role should charter schools serve in Atlanta?

Charter schools were initially created to be learning labs, untethered from the slow pace of public school bureaucracy. This allowed innovative teachers and leaders to implement changes and discover best teaching practices. I know firsthand that some charter schools are serving kids and can be as models for other public schools. I see day in and day out that our children are growing and learning. These improvements shouldn't be limited to just charter schools, however. More important, the ability to access this rigorous education shouldn't be based on a lucky lottery ticket; this access should be a universal right. In this district, charters schools have faced varying degrees of success over the years.

Do you support further expansion of charter schools in Atlanta?

I am and will remain an advocate and supporter of quality public seats.

Q17 School leadership - What plan, if any, do you have to develop a pipeline of quality school leaders?

We can create a pipeline of quality school leaders by offering career development pathways for promising teacher leaders at every stage of their careers. Additionally, APS must work proactively to recruit top talent from different districts and top-tier universities.

Q18 Teacher quality - What plan, if any, do you have to increase teacher quality in APS?

In order to ensure we have the best classrooms, we must start by having and retaining the best teachers. Teacher turnover is a not a problem unique to APS (47% of all Georgia teachers leave their schools within five years), however, we must create a system of recruitment and retention by taking a close look at our incentives to keep the best teachers within the system.

Additionally, I support the talent strategy plan that is in place to provide meaningful professional development and to develop new teachers who are eager to drive student achievement. We must help amplify the voices and recommendations from our best teachers as we examine our efforts to recruit new teachers and retain our high performing educators.

Q19 Early education - What plan, if any, do you have to increase access to and the quality of early education programs in Atlanta?

We must expand early learning programs through public and private partnerships so underserved communities have access to high-quality early learning and Pre-K.

One great example is the upcoming opening of the early learning center at Whitefoord, which was negotiated through a private partnership and that will provide Pre-K for District 3 children. I will ensure that we prioritize funding for expanded Pre-K access through external partnerships and collaboration with city council and the mayor's office.

Engagement (4/4)

Q20 What will you do to increase community and parent involvement in schools?

District 3 contains a diverse mix of schools with an even more diverse set of challenges ranging from school closures and underenrollment to annexations and overcrowding. As an experienced educator and leader who knows firsthand how policies made in the boardroom affect our children in the classroom, I plan to employ my experience to create a truly collaborative community education environment. School success is closely tied to parent and community involvement, and I want to make participation in the education systems more accessible for all family-types.

Q21 When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

If elected to the school board I will ensure accessibility to the community and its constituents by being present and available in formal and informal settings from football games to town halls to PTA meetings.

Q22 In what ways, if any, would you seek to drive decision making and autonomy to the school level?

We must support the empowerment of APS GO Teams for budget decisions and school board policy recommendations. The needs of our schools vary greatly, and those closest to the issues should be empowered to address them. In my first six months in office, I will work to leverage our local governance teams by creating a more comprehensive structure of collaboration; a chain-of-command that ensures we hear the team's recommendations well before policy comes before the board for a vote. We must also train GO Team members in the intricacies of the board so they are prepared to serve and be most effective in this role.
