

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR 2017 CANDIDATES FOR THE DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

Candidate: Xochitl Gaytan

Position: DPS Board of Education, District 2

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?	Yes! Reviving neighborhood schools is a cornerstone of my campaign.
Under what circumstances, if any, would you support the use of public funds (vouchers) for private schools?	Under no circumstances should taxpayer dollars be funneled into vouchers for private, religious, or for-profit schools. That would be a misdirection of public funds.
Do you believe that financial decisions by DPS are sufficiently transparent? If not, how could/should they be made more transparent?	No, DPS says the finances are transparent but in reality that is not the case. Income and expenses are large, broad categories in the budget. DPS should commit to putting its line item budget on line with an accompanying "key" to explain what each number/category along with the instructions how taxpayers or other interested parties can access income and expenditures.
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?	Charter schools were not meant to be a replacement for traditional schools. They were supposed to allow for innovation and creativity. What we see happening in Denver is the use of charters as a solution for supposed failing schools. Charter schools have a high ratio of short time employees, and for Denver's children living in poverty and children speaking English as a second language this is problematic. These children especially need stability that is often not provided by the charter model. Public charter schools <i>can</i> allow for curriculum and school culture flexibility to accommodate <i>certain</i> children who are not served by a traditional model. However, the proportion of charter schools in DPS is now too high, and DPS now uses this outsourced idea to "solve" education issues.
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.)	1 - (f) 2 - (e) 3 - (c) 4 - (a) 5 - (b) 6 - (d) 7 - (quality services: special needs programs, free breakfast/lunch, social/emotional development)
Recognizing that some schools may offer a specialized curriculum, in general do you favor broad-based curricula with extracurricular options,	Whole child education which includes a strong core of STEM and basic English. Doesn't have to be either/or. Extracurricular options are critical for many students to find that hook that will keep

or curricula focused on basic English and STEM subjects?	them engaged.
Do you favor foreign language courses for all students; and if so, at what grades should they begin?	Yes, I myself am bilingual in Spanish. The earlier the better for foreign language acquisition. In today's ever-changing, global economy and smaller world, I support offering children the option to learn a second language, such as Spanish or Mandarin. I support dual language immersion in elementary school.
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?	Nutrition is so strongly tied to student success and behavior outcomes that it would be irresponsible of schools to ignore students' hunger if that is not being covered at home. The breakfast in the classroom program at my son's elementary school has been very successful. Most teachers praise it and most children enjoy the breakfast provided. I do not have accurate data to share, however, from conversations with the school principal, it's been an essential tool to support teachers and energizes young learners.
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?	Under no circumstances. Charter schools avoid multiple legal requirements that traditional schools face to accommodate the students with special needs. There should be an even playing field for both traditional/neighborhood schools and charter schools.

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?	Today, teachers spend approximately one third of the school year preparing, administering and grading standardized tests. Often, teachers have not even taught the material or content of the standardized tests. It's important to think of it as smart testing. Excessive testing is 20% or more of the school year focused on testing. Smart testing would mean supporting measures to reduce the number of standardized tests, especially the 10 th grade standardized test, which would save the State of Colorado \$10M annually. Professional educators know what needs to be taught, what they have taught, how to evaluate where kids are falling short or excelling, how to get them to grade level. The push for national standardized tests is another example of outsourcing; someone in the reform community making money from these tests. Professional educators know how to evaluate students. I trust our teachers and they have concrete solutions we should listen to.
Do you agree with zero-tolerance disciplinary policies in public schools?	No. We need to teach our students that there are consequences for their actions while nurturing them to become productive members of society. I support the recent Colorado legislation by Representative Susan Lontine which reduces the automatic expulsion of elementary aged students. We need less police involvement in our schools unless there are physical harm threats to our students. I also support the concept and actions of Restorative Justice. Teaching children to make another child whole for a mistake they made has been proven to be the best tool for reducing discipline problems in schools. Restorative Justice emphasizes empathy and understanding – concepts I strongly support.
Do you support “military style” management of student behavior?	No, absolutely not. Public school education needs to find a way to work with parents and professionals to bring back respect, discipline support into the class without military style discipline. Administration, Teachers and other staff should educate and foster community-minded young learners. Also foster and encourage freedom of expression, creativity, curiosity, and respect for others.
Under what circumstances, if any, do you support waiver of Colorado’s licensure requirements for teachers?	Only in circumstances of a severe shortage. I do not support this as a way to pay less to balance budgets or to get rid of a unionized work force.
Do you support initiatives to increase the proportion of people of color as administrators, teachers, and staff? If	Yes, this is one of my primary campaign goals. We need to recruit more teachers of color because numerous studies have concluded that hiring

so, give examples of such initiatives.	teachers of color increases students of color attendance and reduces dropout rates. What better way for a student to engage with learning than having a teacher that looks like them, speaks the way they speak and understands who they are. Strengthen teacher training programs. Improve financial benefits: i.e. provide more health care coverage options. I support providing financial incentives, such as hiring bonuses to recruit, train and hire more teachers of color.
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?	Personally, I do not think the schools are failing. DPS is failing the schools and their communities. DPS is not providing the resources necessary in today's world to help its poor students and its students with language and other educational challenges. Standardized test score "growth" would factor less into the school's status. I would borrow best practices from schools that have improved, such as Manual High School. For example, I would support principals that understand that improvement takes more than one school year. Failing schools are schools that do not provide the whole child approach and ensure individual student growth.
Do you believe that all educational professionals have a right to organize?	Yes, I believe it's in the best interest of students that they do.
Given limited resources, would you choose lower class sizes or higher teacher salaries?	I would solicit the expertise of educators before making a decision. I would support higher teacher salaries, which in turn, would increase teacher retention rate and maintain high quality teachers who can teach more students in a classroom.
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?	No. Grant money should be distributed in a way that adds resources to the classroom, not an already top-heavy administration.
Do you support limits on campaign contributions and full disclosure of donors for school board candidates?	Absolutely. A volunteer, local service position should not be flooded with out of state, undisclosed, and special interest money.
Do you favor allowing school staff members including teachers to be designated as security officers and to carry concealed firearms?	No. Teachers should be seen as allies and diplomats of students, not looming threats of force and violence.
How do you think mandatory attendance should be enforced?	Attendance should be enforced by cooperating and consistently communicating with the parents and guardians. If a student experiences an echo chamber of support, the student will be more motivated to attend school.

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?	An independent audit is on the top of my priorities list. A review and analysis if mill levy monies will allow us to understand what must be adjusted so that all children have access to fine arts and PE.
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