

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR 2017 CANDIDATES FOR THE DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD

Candidate: Carrie Olson

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?	Yes. Most people I have talked to across District 3 want to be able to have their first choice for a good school be one close to home, especially for ES and MS.
Under what circumstances, if any, would you support the use of public funds (vouchers) for private schools?	none
Do you believe that financial decisions by DPS are sufficiently transparent? If not, how could/should they be made more transparent?	No. I think that we need a line-item budget released and more oversight into where all of DPS' money is being spent. In addition, publicly sharing contracts and financial agreements for third party vendors would also be helpful.
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?	too high - 51% Some of the advantages are the grassroots charters developed by a neighborhood to fill a need identified in the community. Some of the disadvantages of charters are their development by corporations to fulfill a business plan and turn education into a profit margin for CEOs. There is also limited transparency and regardless of what they say, families report that they don't serve ALL students equally.
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.)	It is difficult to rank order the factors needed to create high performing schools. Well trained and prepared principals and teachers are at the core of a high functioning school. Working together they can create a school culture that fosters high academic achievement and school engagement. Small class sizes and well-resourced schools and classrooms are also critical. Having adequate socio-emotional supports and ensuring children are well-fed leads to children who are ready to learn.
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 believe that elementary schools and middle schools should offer a broad-based curriculum so that students may explore their interests. AMLE offers research that suggests that 10 - 15 year olds benefit from exploring a variety of interests. This should be an option in high schools along with some specialized schools for students who wish this.
Do you favor foreign language courses for all students; and if so, at what grades should they begin?	Yes. I believe this is essential for our students to compete in a global economy. The right age depends on the will of the community served. Certainly there is research that supports beginning at a young age in other countries.

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?	Yes, I strongly support the funding of nutritious school meal programs for children in need of them. I know firsthand that some students only get a nutritious meal at school. It is the responsibility of the school system to take care of the whole child.
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?	None!
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 serves as nothing more than an expensive method of ranking and sorting schools and students and years of evidence shows that it has not leveled the playing field. A well trained (and certified) teacher knows at what level their student is reading or writing. Standardized tests tell us what we already know: a student's socioeconomic level. In addition, an inordinate amount of time is spent on preparing and administering standardized tests. Excessive is spending a 1/3 or more of the school year preparing for and administering the tests as well as analysing the results.
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?	None.
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. Students need to be able to see people who look like them and come from their ethnic background in their teachers, principals, or school leaders. This is not enough however. Many of our teachers in DPS are not of the same ethnicity as our students so we must fully embrace the District's initiative for culturally responsive teaching practices. The report by Dr. Sharon Bailey is an excellent start in creating a more equitable environment.
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?	How do we know for sure a school is failing? Why do we need to label a school as failing? Why are we not working in ensure that schools never get to the point that they are even approaching "failing?" We need to help schools that are not producing the results we all want for our students. We need to talk to the families, students, and administration to hear what their thoughts are before we label it as "failing." For what I have seen, schools that are struggling are not given the the support and resources they need to ensure that students learn.
Do you believe that all educational professionals have a right to organize?	Yes. Of course! It ensures teachers' rights are protected so they have a fair working environment which will lead to a better learning environment for students.
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	No. Not at all. I think we need to re-examine what everyone does and how can central administration can better support our schools.

more administrators because DPS receives and administers many more grants?	
Do you support limits on campaign contributions and full disclosure of donors for school board candidates?	Yes. We should have a limit because most other public offices have a spending limit. With spending limits, school board races are not won by the people with the most money to run a slick campaign, but are won by those who demonstrate their qualifications and understanding of public education.
Given limited resources, would you choose lower class sizes or higher teacher salaries?	We need to do both if we want our students to be better educated and to lower teacher turnover. There is no reason to chose. There are sufficient resources in the DPS budget to fund both, if non-student-contact department budgets are cut (e.g. marketing, communication, excess administration). It's a matter of budgeting priorities.
Do you favor allowing school staff members including teachers to be designated as security officers and to carry concealed firearms?	No.
How do you think mandatory attendance should be enforced?	One program that has been very successful in our school has been teacher home visits. Talking with families and students in a setting that is comfortable often reveals reasons why students are not attending and we can solve the problem together. In addition, having social workers work with families has also helped.
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 would talk to the schools to find out why this hasn't been implemented. I wonder why these ideas wouldn't be implemented when most teachers I talk to think this is a good idea. Perhaps the resources haven't made it to the school level to implement this.