



2016 Delaware School Board Candidate Questionnaire

Please introduce yourself giving a brief background of your qualifications and why you are running for the Capital School District Board of Education.

Hello, my name is Dr. Chanda Jackson-Short. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology, a Master of Social Work degree, and a Doctorate degree in Social Work. I have lived in Capital School District all of my life and am a product of the school district. I am running for Capital School Board because I have a deep passion for the youth and yearn to see them succeed. I know what Capital School District is capable of producing and when I look at where the district is and where we can be, I'm inspired to be a part of the network that makes the possibility of who we can be a reality.

1. What do you see as the board's roles and responsibilities?

The School Board serves the community in relation to students and their education. Its primary objective is the education of the students they serve. The Board serves as a link to public schools and incorporates the views of students, teachers, parents, and the community at large. Members of the Board are accessible to the public and accountable for the performance of the schools in the district. Further, school board members, adopt policies that give the district direction, and set priorities to achieve its goals. Other responsibilities include, but not limited to hiring and evaluating the superintendent, adopting curriculum, adopting and overseeing the budget, overseeing construction and approving contracts.

2. How would you describe an effective school board member?

An effective school board member is attentive to the needs of the students, teachers, and parents within the district; would be involved in various student activities; communicates well with others including students, teachers, parents, and the community; committed to seeing students succeed; attends meetings; and has a positive outlook on the district.

3. What skills, experience, expertise or resources will you bring to the board if elected?

Many people think success of our students is based solely on their academic performance in the classroom. Nothing is further from the truth. I've been an avid

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part of the reform process to the Capital School District community at large.

Coordinating neighborhood efforts to make our streets safer and cleaner, partnering with our local police department to improve relationships so that our students don't feel alone or abandoned once they leave the school building, running an annual Back to School Academic and Life Skills Bootcamp to ensure our children are prepared and start each year off with the tools they need to be successful, attending and participating on youth committees, collaborating with the Mayor and City on various initiatives to improve this City, and the list goes on. Once we see success borders beyond the classroom I believe we'll see true success for our students. If elected, I will not only bring the community's perspective, but a female and mother's perspective to a majority male Board. I will bring the experience of those around me and of those I hear while in the community.

4. Please briefly share your vision for education in your district. (250 words or less)

While we all have a vision for what the district should look like, I think it is imperative to have a collective vision. I especially commend the district for allowing public comments for the upcoming strategic plan. My vision consists of a collaborative vision, one that is inclusive to everyone and one that affords all students the opportunity to learn and succeed. I would like to see Capital School District become the leader of primary and secondary education. This can be achieved by challenging students in ways that create leaders who will become productive members of society, identifying innovative ways to teach every student and reducing the pressure teachers are under while still holding them accountable to teaching. I would like to see the fun instilled back into learning on all levels.

It is imperative to create a safe and comfortable environment for all students to learn, while instilling values and life skills. Developing a fair and just disciplinary system, a place that identifies students' strengths and builds upon their strengths while strengthening their weaknesses. Cultivating students' ability to become leaders in the community and giving them a sense of pride and ownership in their schools.

Additionally, the schools are an important entity within the community and it is important to engage the citizens of the community. This includes, but is not limited to seniors, religious institutions, businesses and nonprofit organizations, and other institutions that create community. Building upon existing community relationships and developing new relationships are keys to success.

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5. How do you feel about family engagement in areas such as shared decision-making at the building and district level? Please share at least three strategies you would use to increase meaningful family engagement in your district.

Family engagement is essential to the educational development of our students. Family input often sheds light on who the students are at their core. Relying on involved, concerned, and committed family's input will almost guarantee that a student centered decision is made and includes the students' best interest educationally and characteristically. I'd continue to have interest meetings and community board meetings to keep families, and community leaders and supporters involved in the decision process for the District. Reaching out through satisfaction surveys and actual check-ins during parent/teacher conferences as well as at school wide district events will help to keep the Board abreast of the climate District wide. Having meetings when increased occurrences are taking place whether positive or negative will allow the Board to be proactive rather than reactive. Families tend to be more amenable when they know they have been included on every aspect of their child's journey including the educational process. Ensuring that the superintendent stays apprised of changes that affect our children as expeditiously as possible so that issues of detriment is not given time to be destructive or used divisively by proponents of positive outcomes for our students.

6. Please explain what your district will do or has done to comply with current anti-bully laws in Delaware? If elected, what steps would you take to address bullying, harassment and intimidation in your schools? What specific strategies would you use to improve school climate and safety?

The District currently has an anti-bullying policy which forbids bullying and the retaliation against those who report bullying. The School, District Employees, students, parents and guardians all have a responsibility to prevent bullying. There is also a bullying prevention program presented at each school for the students.

I would like to see the District support a communal type culture in the schools that will not only encourage students to take pride and ownership in their schools, but also encourage students to support each other. For instance, implementing a brother's/sister's keeper initiative that encourages students to look out for each other

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and help each other. Recognizing that we all need each other and that life beyond school will call for us to work together regardless of the field we choose.

7. Please share your views on state assessments and the role they play in the following areas:

A. Student Achievement-Several factors come into play regarding the issue of student achievement and standardized testing. The credibility of the test, the relatability of the questions to all students and the students' level of interest in the test results are just a few. I feel that it's a bit unrealistic to expect to obtain a snapshot of a student's intellectual ability or level of achievement with one test.

B. School performance-While state assessments are often used to determine a school's effectiveness, they may not be the most accurate way to do so. The time that it takes to administer state tests takes away from classroom instruction and can sometimes lead to frustration on the part of both teachers and students, thus skewing the results.

C. Teacher accountability- State assessments often lead to high levels of stress for teachers. More accountability seems to be placed on educators than on parents and students. Some students have even deduced that state tests are used to determine teacher effectiveness rather than student achievement. Consequently, some students don't perform at their best because they feel that their lack of success reflects on the teacher and not them.

D. Student accountability- As previously stated, some students don't "buy in" to state assessments. In their minds, there are no consequences for not meeting the standard. Correlating test scores to graduation requirements is an effective strategy for high school students, but there should be consequences for middle school students as well. Perhaps promotion to the next grade should depend upon state assessment scores.

8. Please share your views on the current state initiative to reduce the amount of testing in our schools. Do you agree or disagree and why?

State testing has always had the ability to be a marker on where children should be at based on their age and grade demographic. It has however come to be used more as a mechanism for determining teacher's success without much consideration given to the varying classroom dynamics. I don't believe all students no matter how great the teacher or curriculum is set to test well. I am sympathetic to the fact that testing is a great

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mitigating factor in funding so it is necessary to have and to keep in place. If elected, state testing would definitely be a place where I would look forward to collaborating with my constituents to come up with a plan that meets the needs of every student and teacher represented.

9. There continues to be a focus on full inclusion in our schools statewide. If elected, how would you ensure our educators receive adequate professional development on inclusion strategies, implementation of IEPs, diversity training for teachers and students and the necessary supports for sustained and successful inclusion?

Our schools are staffed with professionals who do several things well. I think it's critical that we allow those professionals to share their wealth of knowledge with their peers. After all, who's better qualified to tell teachers what works than other teachers? It's also important to research current trends and successful strategies with regard to co-teaching, inclusion, and diversity training and implement them for our teachers. Current topics such as UDL (Universal Design for Learning), Formative Assessment and various co-teaching models would be high on the list of priorities for teacher in-services and trainings.

10. What are your views on allocating education funding in your district so that the money follows the child?

Throughout this campaigning process I have met with the Chief Operating Officer a few times to gain a better understanding of the budget and how funds are allocated in the District. What I have learned from meeting with him is that many of the funding sources are granted based on the understanding that the funds go to a certain program or area. Funding for students are allocated based on the level of service the student needs. For instance, a student with learning challenges is afforded more funding than a student who may not have learning challenges. The extra funding for the student who has learning challenges are put towards resources to assist with accommodations and specialized learning plans. While the student who does not have any learning challenges receives the same resources as all other students. The challenge in this scenario is students who have no signs of learning challenges are put in cookie cutter situations. While they may not meet the qualifications of learning challenges, it is still imperative that they receive individualized learning plans. I think it is imperative for the funding of each child be allocated for that child. Ensuring that every student has an opportunity to be successful and has the resources needed to be successful is necessary for every student.

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11. During times of fiscal constraint, what programs would you consider essential to keep or implement in order to maintain or exceed the current level of education in your district and why?

Ensuring that core subjects are not affected are important particularly literacy and arithmetic programs. Programs that afford students optimal opportunity for gainful employment post graduation as well as offer the greatest potential for continuing education at higher learning levels.

Also, as previously mentioned, I have met with the CFO a couple of times. While meeting with him, I have been enlightened upon some of the fiscal constraints as it relates to the programming implemented in the District. I've also been informed that many of the programming has its own funding that has been granted specifically for that particular program. During times of fiscal constraint, it would be important to understand and be aware of the impact of the various programs on students' success before determining which programs would be essential to keep or implement. I would first like to review data before determining which programs will remain in order to make an informed decision.

12. Do you believe extracurricular activities are necessary?

Yes, I do believe extracurricular activities are necessary. I feel it is important to offer extracurricular activities as it affords students the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the classroom to different areas.

13. Do you feel that subjects such as music, art, physical education, technology, and foreign languages play an important part in a child's education? Explain.

Yes, I feel that subjects such as music, art, physical education, technology, and foreign languages play an important role in a child's education because it allows students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to other subjects and other areas. Students need to recognize the importance of learning and how what they learn will eventually be used after completing high school.

14. If you could change one thing about the district's proposed school budget, what would it be and why?

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If I could change one thing about the district's proposed school budget I would change the amount allocated for teacher units. Recently, I spoke with a couple of teachers who state they have up to 30 students in their classroom at a time. I would like to see eventually that number be reduced or additional help be given to teachers. Additionally, I would like to see the district hire each school their own specialized teacher instead of sharing those positions throughout the district allowing for more time with students and less time traveling.

15. What are the educational strengths in your district?

The educational strengths of the district include a mentoring program; building community partnerships / relationships with Senators, Representatives and community leaders; the use of technology to keep students engaged; the implementation of an energy conservation program to save money in the budget and apply it directly to students' needs and the implementation and execution of lessons that are aligned to state and national standards, ensuring that students are college and career ready.

16. What are the educational gaps or weaknesses in your district?

The educational gaps in the district are in areas of special needs and honors program. While the district has a facet of interventions for students with special needs, I believe that more could be done to ensure students with learning challenges are equipped with what they need to be successful. The same goes for students on the other spectrum.

17. With an increased focus on personalized learning and advancements in technology, what steps would you to ensure the privacy and protection of student data?

Some years ago our healthcare facilities moved in such direction to ensure individual healthcare information. Securing records and requiring healthcare members to enforce and ensure patient confidentiality has proven successful. Allowing access of students' records only to those actively engaging in the educational process for the student as well as their parents is essential. Requiring parental consent and approval before releasing their records are all ways to address this issue.

18. If you could change one thing about the current district budget, what would it be and why?

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19. Do you see yourself primarily as a representative of the community or as a representative of the school system?

As a parent and advocate for school aged children and continuing adult education I'd have to say you cannot represent either, you must represent both. Community is crucial to our systems of education and education has great impact on our communities. A great school board member knows that and seeks to lend balance to his or her role on the board by best representing and advocating in the best interest of both.

20. What are your three overall education priorities that, in a perfect world, you would accomplish during your time in office? How will you go about achieving them? Why are these most important?

Three overall education priorities I would like to see accomplished are increased parent and community support, safety and discipline. If we are able to engage parents and the community more, teachers and students will feel supported. Education will become a top priority for students. Consequently, the climate and culture of Capital's schools will improve, thus evoking change (for the better) in the safety and disciplinary concerns we are currently facing. In conclusion, increasing community engagement and addressing safety and disciplinary concerns would be top priority.

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