

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR 2017 CANDIDATES FOR THE DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

Candidate: Julie Banuelos

Position: DPS District 1 At Large

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?	I believe and support that every child should have the right to attend their neighborhood school, which must be located near their home and/or definitely available by a convenient method of public transportation.
Under what circumstances, if any, would you support the use of public funds (vouchers) for private schools?	<p>I do NOT support vouchers for private schools. With public education, citizens have the opportunity to engage and involve themselves in the democratic process of deciding what educational policies reflect the diverse backgrounds and needs of their community.</p> <p>More than often, district budgets are scare, consequently, private school vouchers siphon sparse public monies from a system that can't sustain and/or be held accountable by average citizens.</p>
Do you believe that financial decisions by DPS are sufficiently transparent? If not, how could/should they be made more transparent?	<p>No, the district does not have financial transparency. The financial information that is publically available is characteristically devoid of specifics related to the district's budgeting priorities. For example, there is evidence that the district spent an enormous amount of money in lawsuits due to its inability to serve, as determined by law, both our special education students and our English language learners. Where can we, tax payers, see this amount for each year/s?</p> <p>Furthermore, the district's failure to publically admit and restore the damage it caused by engaging in risky financial investment strategies known as SWAPS, that failed and sent millions in accrued debt and fees to The Royal Bank of Canada and JP Morgan Chase, and deprived students and teachers of necessary resources. Our taxpayers and communities have little to no knowledge of this activity. I believe it's imperative the district disclose where and how many dollars were and have seeped out as a result of this gamble.</p> <p>More helpful details related to outside consultants, middle management costs, charter</p>

	related funding (e.g. rental coverage of buildings) and curriculum and testing related expenditures are not discernible from current financial reports.
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?	<p>The original intentions behind the charter school movement were characterized by the shared vision of students, parents and teachers. One where teaching and learning reflected the values of all stake holders. The model would be free of school district red tape all the while respecting teachers; subsequently, contributing to the nourishment of young minds. School administrators would manage resources, financial and physical, to fit the shared vision of the community.</p> <p>Charter schools like The Odyssey School of Denver and The Downtown Expeditionary School with specialized curriculums appear to appeal to diverse and upper middle class families. I imagine their experience is both fulfilling and unique and probably fit the original vision of charter schools.</p> <p>But unlike the aforementioned schools, West Denver Prep, Excel, Strive Prep and Denver School of Science and Technology and other charters, which have washed out because of countless issues, mainly specialize in the promise of improving test scores and producing college accepted students. These charters have cherry-picked a particular type of student to enroll in order to build their high test scores all along inconspicuously excluding or short-changing special education and English learning students.</p> <p>Long story short, charters have taken advantage of the autonomy that comes with school-based management at the cost of discriminating for the sake of aggrandizing its outreach. In May 2017, DPS approved 11 of 20 charter schools while closing three traditional schools. Given that overall ratio, of more than 50% (charter and innovation), DPS's makes its agenda and values very clear.</p>
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.)	As a former teacher and advocate of diverse communities with distinct needs, I can't prescribe a hierarchy of factors that students, families and community members find most relevant given their situations.
Recognizing that some schools may offer a specialized curriculum, in	I favor a curriculum that is culturally responsive, comprehensive in providing instructional

<p>general do you favor broad-based curricula with extracurricular options, or curricula focused on basic English and STEM subjects?</p>	<p>strategies that serve all types of learners, especially students with disabilities, English learners at the same time adhering to the court ordered consent decree. With students having a variety of interests, extracurricular options and the arts should always be offered at our public schools.</p>
<p>Do you favor foreign language courses for all students; and if so, at what grades should they begin?</p>	<p>Foreign language courses play an important role in giving students an opportunity to enrich their learning. Given language acquisition research, students as young as preschool can learn a second language, with adherence to best practices. Nonetheless, learning a second language proficiently must include commitment from parents and families – similar to the dedication that our immigrant and refugee students bring to their educational experience. Consequently, foreign language courses can start at a grade level where these supportive factors are sustainable.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Funding of a nutritious school meal program is imperative. The basic needs of all, especially the most vulnerable, students must be met if teachers and special service providers expect to give way to learning. Like public education, providing a nutritious school meal program, has positive spillover effects; such as, a prepared workforce and continued support for democratic institutions that equalize access to education, health, arts and public infrastructure.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>There is no exception. Moreover, the district must provide the well-prepared and experienced teachers that specialize in making the curriculum accessible to our special needs students.</p>

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?	Testing and competition are components of our hurtful capitalistic culture. Students should not be molded to only know how to take and pass standardized tests. Students, like adults, have diverse interests and talents. As educators, we must lay the groundwork for students to reach their own potential. If that means going to college, then test preparation is helpful; but, fostering skills that can be transferred to honorable work that might include skilled trades, entrepreneurial possibilities, and/or civically engaged members of society.
Do you agree with zero-tolerance disciplinary policies in public schools?	Disciplinary policies must be replaced with restorative approaches and practices. If we are to make positive strides in building healthy students that are equipped to repair and restore relationships that they've hurt, then DPS must invest and thoroughly implement these cooperative systems.
Do you support "military style" management of student behavior?	Completely opposed to this type of authoritative and hurtful system. This is without doubt a reason for the school to prison pipeline.
Under what circumstances, if any, do you support waiver of Colorado's licensure requirements for teachers?	Like licensed plumbers, carpenters, doctors or lawyers, the skilled work of a teacher is specialized and must have the state required credentials.
Do you support initiatives to increase the proportion of people of color as administrators, teachers, and staff? If so, give examples of such initiatives.	<p>Yes! The demographics of DPS students are mostly minority students from working class or immigrant families, in order to understand and build the important family and community relationships, staff, teachers and administrators must reflect the populations that they work with at the school and district level. More importantly, policy must include hiring and retaining local and experienced teachers of color.</p> <p>Programs like the Denver Teacher in Residence and Make Your Mark aim at preparing and recruiting a teacher workforce but, take focus away from valuing the experienced teachers of color that remain downtrodden by culturally incompetent and fear-inducing school administrators that place value on standardized testing and on whether a LEAP score makes him or her "effective."</p> <p>Possible replacements would be to create opportunities for students in their junior and senior year to embark on a pathway to pursuing a teaching degree with the district's financial commitment.</p>
What would be your approach for	Identifying a school as failing through the School

<p>dealing with schools deemed to be failing, starting with a statement of what your criteria for failure would be?</p>	<p>Quality Review process is the district's modus operandi to close schools, thereafter, creating turmoil in communities, especially those of color and working class.</p> <p>Ironically, the district is failing students and families by not complying with required service hours and instruction to our SPED students and/or curtailing the requirements agreed to in the court ordered consent decree to provide a comprehensive education to our English learners.</p> <p>These outcomes have been costly and require corrections. Once stabilized and committed to these essential instructional practices, then there's room to develop criteria for helping schools service all students when parents, communities and stakeholders identify academic shortfalls. But more weight must be given to student, parent and teacher input in determining the quality of their school.</p>
<p>Do you believe that all educational professionals have a right to organize?</p>	<p>Yes. I believe that the right to collective bargaining plays an important role regulating pay, salary, benefits and grievances with district management. Without the right to organize, educators are vulnerable to exploitation and robbed of due diligence.</p> <p>Charter and innovation schools are given waivers to diminish the power of collective bargaining. Exposing teachers to these conditions have resulted in higher teacher turnover and a greater lack of adherence to fair practices.</p>
<p>Given limited resources, would you choose lower class sizes or higher teacher salaries?</p>	<p>Neither. By creating such a scenario suggests that one or the other is expendable.</p> <p>I believe there are cuts that can be made which won't put teachers and parents at odds with each other. If the district was transparent about its budget, I am confident that frivolous expenditures can be identified and curtailed so that such a scenario is never considered.</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>I am not a proponent of having such a disparity between teachers and administrators. Grants must be evaluated for its impact on schools that the district has identified as 'failing,'</p> <p>By placing more importance on administrators, there is no wonder the district has adopted a one size fits all school and teacher evaluation systems.</p>

Do you support limits on campaign contributions and full disclosure of donors for school board candidates?	Definitely. With full disclosure, tax payers, teachers and families know who has a vested interest in a school board race and whether a candidate will advocate for its constituents or motivated to carry out a corporate agenda of outsiders.
Do you favor allowing school staff members including teachers to be designated as security officers and to carry concealed firearms?	No! I expressed a dire need for restorative practices and approaches and this goes against my values and the culture of community. The mere presence of officers and guns fosters a culture of criminalization.
How do you think mandatory attendance should be enforced?	<p>Factors that increase attendance relate to how school administrators, faculty and staff engage with students and their families. Creating community through the home visit program and allowing for teachers to establish rituals and routines the first two months of school cultivates healthy relationships between teacher and students.</p> <p>Moreover, by having full-time social workers, psychologists and nurses in high need schools, helps address issues related to why students are truancy; often, there is a strong socio-emotional component to school absences.</p>
Though Denver voters approved a mill levy increase to broaden offerings in fine arts and physical education, some schools do not yet offer this brader curriculum. What should be done to implement the will of the voters?	<p>The district took out all the bells and whistle to garner voter support for the 2016 Bond & Mill Levy. Included in this “full court press” where teachers’ cost of living adjustment was tied to the passing of these tax dollars.</p> <p>In order to oblige the district to these commitments, the Denver citizens must require full disclosure of a transparent district budget. The district easily falls back on saying that spending at the school level is autonomous and the central office cannot impose on that privilege.</p> <p>Another easy and effective action item would be to attend the public negotiations between DCTA and the district because discussions about budgets, the reality of what is practiced versus promised come to the surface at these meetings. Through civic involvement and engagement at the school and district level, voters will see how policy and resources are implemented.</p> <p>As a board member, I would ensure that the district superintendant and administrators have follow-through and bring about the projects and curriculum as intended.</p>

