

Responses cannot be edited

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Community Led School Board

Questionnaire

This questionnaire was put together by a coalition of non-partisan, non-profit organizations seeking to provide the community with an opportunity to meet, engage and learn from all school board candidates. All candidates running for Denver Public School Board and Aurora Public School Board are being sent the questionnaire on the same date with two weeks to submit their responses.

The questionnaire was put together by Inspire Colorado, YAASPA, and Padres y Jóvenes Unidos.

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In a few sentences, describe your vision for the students and families you desire to serve.

My vision is for cutting edge schools, that are considered the best when it comes to meeting the needs of every individual student, retaining and continual training of the best teachers, at the forefront of technology and curriculum, and finally a board that is accessible, accountable, and transparent. I will advocate for an increase in funding for our district. For resources are the key to building all of the above.

In your opinion, what top two changes should be made on a state and local level regarding public education?

Most every example that I would give would come back to one critical issue, money. The budget for education at the state level must be increased. With the increasing of funds comes the ability to hire effective teachers, bring translation services to a multitude of languages that the district has, and provide aging schools with newer and more technology savvy facilities.

If you are elected to the school board, how will you ensure there is progress toward racial equity for students of color?

As a board member I would make it one of my top priorities. Everything starts at the top. Meaning the leadership at the top has to prioritize areas that are lacking, one major area is the racial disparity amongst students of color. When the top makes it a priority, that allows the superintendent and the principals to develop ideas to address the issues and make actionable plans. Therefore, that means we must address schools that do not have the resources to meet the needs of those students of color. Whether that is a lack of technology, a lack of effective teachers of color, or a lack of activities that other schools within the district may have. This will be a theme for the board and a major priority to address.

What do you think needs to be done to increase access to programs like ASCENT and concurrent enrollment for students of color and lower income students?

It needs to be made more public. I have found that many people do not even know that concurrent enrollment programs exist. Further, we have to train our counselors in the schools to recognize when students would benefit from such a program. The board also needs to partner with various other community colleges and online colleges to get them to become part of the program. In other words lets trumpet the program and make it accessible to all who are interested.

How does your school district need to improve in its process of ensuring all students graduate ready for college/career?

By making sure that our school counselors are well trained and knowledgeable of all the programs that are available to each student. And from that point being able to listen to the student and provide them all available options without telling where they should go or what they should do. We need to let the student make the decisions, provide answers to their questions, and give them the resources and tools needed to be successful in their chosen path. At the same time, we need to make sure that the family is engaged in the decisions with their child.

How would you determine top budget priorities?

By determining what the needs of students are in each school. Whether that is translation services, effective teachers of color, technology, newer or improved facilities, or transportation needs. I think the budget priorities must be made based upon what each individual school needs.

How would you advocate for adequate and equitable funding for your district on a state and local level?

As a board member, I understand that the funding that the district receives are based on several facts, much of which depends on the number students that are enrolled during the time of the school count. However, that will not stop me from advocating as a board member, parent, husband to a teacher, and community member for funding that is not only adequate but that exceeds the current per pupil rate. Colorado is currently 41st in spending. We spend \$2100 less than the national average. I will be in the ears of the state legislature as well as the Colorado Board of Education pushing for an increase in funds for APS. This is one of my primary purposes for running for the school board.

What role do you believe families and students should play in implementing district and school policies?

I am a firm advocate and believer in family engagement. Study after study has shown that family engagement is critical to student achievement. Students take more responsibility for their learning and their accountability is heightened. Further there are fewer behavioral problems, better academic performance, and the student is more likely to complete high school. These are just a few of the benefits.

How would you work with schools to address the school-to-prison pipeline?

Simply put, we cannot build safe, creative, cutting edge, and nurturing schools and yet continue to criminalize our children at the same time. I would work with our superintendent, teachers, students, parents, and community to get rid of the zero tolerance policies and advocate to get rid of zero tolerance laws. I would work to create alternative approaches to safe school communities that rely on restorative justice instead of criminalization. As a trial lawyer I have represented many students whose actions were defined as "crimes", and have had to be involved in a criminal system that really was not designed to handle issues that could be handled within the school. Therefore, restorative justice practices and more discretion for the school to handle issues internally would be my push to address and eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline.

What is your position on charter schools?

My opinion on charter schools is mixed. I am a product of the public school system and know that my early years spent in public schools set me on the right path. I believe in the value of public education and know that the public school system is the best tool to set children on the path to success. I am heartened to see that many charter schools strive to meet the needs of the communities they serve and believe that every child should have access to the education that best suits their needs. I do not, however, support charter schools at the expense of public schools. Reductions in per-pupil funding, a lack of transparency and accountability and mixed achievement gains have given me doubts about the widespread expansion of charter schools.

What steps would you take to ensure that the district curriculum be culturally responsive to the needs of students of color at all grade levels?

As a board director I will advocate for the setting of policy that all curriculum be culturally inclusive and responsive to the needs of our students of color. I would further want to make sure that we have yearly reviews of the curriculum to make sure that we are meeting our policy goals.

What would you do to hire and retain more teachers of color?

Set it as a top priority. And as a top priority we must expand where we search for teachers of color. We must attend job fairs at colleges all over the country and seek out partnerships with various student unions and educational fraternities and sororities. We need to make it known that as a district we want effective teachers of color and that they will be paid a livable wage and given the resources that they need in order to teach a diverse student population.

Do you support the establishment of Haven Schools in accordance with the Safe and Welcoming School District Resolution adopted by the School Board?

Absolutely.