

# QUESTIONNAIRE FOR 2017 CANDIDATES FOR THE DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

Candidate: Mike Johnson

Position: DPS District 3

*Please answer in the space provided, explaining your answer as required. If you feel you need more space, you may attach a supplementary sheet.*

QUESTION	CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE
Do you support the right of every child to attend the school nearest their home (or most accessible by available transportation)? If not, under what circumstances do you not?	Every child should have access to a quality school near their home. Because neighborhoods are segregated, assigning students to schools based solely on their addresses results in segregated schools. As a Democrat, I am committed to integration and believe the school board has an obligation to adopt policies that promote integration, including policies that encourage and in limited cases may require students to attend schools with students of a different race or socio-economic background.
Under what circumstances, if any, would you support the use of public funds (vouchers) for private schools?	No circumstances. I oppose vouchers for private schools.
Do you believe that financial decisions by DPS are sufficiently transparent? If not, how could/should they be made more transparent?	As Treasurer of DPS for the last four years, I brought transparency to DPS's finances by publishing detailed school-by-school budgets so you can see how your tax dollars are spent in each school. These school-by-school budgets are published at: <a href="https://financialservices.dpsk12.org/financialtransparency/#1485974651752-70d749c4-c499">https://financialservices.dpsk12.org/financialtransparency/#1485974651752-70d749c4-c499</a> .  In the next four years, I promise we will continue to refine the school-by-school budgets and publish them every year.
What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of public charter schools; and do you think the proportion of charter schools within the DPS is too high, too low, or about right?	My number one goal is that every student in every neighborhood has access to high quality neighborhood schools and educational choices so that all students can attend a school that meets their needs. I am neutral on school model because I do not believe anyone has yet developed the one single school model that is right for every student.  I don't have an opinion about the proportion of any particular type of school. All I care about is that we have the highest proportion possible of schools that provide a quality education to Denver students.
How would you rank order (1 = highest) the importance of the following factors in student success: (a) teacher quality, (b) quality of principal, (c) class size, (d) racial/ethnic integration, (e) economic means of family, (f) parental involvement? (Add any other factors that you consider important.)	I rank teacher and principal quality at the top, followed by parental involvement. The research on the importance of class size is mixed and class size is difficult to control given the district's limited state funding (somewhere in the bottom 10 nationally). We have a duty to educate all students regardless of their race or the economic means of their family.
Do you favor foreign language courses for all students; and if so, at what grades should they begin?	Yes. If the resources and skilled teachers were available, I would like students to have access to foreign language beginning in pre-school.

Recognizing that some schools may offer a specialized curriculum, in general do you favor broad-based curricula with extracurricular options, or curricula focused on basic English and STEM subjects?	I favor a broad-based curricula with extracurricular options. Before I was on the board, I was co-chair of the committee that developed the 2012 mill levy to expand arts, music, PE and enrichment. While on the board, I served as the board representative on the committee that developed the district's Arts Strategic Plan.
Do you support the funding of nutritious school meal programs for children in need of them, or do you not see this as a responsibility of the public school system?	I support the funding of nutritious school meal programs for all children who need them. Students cannot learn if they are hungry.
Under what circumstances, if any, would you make exception to the mandate for equal access to appropriate quality education for all challenged and special needs students?	No circumstance.
Most politicians (and parents) say they are opposed to excessive testing; but what is excessive, and can standards be raised to make our students nationally competitive without the use of standardized national tests?	I would like to see testing reduced by at least one-half, to no more than 3-4 hours per student per year. I support standards that are developed by Coloradans for Colorado students and tests that accurately measure whether students are learning what those standards require.
Do you agree with zero-tolerance disciplinary policies in public schools?	No.
Do you support "military style" management of student behavior?	No.
Under what circumstances, if any, do you support waiver of Colorado's licensure requirements for teachers?	I am in favor of licensing and teacher preparation that ensures that all teachers have the training, knowledge and skills to be effective teachers and to deal with the social and emotional needs of children. With the shortage of teachers throughout the nation and particularly in rural areas and in hard to fill specialties like math and science, we need to make sure that our licensing and teacher preparation systems result in every student being taught by the very best teacher possible.
Do you support initiatives to increase the proportion of people of color as administrators, teachers, and staff? If so, give examples of such initiatives.	Yes. Examples of such initiatives include: building partnerships with higher education institutions that graduate a high percentage of students of color; launching a visitor teacher exchange program with Mexico for school year 2017-18; partnering with the Mayor's Office on the "Make Your Mark" campaign to recruit both local and national educators of color to Denver (for more information, see <a href="http://www.MakeYourMarkDenver.com">www.MakeYourMarkDenver.com</a> ); contracting with recruiting firms outside of Colorado to reach more diverse candidates beyond our internal pipelines; focusing on growing our own diverse talent within DPS by launching our Paraprofessional-to-Teacher program (65% of our more than 2000 paraprofessionals are of color), with 14 initial

	<p>participants this year and plans to expand the program to more participants annually; and developing EducationConnect, a CareerConnect pathway for current DPS students who are interested in careers in education.</p>
<p>What would be your approach for dealing with schools deemed to be failing, starting with a statement of what your criteria for failure would be?</p>	<p>If a school is persistently underperforming overall under our school report card, the School Performance Framework or SPF, or for subgroups, the district should provide guidance, training and additional resources to improve the school.</p> <p>If a school does not improve after the district has spent considerable time and resources, our first obligation is to make sure the students in the school have access to a quality educational program so that they do not fall even further behind. This can be provided in the same school through a change in program (a restart) or by transferring the students to another higher quality school (a closure). In the past, DPS restarted or closed on a case-by-case basis. The recently adopted School Performance Compact creates objective guidelines in order to remove subjectivity and to provide certainty for schools and the public.</p> <p>Restarts and closure are difficult and controversial. But the data from our experience in Denver is clear that, if a restart or closure is done right (including enough time to plan for the restart program), the students previously served by the old, underperforming school are better served because they wind up attending much better schools and their academic achievement is higher.</p>
<p>Do you believe that all educational professionals have a right to organize?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>The ratio of administrators to teachers is much higher in the DPS than in all its surrounding school districts. Are you satisfied with the Administration's justification for more administrators because DPS receives and administers many more grants?</p>	<p>The most important ratio for student learning is the ratio of students to teachers. DPS's student-teacher ratio is the lowest in the metropolitan area at 15:1, compared to 20:1 in Adams 12 and Douglas County and 18:1 in Aurora, Cherry Creek and Jefferson County (SY 16-17 numbers from CDE).</p> <p>In the most recent budget, DPS reduced the amount money that the DPS central office receives from the general fund (the fund that is available for operating schools) from 5% of the general fund to 4% of the general fund, a number percentage well below the average for other large urban districts.</p> <p>DPS leads the state in grant funding for developing and implementing new, innovative programs. The terms of the grants limit the use of grant funds to the purposes of the grant and are not generally available for school operations.</p>
<p>Do you support limits on campaign contributions and full disclosure of donors for school board candidates?</p>	<p>Yes and yes. I have made a commitment that: I will not accept corporate money. I will not accept PAC money. I will not accept money from PAC-like small donor committees whose contributors are not disclosed publicly. I will only accept money from real live human beings who I can sit down across that table from and have a person-to-person conversation about education in Denver.</p>

Given limited resources, would you choose lower class sizes or higher teacher salaries?	I would like to be able to increase teacher salaries significantly. I also would like to decrease class sizes, at least in the earlier grades. It is impossible to choose between the two in the abstract.
Do you favor allowing school staff members including teachers to be designated as security officers and to carry concealed firearms?	No, no, no.
How do you think mandatory attendance should be enforced?	First, by working with parents. Students who are chronically absent also should have to make up the work they missed after school or on the weekends.
Though Denver voters approved a mill levy increase to broaden offerings in fine arts and physical education, some schools do not yet offer this broader curriculum. What should be done to implement the will of the voters?	I was co-chair of the committee that designed the 2012 mill levy for art, music, PE and enrichment and was co-chair of the mill levy oversight committee whose charge is to make sure that the money is spent in accordance with the will of the voters. Any school that is not using the mill levy money for the purposes specified in the ballot questions should lose the funding.