

## **Page's Responses:**

### **1. What role will/should the Council play, if any, in overseeing DCPS's system of teacher evaluation (IMPACT)? And what are your thoughts about the way the system is designed and implemented?**

The Council should provide oversight (particularly hearings) to assure that IMPACT is used to evaluate teachers as it was designed, but that it is not used for more general purposes, such as purported efforts to determine whether certain universities contain alumni who are ineffective teachers as a way to gauge whether future alumni from that school are hired (since past alumni performance is no guarantee of future alumni performance). Further, the Council may need to introduce legislation to assure that teachers determined to be "highly effective" are able to accept incentive bonuses with no strings attached (as opposed to recent reports that some teachers are being asked to give up certain labor protections as part of accepting incentive bonuses).

I am always concerned about how "effective teaching" is defined. Teaching critical thinking skills is an amorphous, but highly valuable skill I expect our teachers to exhibit, yet current testing upon which IMPACT evaluations are based do not measure the critical thinking ability of students, to my satisfaction. I do believe that some method of measuring teacher effectiveness is warranted, but I am not sure if five classroom visits and standardized test score data are the key measures that can be relied upon, towards this goal. I think holding hearings with teachers, parents, students and other key stakeholders (and reviewing best practices on teacher evaluation in urban education globally) may be a path towards a stronger evaluation system. IMPACT is definitely a start.

### **2. As an elected Councilmember, what criteria will you apply to the Mayor's choice of permanent DCPS chancellor? How will your criteria be different from those that your opponents would apply if they were on the Council?**

I believe the permanent chancellor should have some history of proven results in a school system analogous to the District's, where results can be measured in a quantifiable way. Letters of recommendations from parents, students and faculty at school systems where the chancellor candidate has previously worked should be sought. We want to know how these key stakeholders viewed the chancellor's performance in previous academic positions before accepting him or her to lead our school system. I have no knowledge of my opponents' criteria in this area, so I can not address the difference between our positions at this time.

### **3. As an elected Councilmember, what would your position be on surplusing and development of city-owned buildings, including former schools?**

I think community stakeholders who live in the communities housing former schools and other city-owned buildings should be given preeminent stature when considering how development of city owned buildings should proceed. Ideally, input from ANC commissioners in affected communities should be sought as well and presentations from parties proposing to develop such sites should be made at ANC meetings of effected communities well in advance of any transfer of ownership of these properties.

**4. Do you think that current budget allocations for DCPS and DC Public Charter Schools are fair? How will your position on the Council affect the facilities and operating budgets of these school systems?**

I think that a fair way of allocating resources between DCPS and DC Public Charter Schools may be to base allocations on enrollment. We should allow students and parents to vote with their feet. Additionally, if community demographics are changing (with either an increase or decrease in student population), we should fund schools in those changing communities in accordance with their enrollment. Anything else will lead to an imbalance where either DCPS or DC Public Charter Schools are getting more money allocated to them than the number of students that they serve. The public money should be directed in line with where the students are best being educated.

**5. What are your thoughts on the future role of the State Board of Education?**

Ideally, the District of Columbia will at some point in the future be admitted as a state in the union as New Columbia, at which time a state level of educational administration will be even more essential. Currently, SBOE takes on the de facto role of a state level of educational administration and I imagine their role should be to pursue the maximum amount of federal funds for which the District is eligible and to disseminate those funds amongst DCPS and DC Charter Schools in the most equitable way possible. As the Department of Education faces cuts, SBOE may also play a vital role in convincing lawmakers on Capitol Hill to maintain (and hopefully continue annual increases for) educational grants and other funds for the continued improvement of our local schools. I also picture SBOE working hard in the future to pioneer new public-private partnerships with companies that seek to do business in the District, linking our educational curriculum with employment (for our students who become future workers) and business opportunities (for our students who become future entrepreneurs), between our current students and their future employers or business partners.

**6. Is there a Council role in overseeing the state education office (OSSE) in its implementation of major federal grants like Race to the Top or and the grant that funds development of a state longitudinal education data system ("SLED")?**

The Council definitely should maintain an oversight role over how major grants are implemented, particularly key grants such as Race to the Top. SLED is necessary to track student demographic data so that we can properly plan the future for our school system, so naturally the Council should maintain an oversight role over the expenditure of grant monies to fund the development of SLED.

**7. Do current education policies in DC equalize opportunity for DC's most disadvantaged kids, or do they exacerbate them? Which specific policies would you change if any to address equity in the access to good teachers and schools? ("Make all our teachers and schools great" is not a specific policy).**

This is a broad question, but I would say that the test scores indicate that we are not closing the gap. The usage of out-of-state and private placement for special education students is a policy

that drains resources from some of our poorest performing schools. The school modernization plan provided modern facilities for a handful of schools but left some of our most dilapidated schools still in disrepair. First, we may need a radical restructuring of the lottery system; instead of having smart kids struggle to get into a handful of good schools, we might be better rewarded with a system that encourages rotation of effective teachers from high performing schools to low performing ones (incentive payments to be doubled, for example, if a highly effective teacher relocates to a low performing school and fosters double digit test score improvement for his/her new class [and gets a "highly effective" grade from at least half of his/her students via an anonymous feedback form]). Secondly, I believe that programs that allow professionals to teach while they become certified should be capped at a certain percentage of overall teachers, so that low performing schools don't also face the challenge of having a high percentage of inexperienced teachers [teachers participating in these programs should be spread as widely across the system as possible to avoid this]. Finally, I think school modernization should be done by making baseline improvements/maintenance (assuring working bathrooms, furnaces, etc) across all of our schools rather than making expensive improvements to a handful.

**8. House Republicans are trying to re-introduce the school voucher program known as the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program. Do you support this program?**

No, I think that public funds should go to DCPS and DC Charter Schools exclusively. Private schools have numerous needs-based scholarships that are available for those who seek to be admitted there. Due to the challenges we face in our public educational system, I do not think local funds or federal funds aimed at improving local education should be disbursed to private schools.

## **Weaver's Responses:**

### **1. What role will/should the Council play, if any, in overseeing DCPS's system of teacher evaluation (IMPACT)? And what are your thoughts about the way the system is designed and implemented?**

I think teacher quality is the A-1 issue for the future success for DCPS.

And while I agree with Chancellor Henderson that we should not change IMPACT to that hold teachers to different standards if they worked in schools with high concentrations of children from low-income homes --- IMPACT cannot be the only marker for evaluating high teacher quality.

Beyond evaluating teacher performance based by a set standard I am particularly concerned with D.C.'s longstanding practice of assigning our least effective teachers to our neediest students. Struggling schools have trouble recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers. As they gain experience, teachers typically transfer to schools with fewer low-income students and students of color, taking their higher salaries and expertise with them. This results manifest in glaring disparities in teacher salaries between high- and low-poverty schools. As a result, low-income students and students of color are taught by novice, inadequately trained, and/or out-of-field teachers. Thus it shouldn't be a surprise when the least qualified teachers in the most underperforming schools receive low marks through IMPACT.

Recently, the focus on teacher quality—as defined by years of experience and credentials—has shifted to how effective the teacher is in the classroom. Unfortunately the current IMPACT teacher evaluation systems do not allow us to measure teacher effectiveness relative to student learning.

To be sure, the task ahead is challenging. But the teacher quality gap is the single largest contributor to the achievement gap. If we're to make good on our promise to close the achievement gap, it is essential that we become honest about the teacher distribution problem, confront the challenges head-on, and then go about the business of helping DCPS provide their teachers—novice and veteran—the supports they need to become more effective.

### **2. As an elected Councilmember, what criteria will you apply to the Mayor's choice of permanent DCPS chancellor? How will your criteria be different from those that your opponents would apply if they were on the Council?**

First, I fully support Kaya Henderson. I think she was the obvious choice for DCPS. It bothered me that her permanent appointment took so long...and apparently during that time no other candidates were interviewed.

Again, I think the teacher quality gap is the single largest contributor to the achievement. I want a chancellor of DCPS to be honest about the teacher distribution problem, and confront the challenges head-on and bring on and retain the highest qualified new teachers to our poorest schools.

**3. As an elected Councilmember, what would your position be on surplus and development of city-owned buildings, including former schools?**

I am a strong proponent that public property is used for public use. District law requires D.C. government to give charter schools a right of first offer for the purchase, lease, transfer, or use of surplus public facilities or properties, but historically, this statutory preference has been openly flouted in practice.

We need a complete inventory of D.C.'s public property network, made available and accessible to the community and used to identify where public properties are, the type of property, past and current uses, which agency manages the property.

Then D.C. must identify community needs (such as those for expanded recreation, senior services, health services, work-force housing, mix-use commercial development with a government component etc) and coordinate the planning of public property use with the serving of these needs.

Currently D.C. only provides a process for disposing of public property, not for retaining and repurposing it with community input. We need a transparent, community-driven process for inviting new uses for public property that serve existing community needs.

Maintaining valuable public assets and protecting the long-term needs of D.C. communities by leasing, not selling public property and retaining the right to reclaim those properties leased to private entities when the need arises.

**4. Do you think that current budget allocations for DCPS and DC Public Charter Schools are fair? How will your position on the Council affect the facilities and operating budgets of these school systems?**

The biggest issue regarding the disparity in funding between DC Public Charter Schools and DCPS is for facilities. By Federal and District law Charter Schools are to receive equal funding per pupil. The current budget doesn't come close to meeting that mandate that there is equality between the two public school systems. Recent studies have shown that Public Charter Schools received \$2,810 per pupil for facilities, while DCPS received \$3,023 per pupil (a difference of \$213 per pupil). In addition, the studies found that the facilities allowance fell far short of meeting the capital construction costs incurred by charter schools.

Obviously the law allows charter schools some competitive advantages to seek outside funds and to access tax-exempt bonds through D.C.'s Revenue Bond Program.

But until the law is clarified the District of Columbia is open to a class action lawsuit from Public Charter Schools for failing to meet the legally required parity in facilities funding. This has to be addressed now.

**5. What are your thoughts on the future role of the State Board of Education?**

I continue to think that in the current political climate it is impossible for the The D.C. State Board of Education to return to an oversight body. It will remain as an important advisory board to the State Superintendent of Education on educational matters, including: state standards; state policies, and governance of Public Schools

**6. Is there a Council role in overseeing the state education office (OSSE) in its implementation of major federal grants like Race to the Top or and the grant that funds development of a state longitudinal education data system ("SLED")?**

I think the current condition of the Council of the District of Columbia has devastated the single most important element of the job....oversight.

The original SLED was supposed to bring order and coherence to information about the District's education system--DCPS, public charter schools and the University of the District of Columbia--now scattered among databases, file cabinets and desk drawers in multiple agencies.

The finished product was envisioned as a portal through which parents and policymakers could track the academic progress of students and teachers from pre-school to college graduation. Such a system is now regarded by education experts and federal regulators as essential for school districts in need of reform. But the original contractor wasted 12 million dollars of tax-payer money on a program that did not work.

To make sure that we are using limited tax funds or hard to win grants correctly and effectively the council must be a tenacious watchdog for the public interest. Last thing we would want to see is the use of "Race To The Top" grants to be used to fund a strip club, like we have seen in the waste of use of HIV/AIDS funding grants.

**7. Do current education policies in DC equalize opportunity for DC's most disadvantaged kids, or do they exacerbate them? Which specific policies would you change if any to address equity in the access to good teachers and schools? ("Make all our teachers and schools great" is not a specific policy).**

Two things off the top of my head:

- a. Much of the achievement gap is rooted in what occurs outside of formal schooling. By and large, low-income students learn as rapidly as more-privileged peers during the hours spent in school. Where they lose ground, though, is in their lack of participation in learning activities during after-school hours and summer vacations. D.C. policy makers should increase investments in areas such as longer school days, after-school and summer programs, and school-to-work programs with demonstrated track records.
- b. Pay highly qualified teachers up to \$16,000 in bonuses for voluntarily moving to any of lowest performing schools. Selected teachers (principals and staff too) would have to commit to the school for at least three years.

**8. House Republicans are trying to re-introduce the school voucher program known as the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program. Do you support this program?**

No, but if house Republicans are willing to send every needy kid in Columbia Heights Village or Barry Farm to St. Albans, Sidwell Friends or Georgetown Day free of charge I could get on board with that plan.

In its current form DC Opportunity Scholarship Program is ultimately inconsequential to education reform. The voucher for \$7,500 will help a handful of needy families pay for part of private school tuition. But for DC's poorest families \$7,500 is a drop in the bucket to get their child into an elite school where tuition is at least three or four times the amount of the voucher. I also have huge issues with public tax dollars going to an institution that could discriminate against a student or teacher based on sexual orientation.

## **Biddle's Responses:**

### **1. What role will/should the Council play, if any, in overseeing DCPS's system of teacher evaluation (IMPACT)? And what are your thoughts about the way the system is designed and implemented?**

With 18 years of experience in education, including 8 years as a classroom teacher, I will be paying close attention to the role IMPACT will play in the education of the District's children. I'm also a DCPS parent, with two children currently attending Shepherd ES, which make the success of schools very personal to me.

I have confidence in Chancellor Kaya Henderson and the teachers to continually evaluate IMPACT and work to make changes if necessary. Since this is the second round of IMPACT, I'll be looking to see if the process is improving.

The Council should not act as a School Board, micro-managing the schools, but should play a strong role in oversight and ensure that the process is fair to students and teachers.

Ultimately, IMPACT should be consistently applied at every school.

### **2. As an elected Councilmember, what criteria will you apply to the Mayor's choice of permanent DCPS chancellor? How will your criteria be different from those that your opponents would apply if they were on the Council?**

The process that was put in place for Chancellor selection, which included a committee of community members, teachers, principals, and union members, was a fair one.

As I've stated in the past, I fully support the Mayor's selection of Kaya Henderson as Chancellor of the DCPS. I've known Kaya Henderson for almost 20 years and have been impressed with her work with children and public education. She knows the District, and she has already demonstrated a strong commitment to making the community a key partner in our reform efforts. Her appointment provides the continuity that is necessary to keep aggressive school reform on track.

Input from key stakeholders will remain critical, but I do also believe firmly in the mayoral control system the Council approved in 2007.

### **3. As an elected Councilmember, what would your position be on surplus and development of city-owned buildings, including former schools?**

That's a very broad question but there are several uses for surplus land and properties that can be considered. I think that if the surplus property is a burden to the taxpayers and there's a private company that can make the property profitable, the District should disposition the land in a way that benefits the community.



I also believe that when surplus land is identified, the community should be notified so that it can provide solutions for how to best use the land. There may be opportunities that the government hasn't identified, which could put the land back into public service.

The first goal of handling surplus school property should be to find a valuable public service that can be provided at the facility. If the property is in disrepair, or the government can't afford to maintain it, we can look to non-profit and private alternatives. Charter schools should be a prime target for taking over surplus school property because they fit the first goal of managing surplus property, which is to provide a service, in this case education, for the community. Either way our ultimate goals should be to maximize the value of the land, increase our tax base and provide an overall benefit to the community.

**4. Do you think that current budget allocations for DCPS and DC Public Charter Schools are fair? How will your position on the Council affect the facilities and operating budgets of these school systems?**

We should not be asking if allocations are fair to DCPS and Charter schools, the question is whether or not the funding is fair to students. We will only achieve a world-class education system if we learn to work together towards the goal of maximizing student potential.

There have been instances in the past when funding for charter schools was provided late, which is unfair to the students who attend those schools. We should be working to ensure that payments to charters are on time, every time.

I know that a number of people, including Mayor Vincent Gray, his education team, and FOCUS, are looking at this now. It is important that we have an apples-to-apples comparison of funding. As a Councilmember I will strive to be as fair and equitable as possible in supporting both DCPS and charter schools.

**5. What are your thoughts on the future role of the State Board of Education?**

As a former member of the Board of Education, I believe the members should continue to push for rigorous standards and assessment systems. I will also work with the Board to seek advice on the future of education in the District. I believe that the Council can strengthen its partnership with Board.

**6. Is there a Council role in overseeing the state education office (OSSE) in its implementation of major federal grants like Race to the Top or and the grant that funds development of a state longitudinal education data system ("SLED")?**

The Council should monitor OSSE just as it monitors other agencies through performance hearings. Certainly both RTTT and the SLED are mission-critical projects of OSSE. I expect both of them to be primary topics of conversation in State Superintendent Mahaley's performance hearings.

**7. Do current education policies in DC equalize opportunity for DC's most disadvantaged kids, or do they exacerbate them? Which specific policies would you change if any to**

**address equity in the access to good teachers and schools? ("Make all our teachers and schools great" is not a specific policy).**

The District's vibrant school choice policies, through both charters and DCPS, is probably one of the best for ensuring equity for DC's most disadvantaged kids. Families and students are able to select higher-performing, safer, and more suitable schools based on their individual needs. But we have to get to a point where there are great schools in every neighborhood.

In the meantime, we need to help families understand the process and increase their access to high performance schools. I'd like to ensure that both DCPS and the PCSB's school performance systems and scorecards are distributed far and wide, and that families are supported in becoming avid consumers of this information. We need a quality elementary, middle and high school in every neighborhood.

**8. House Republicans are trying to re-introduce the school voucher program known as the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program. Do you support this program?**

Yes. I believe that the voucher program can be an effective tool for giving low-income students educational opportunities they otherwise wouldn't have had. However, I do not support funding organizations that do not comply with the DC Human Rights Act.

## **Orange's Responses:**

### **1. What role will/should the Council play, if any, in overseeing DCPS's system of teacher evaluation (IMPACT)? And what are your thoughts about the way the system is designed and implemented?**

The DC Council should play the role that is mandated by law. That is to provide oversight for the District of Columbia Public Schools ("DCPS"). It is the Mayor's role to operate DCPS which Mayor Gray will do through his Deputy Mayor for Education and the DCPS Chancellor.

Clearly, there has been tremendous discussion regarding IMPACT. The prevailing view is that IMPACT needs to be reviewed, modified and embraced. The DC Council should provide public hearings and insight into what a fair and improved IMPACT formulation could look like. The DC Council should take advantage of the opportunity to serve as a fair and honest broker in bringing all the parties together to express their view on IMPACT design, recommendations for modifications, implementation and embracement.

My thought is that the heavy lifting has resulted in an executed contract that provides for an increase in salaries that is directly connected to performance. A foundation has been secured for a system of teacher evaluation. The question now is can we improve this system to produce fair results that "all parties with an interest" can accept. My answer is YES.

The DC Council can provide the forum and leadership for the dialogue to commence with the executive and legislative branch, the Washington Teachers' Union, teachers, students, parents and anyone else with an interest. The ground rules for the hearing should be we are here to evaluate and improve IMPACT with the goal of rewarding good teachers, helping struggling teachers through professional development and peer review, and dismissing poor performing teachers through a fair executed process. We are engaged in this dialogue to improve education for our children and to produce successful high school graduates.

Given that the implementation of IMPACT has a budgetary and fiscal impact (costs of inefficient implementation and defending law suits for improper implementation), the Council should provide this needed oversight hearing and public accountability without micro-managing or legislating IMPACT revisions. A very good DC Council Education Committee public hearing and subsequent report containing recommendations submitted to the Mayor should prove to be very rewarding for education reform in the District of Columbia.

### **2. As an elected Councilmember, what criteria will you apply to the Mayor's choice of permanent DCPS chancellor? How will your criteria be different from those that your opponents would apply if they were on the Council?**

The criteria I will apply pertain to building on the educational foundation in place. Michele Rhee utilized the positive initiatives of Dr. Janey coupled with her vision, ideals, and initiatives, and made significant strides. The new Chancellor must build on these foundations along with their vision, ideals and initiatives to continue education reform in the District of Columbia.

I would like to see a chancellor who has an outstanding vision for educating our children with outreach to all walks of life while being inspirational, firm, committed and aggressive in pursuing education reform.

I differ from my opponents because I have well documented positions on education which include legislation establishing educational standards for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, mandating textbooks for core subjects be provided to students within the first two weeks of school, American Sign Language Recognition Act, District of Columbia Early Childhood, Reading and Mathematics Program Act and the Alexander Crummell Early Childhood and Enhancement Pilot Program Act. I also spearheaded the reopening of McKinley Tech as McKinley Technology High School which is performing.

### **3. As an elected Councilmember, what would your position be on surplusing and development of city-owned buildings, including former schools?**

Former schools should be used first for educational purposes rather than developed for non-educational purposes. This would allow charter schools to spend their DC facilities allocations on DC public properties rather than on private, commercial properties (which also currently removes those commercial properties from DC tax rolls, because charters are non-profits that don't pay property taxes). For other under-enrolled or utilized schools I would support co-location (voluntarily between the DCPS and charter schools). Government services that are complementary to educational services (i.e. mental health, social services, adult education etc.) could also co-locate into underutilized facilities to serve students, their families, and local communities along the lines of successful Community Schools models.

For city-owned buildings other than schools, they should be surplus only after there is proven to be no government or public use need, which would initially seem unlikely given the high amount of DC government agencies leasing private commercial properties. Both the uses of schools and other city-owned buildings should be driven by an openly developed comprehensive plan (including DCPS and charter students/schools) that studies current needs, future needs, and housing and demographic trends. Only after such a thorough due diligence should city-owned buildings be surplus, and not for short-term financial gains that don't factor in long-term needs and benefits.

### **4. Do you think that current budget allocations for DCPS and DC Public Charter Schools are fair? How will your position on the Council affect the facilities and operating budgets of these school systems?**

Despite the claims of local charter advocates otherwise, DC policy and practices are quite advanced when compared nationally in regard to equity between charters and traditional district schools. In general, the budget allocations are fair because it is based on an equal per-pupil formula wherein funding follows the student to the local education agency. Charters (independent LEA's) receive their monies directly for their enrolled students, and DCPS receives

monies for all the students enrolled in DCPS and then internally decides how to allocate the money to the local DCPS schools. In this system DCPS schools actually suffer inequity, particularly in regards to the comprehensive high schools. I would support a return to a weighted-student-formula with supplements for magnet programs (i.e. School Without Walls, Banneker, Duke Ellington) and small schools at capacity who don't benefit from the economies of scale of larger schools.

#### **5. What are your thoughts on the future role of the State Board of Education?**

While the role and responsibilities of the State Board of Education have been reduced to primarily an advisory role and establishing state curriculum standards, SBOE members are all elected and should listen to and provide a voice for their constituents on all areas of their educational concerns. As a Councilmember I will give great consideration to the advice of SBOE members, particularly in areas of state concerns, such as oversight of the status and plans for local schools under NCLB restructuring.

#### **6. Is there a Council role in overseeing the state education office (OSSE) in its implementation of major federal grants like Race to the Top or and the grant that funds development of a state longitudinal education data system ("SLED")?**

Yes. Given the Council's budgetary role and responsibilities, and since DC to date has a terrible record of implementation of federal grants in general (and SLED in particular) the Council should provide strong oversight and corrective interventions when necessary. DC's poor grant management and medicaid documentation practices contribute to the budget deficit in the form of dollars lost and grant dollars required to be repaid.

#### **7. Do current education policies in DC equalize opportunity for DC's most disadvantaged kids, or do they exacerbate them? Which specific policies would you change if any to address equity in the access to good teachers and schools? ("Make all our teachers and schools great" is not a specific policy).**

National research shows that lesser experienced teachers tend to be placed and "bounced" into poorer schools (economically and academically). Despite that knowledge and data, DCPS still continues to place higher-performing, experienced teachers in higher income neighborhood schools, and newer, lower-performing teachers still are placed in struggling schools and communities. This continuing trend should be changed in policy and practice, similar to what was done in Montgomery County, and used as an incentive for higher performing teachers to be paid higher salaries to teach in poorer schools.

#### **8. House Republicans are trying to re-introduce the school voucher program known as the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program. Do you support this program?**

Yes. As someone whose high academic performance in public school led to a scholarship to a high-performing private boarding school, I personally know the value of the opportunity to attend private schools. When I was 13 years old, I was awarded a scholarship to attend Fountain Valley School, a private boarding school, in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Sponsored by ABC (A Better Chance) Program, the scholarships were open to minority students whose records show their academic potential, but who could not attend these private schools because of financial limitations. The scholarship included tuition, room and board, transportation, books, and school supplies, medical care and laboratory fees.

Though the voucher program is controversial due to it being legislated by Congress and not the District of Columbia, it does continue the Tri-sector approach which provides an additional 20 million dollars to both the DC Public Schools and the DC Charter Schools. In total, 60 million dollars in additional funding (including 20 million dollars for vouchers) are being spent on educating DC children. DC children deserve the right to take advantage of all opportunities for a good education.