Philadelphia 2015 Mayoral Report Card on Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate Name</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Testing</th>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Stability</th>
<th>Community &amp; Poverty</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Lynne Abraham</td>
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<td>Anthony Williams</td>
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*Teacher Action Group did not receive a completed survey from mayoral candidate Milton Street

Primary Elections will be held on Tuesday, May 19, 2015.
To all Mayoral Candidates:

As we all know, education is a critical issue in Philadelphia -- now, and always. As a city-wide coalition of teachers and education allies, Teacher Action Group represents thousands of votes. We would like to know your views on education policy in Philadelphia.

To those ends, we have created a poll that we are sending to all candidates running in 2015. Your answers will be shared with the public, and could lead to an endorsement from our group.

As the voting public, we need our candidates to be crystal clear on their viewpoints and approach towards public education in Philadelphia. The future of our city depends on it.

Sincerely,

The Teacher Action Group Candidate Report Card Team

www.TAGPhilly.org / Twitter: @TAGPhilly / TAGPhilly@gmail.com
Teacher Action Group’s
2015 Education Final Exam

Please circle your opinion on the statements below. We encourage you to explain your answer in the space below.

Funding

While Governor Wolf has proposed increased funding to education, much uncertainty still remains for Philadelphia schools. While much of the problem lies with Harrisburg’s inability to create a fair funding formula, the city of Philadelphia must look to contribute. According to the Philadelphia Public School Notebook, Philadelphia only contributes 30% of the District’s budget -- significantly lower than neighboring municipalities and even lower than some of the poorest areas in the state.

Many of us live in Philadelphia, and understand the trouble with raising taxes. As parents, teachers, librarians, and students, we want to know if Philadelphia’s next Mayor will consider any and all options for funding our schools.

1. At the city level, excellent school funding requires politicians revisiting tax abatements, PILOTS (Payments in Lieu of Taxes), and increasing the city’s contribution to the Philadelphia public schools.

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  **Strongly Agree**

Adding new recurring revenues from City sources to Governor Wolf’s $160 million pledge to education in Philadelphia would go a long way to addressing the chronic underfunding of our schools. Our non-profit institutions provide significant benefits to our City and, as a result, I have significant concerns about PILOTs. I also believe that tax abatements, especially in areas just beyond the reach of development, are supportable.

2. Although schools will always need to adapt, fully funded education is a Constitutional and moral right. Funding for basic needs should never be predicated upon "reforms".

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  **Strongly Agree**
Testing

Research by the Council of the Great City Schools revealed that between pre-K and 12th grade, students take 113 standardized tests on average. The National Education Policy Center promotes the consensus that "standardized tests are ineffective and even counterproductive when used to drive educational reform." Moreover, the NEPC found that No Child Left Behind and its associated "test-driven accountability policies" have not closed the achievement gap for low-income students and children of color.

Standardized test preparation further narrows school curriculum: the American Federation of Teachers concluded that in high-stakes testing grades, students can waste up to 110 hours per year on test preparation activities, often at the expense of art, music, and the creative arts.

1. High-stakes testing is absorbing too many resources, including teacher time, learning time, and real dollars from schools in high-poverty areas. Testing should be reduced and not used to compare resource-starved schools against their wealthier counterparts.

   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

Stability and Equity

Since 2013, the school district has closed 24 public schools in Philadelphia. 6,200 students were uprooted, and many left the district altogether. Families at Steele Elementary and Muñoz-Marin were thrust into tumultuous charter-public battles. The SRC unilaterally canceled the teachers’ contract, knowing the threat of work-stoppage was real.

School district officials account that for every student that leaves a public school in the city to attend a charter school, the school district loses $7,000. The financial and structural chaos push many families out of the city.

1. The "zero sum game" in Philadelphia is destructive; Philadelphia should abstain from charter conversions or closings until a fair and equitable funding system is in place.

   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
Our school system needs fair and equitable funding from the state. Closing schools for the sole purpose of funding or advancing charter schools is not responsible.

2. School choice starts with great neighborhood schools able to serve all students.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  **Strongly Agree**

3. Strong schools need strong teachers; teachers should be supported with fair treatment at the bargaining table, and deserve the right to organize no matter what type of school in which they work.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  **Strongly Agree**

**Accountability**

Research by the Philadelphia City Controller (as reported by the Philadelphia Inquirer) reported that “there was a complete and total failure on the part of the Charter Office to monitor charter schools and hold them accountable for how they spend taxpayers' dollars.”

Work by outside groups have unearthed back-door dealings with organizations like The Boston Consulting Group throws doubt on the honesty of our school system. The SRC continues to spend massive amounts of taxpayer dollars without any oversight or accountability to the public.

1. The school district requires the resources and legal support to ensure charter school transparency and accountability.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  **Strongly Agree**

2. Philadelphia needs a locally elected school board. As Mayor, anyone I would nominate to the SRC would support its dissolution.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  **Neutral**  Agree  Strongly Agree
Lynne envisions a school board that has a superintendent appointed by the Mayor, and a hybrid board structure comprised of both elected and appointed members. To get the structure right, Lynne will convene a committee of experts to recommend board structure, member qualifications, and proper checks and balances.

3. **The Mayor’s Office will be committed to transparency and public participation in its work relating to the school district.**

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  **Strongly Agree**

**Community and Poverty**

As reported by the Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia is the poorest large city in America, with a deep poverty rate almost twice the national average. Public Citizens for Youth and Children state that eighty-four percent of children in the district are low-income.

A community school is both an academically rigorous public school and set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. The result is a neighborhood hub that brings together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities.

1. **Community schools that offer wraparound services from certified providers should be the model for the Philadelphia public school system.**

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  **Strongly Agree**

2. **Poverty is the number one driver of poor school performance.**

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  **Agree**  Strongly Agree

Poverty is a leading cause for poor school performance, but there are several factors, including the lack of full and fair funding, that also lead to poor school performance.

*Thank you for participating. We all win when people talk about schools, so we look forward to continuing the conversation about education in Philadelphia.*
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**Funding**

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**Accountability**

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   - Strongly Disagree
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   - Strongly Agree

2. Philadelphia needs a locally elected school board. As Mayor, anyone I would nominate to the SRC would support its dissolution.

   - Strongly Disagree
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   - Neutral
   - Agree

   - Strongly Agree

3. The Mayor's Office will be committed to transparency and public participation in its work relating to the school district.

   - Strongly Disagree
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Community and Poverty

1. Community schools that offer wraparound services from certified providers should be the model for the Philadelphia public school system.

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2. Poverty is the number one driver of poor school performance.

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☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☑ Strongly Agree

2. Parents and students have the right to opt-out of High Stakes Tests without fear of reprisal or intimidation or loss of opportunity. Teachers have the right to educate students and families of their right to opt out.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☑ Strongly Agree
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**Stability and Equity**

1. The "zero sum game" in Philadelphia is destructive; Philadelphia should abstain from charter conversions or closings until a fair and equitable funding system is in place.

   - [ ] Strongly Disagree  [ ] Disagree  [ ] Neutral  [ ] Agree  [x] Strongly Agree

2. School choice starts with great neighborhood schools able to serve all students.

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1. At the city level, excellent school funding requires politicians revisiting tax abatements, PILOTS (Payments in Lieu of Taxes), and increasing the city’s contribution to the Philadelphia public schools.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree ✔ Strongly Agree

The Real Estate tax abatement program has been integral in fostering development in Philadelphia, although mostly contained to Center City and the near surrounds. I believe that the abatement program should continue, but I do believe that those benefiting from the abatement can pay more. For the majority of homes, the total assessed value under Mayor Nutter’s AVI program has been set with the land value as only small percentage of the total assessed value. For some larger developments, like the Comcast Center and Ritz-Carlton Residences, this amount is 5% or less of the total assessed value. Since this is the only taxable portion on fully abated properties, the amount of taxes paid is artificially low. As Mayor I will push to raise the land value to a higher percentage so recipients of the tax abatement will pay a fairer share of taxes, while not inhibiting development by eliminating the abatement entirely.

Former Mayor Ed Rendell was successful in negotiating with the City’s non-profit and educational institutions to develop PILOT payments during the 1990’s. As Mayor I will revive this process and ask these institutions to contribute either
though PILOTs or SILOTs (Service in Lieu of Taxes) to help fund our public schools and service programs.

2. Although schools will always need to adapt, fully funded education is a Constitutional and moral right. Funding for basic needs should never be predicated upon "reforms".

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I completely agree that a fairly and fully funded education system is a constitutional and moral right. Many of our teachers work in difficult environments and take money out of their own pockets to pay for needed supplies, but are paid less than their suburban colleagues. As Mayor, I will work with teachers, principals, counselors, and nurses to make sure that every school is getting the resources and services they need from the City. Where possible, the City will also replace or supplement services that the School District is currently contracting for, so that those funds can instead be spent in the classroom where they are needed most.

Section 2

Testing

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Using testing results as a basis for school funding allocation creates a vicious circle in which struggling students are penalized rather than given the resources they need to succeed. Even in high-performing schools, over-testing takes away valuable instruction time and demands expensive instruction methods. We should not be
testing students as often as we do now, and certainly not employing the high-risk testing that the Commonwealth currently requires.

2. Parents and students have the right to opt-out of High Stakes Tests without fear of reprisal or intimidation or loss of opportunity. Teachers have the right to educate students and families of their right to opt out.

Strongly  Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  ✔Strongly Agree

I fully support your group and others who have worked to educate parents on their ability to opt-out of testing. We also cannot tolerate our teachers being threatened with discipline for supporting these parents decision, as happened recently at Feltonville School of Arts and Sciences. I commend Dr. Hite for recommending that opt-out information should be shared with parents after all.

Section 3

Stability and Equity

Since 2013, the school district has closed 24 public schools in Philadelphia. 6,200 students were uprooted, and many left the district altogether. Families at Steele Elementary and Muñoz-Marin were thrust into tumultuous charter-public battles. The SRC unilaterally canceled the teachers’ contract, knowing the threat of work-stoppage was real.

School district officials account that for every student that leaves a public school in the city to attend a charter school, the school district loses $7,000. The financial and structural chaos pushes many families out of the city.

1. The "zero sum game" in Philadelphia is destructive; Philadelphia should abstain from charter conversions or closings until a fair and equitable funding system is in place.

Strongly  Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  ✔Strongly Agree

Our current charter school law is inherently flawed. The funding system neglects our district schools’ fixed costs, and it overcompensates charter schools for special education services that they don’t always provide. It was for that reason that I publicly opposed the Philadelphia School Partnerships’ $25 million donation to develop new charters, which ignores the District’s fixed costs and covers a fraction of the nearly $500 million required to enroll just 15,000 more students in charters.

As Mayor, I will work with our representatives in Harrisburg to push for a funding formula that accounts for charter schools and asks Harrisburg for full reimbursement for any expenses related to the establishment of a new charter school.
My administration will oppose unfettered expansion of charter schools and will work with the departments responsible for planning and economic development to make sure we have a long term approach to ensuring that every neighborhood has a strong community school in place as our first priority.

2. School choice starts with great neighborhood schools able to serve all students.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | ✔ Strongly Agree |

Great neighborhood schools are absolutely essential to the development and stability of not only the students who attend, but the neighborhood as a whole. We shouldn’t be placing new charter schools in neighborhoods with high-performing or improving neighborhood schools because those District schools will be stuck with less resources as a result. As Mayor I will focus on improving neighborhood schools, and developing community schools that provide wraparound services for students and parents with the goal as making our schools the focal point and hub of activity in every neighborhood.

3. Strong schools need strong teachers; teachers should be supported with fair treatment at the bargaining table, and deserve the right to organize no matter what type of school in which they work.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | ✔ Strongly Agree |

I wholeheartedly support the right of teachers to collective bargaining, and I recognize -- as do the teachers -- that all parties need to work together to build a system that fits our budget, protects our teachers, and provides our students with a high-quality education.

Section 4

Accountability

Research by the Philadelphia City Controller (as reported by the Philadelphia Inquirer) reported that “there was a complete and total failure on the part of the Charter Office to monitor charter schools and hold them accountable for how they spend taxpayers’ dollars." Work by outside groups have unearthed back-door dealings with organizations like The Boston Consulting Group throws doubt on the honesty of our school system. The SRC continues to spend massive amounts of taxpayer dollars without any oversight or accountability to the public.

1. The school district requires the resources and legal support to ensure charter school transparency and accountability.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | ✔ Strongly Agree |

Ensuring that the money allocated to charter schools is tracked and spent correctly
is absolutely essential. As Mayor, I will establish more accountability through collaboration between my administration and the District’s oversight staff to monitor the finances and performance of charter schools. We will not promote failing charters or allow charter schools to grow in neighborhoods that already have high-quality public schools.

Moreover, I will work with City Council to ensure that the strong investigative and oversight powers that the Home Rule Charter grants the body are put to good use during the budget process. The City has continued to increase the amount of annual funding it provides the School District, which flows through to charter schools. Therefore, the City has a right to demand more transparency and accountability from those charter institutions that are receiving City generated tax dollars. As Mayor, I will work with City Council to require the Charter Office to appear before City Council during public budget hearings so that there is more transparency and accountability in how charter schools are managed.

2. Philadelphia needs a locally elected school board. As Mayor, anyone I would nominate to the SRC would support its dissolution.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral ✔ Agree Strongly Agree

As Mayor, I will work to make our schools financially stable so that Harrisburg has no reason to continue to saddle Philadelphia with the SRC. If the SRC does vote to disband itself, I would welcome the new school board as an opportunity for parents to hold their elected officials responsible for the quality of our schools. And until that happens, the financial stability of our schools will be my top priority in education.

3. The Mayor’s Office will be committed to transparency and public participation in its work relating to the school district.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree ✔ Strongly Agree

As Mayor I commit to having an open and transparent process for both the City and School District’s budget. Specifically pertaining to the School District, I will work to include input and participation from all stakeholders, including principals, teachers, parents and students.

Section 5

Community and Poverty

As reported by the Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia is the poorest large city in America, with a deep poverty rate almost twice the national average. Public Citizens for Youth and Children state that eighty-four percent of children in the district are low-income.
A community school is both an academically rigorous public school and set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. The result is a neighborhood hub that brings together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities.

1. Community schools that offer wraparound services from certified providers should be the model for the Philadelphia public school system.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree ✓ Strongly Agree

The creation and development of Community Schools was one of the three priorities that I stressed in my announcement speech the day I started this campaign. I will make the development of community schools a top priority by working with educators to identify, align, and provide city services to support schools and develop them as centers of learning, support, and community in their neighborhoods. There are numerous resources that can be aligned to meet the needs of children and families and to strengthen schools as centers of their communities, including health and human services and educational and recreational resources. By supporting the physical, social and emotional needs of children, we can improve their chances of success both in and out of the classroom. Developing schools into centers of their communities will help strengthen neighborhoods and families. Furthermore, this collaboration will result in teachers being better supported in their jobs.

2. Poverty is the number one driver of poor school performance.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree ✓ Strongly Agree

This is absolutely correct, and this is why it imperative that the funding formula developed in Harrisburg account for the poverty rate in the District’s allotment. Far too many students are hungry, thirsty, and have little to none of the support necessary outside of the classroom. In addition, it is impossible for teachers to teach, and also provide the additional support that students need. As Mayor I will work to develop community schools that provide these additional services during the school day for students, and also provide job training and other social service programs in the evening for parents that need them.

Thank you for participating. We all win when people talk about schools, so we look forward to continuing the conversation about education in Philadelphia.
Responses from Doug Oliver

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2. Although schools will always need to adapt, fully funded education is a Constitutional and moral right. Funding for basic needs should never be predicated upon "reforms".

   ☒Strongly Disagree ☐Disagree ☐Neutral ☐Agree Strongly Agree

Many will ask how do we pay for a quality education. Here is the current reality – the School District spends roughly $129 million to operate 19 consistently underperforming schools. With approximately 200,000 students in the school district, the average cost to educate a student is $12,500 per year. Only $6,000 per year, however, is spent on each student. Where is the delta going? It is being taken from students to manage the City’s non-education related financial challenges.
The City is in a difficult position given that the Commonwealth holds the purse strings and that non-Philadelphia Pennsylvanians resent their tax dollars being directed at underperforming Philadelphia schools. Worse yet, they don’t believe that any money that might be appropriated would make it to classroom. In this climate, we can’t count on funding from the state. Even as we continue to push for a fair funding formula out of Harrisburg, Philadelphia may need to make tough funding decisions to educate our children.

As Mayor, I will consider all options for increasing funding for our Philadelphia schools including modifying the tax abatement program, reevaluating the PILOT program, increasing property taxes, looking to collect the City’s delinquent taxes, and possibly selling City assets that would alleviate some of the City’s pension challenges and in turn free up more funding for schools. I will give preference to those options that do not require the sale of a City asset or increasing taxes for our working families.

Testing

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2. High-stakes testing is absorbing too many resources, including teacher time, learning time, and real dollars from schools in high-poverty areas. Testing should be reduced and not used to compare resource-starved schools against their wealthier counterparts.
Given the poor quality of education Philadelphia students currently receive, it is evident that a significant change needs to be made. Excessive testing and test preparation takes much needed class time away from students. Our focus should be on developing an appropriate curriculum and maximizing the time available to teach that curriculum.

**Stability and Equity**

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   - Strongly Disagree
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2. **School choice starts with great neighborhood schools able to serve all students.**

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   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

3. **Strong schools need strong teachers; teachers should be supported with fair treatment at the bargaining table, and deserve the right to organize no matter what type of school in which they work.**

   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

In order to properly educate our children, changes must be made to establish standards that every Philadelphia school – public and charter – is required to meet. Those managing our schools also have to be held accountable for education outcomes.
As Mayor, I will institute aggressive intervention policies to deal with underperforming Philadelphia public and charter schools. These policies will include putting a performance improvement plan in place for schools that underperform in any single academic year and changing the management of schools that fail to meet standards for two consecutive years. When necessary, new, experienced management and good teachers will be drawn from high-performing schools and placed into failing schools.

Both public and charter schools have been known to pick and choose students and enroll selected students to boost their performance metrics. Students with behavioral issues, learning differences or who come from low-income households, on the other hand, are funneled to underfunded and therefore ineffective public schools. Philadelphia schools must educate all Philadelphia children, without fear or favor.

With regards to our teachers, I support their right to organize. Unions have played a significant role in our country’s history by protecting the rights of workers to fair wages and decent working conditions. I recognize the importance of unions in protecting workers and in seeking to secure jobs for their members.

Accountability

Research by the Philadelphia City Controller (as reported by the Philadelphia Inquirer) reported that “there was a complete and total failure on the part of the Charter Office to monitor charter schools and hold them accountable for how they spend taxpayers’ dollars.” Work by outside groups have unearthed back-door dealings with organizations like The Boston Consulting Group throws doubt on the honesty of our school system. The SRC continues to spend massive amounts of taxpayer dollars without any oversight or accountability to the public.

1. The school district requires the resources and legal support to ensure charter school transparency and accountability.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

2. Philadelphia needs a locally elected school board. As Mayor, anyone I would nominate to the SRC would support its dissolution.
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neutral
   - Agree
   - Strongly Agree

3. The Mayor's Office will be committed to transparency and public participation in its work relating to the school district.
People tend to get distracted by the public vs. charter debate. Our sole focus needs to be on creating school environments – public and charter – that foster positive educational outcomes for all students. Currently, there are too many public and charter schools where performance is mediocre at best and a disservice is being done to kids. This cannot continue. In order to provide every child in Philadelphia with a quality education, the City needs to have fully-functioning, high-performing school in every neighborhood.

The School Reform Commission (SRC) currently has responsibility for managing the Philadelphia School District. After decades of failing Philadelphia students, it is evident that a shift must be made in the role of the SRC. Initially, I believe the Mayor should appoint three SRC board members, while the Governor should appoint the two remaining board members. This enables lines of accountability to be maintained with the City and State and aligns the interests of the Superintendent and the governing authority. Most importantly, I believe that the SRC should function as a regulator rather than as an operator. The SRC’s core responsibility should be clear and unequivocal: ensuring that no school in the City of Philadelphia – public or charter – is ineffective and enforcing change when needed.

Community and Poverty

As reported by the Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia is the poorest large city in America, with a deep poverty rate almost twice the national average. Public Citizens for Youth and Children state that eighty-four percent of children in the district are low-income.

A community school is both an academically rigorous public school and set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. The result is a neighborhood hub that brings together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities.

1. Community schools that offer wraparound services from certified providers should be the model for the Philadelphia public school system.

2. Poverty is the number one driver of poor school performance.
I support the concept of keeping public schools public and using the community concept to create community schools. In order to fix what ails the Philadelphia public school system, it will be necessary to have the support of all stakeholders – City government, teachers, families and communities. Children should have access to a quality education, preferably in their neighborhood.

I also believe that the City can better leverage the services and resources of other City departments (i.e., Department of Behavioral Health, Department of Human Services, Parks and Recreation) for the benefit of our schools.

Thank you for participating. We all win when people talk about schools, so we look forward to continuing the conversation about education in Philadelphia.
Responses from Anthony Williams

Teacher Action Group’s
2015 Education Final Exam

Please circle your opinion on the statements below. We encourage you to explain your answer in the space below.

Funding

While Governor Wolf has proposed increased funding to education, much uncertainty still remains for Philadelphia schools. While much of the problem lies with Harrisburg’s inability to create a fair funding formula, the city of Philadelphia must look to contribute. According to the Philadelphia Public School Notebook, Philadelphia only contributes 30% of the District’s budget -- significantly lower than neighboring municipalities and even lower than some of the poorest areas in the state.

Many of us live in Philadelphia and understand the trouble with raising taxes. As parents, teachers, librarians, and students, we want to know if Philadelphia’s next Mayor will consider any and all options for funding our schools.

1. At the city level, excellent school funding requires politicians revisiting tax abatements, PILOTS (Payments in Lieu of Taxes), and increasing the city’s contribution to the Philadelphia public schools.

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

2. Although schools will always need to adapt, fully funded education is a Constitutional and moral right. Funding for basic needs should never be predicated upon "reforms".

Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

Fully funded public education is a constitutional right at the state level, but not at the federal level. Indeed, schools are our most important asset and we must find the local resources to fund them.

First, I will accelerate efforts to collect delinquent property taxes that in turn will go directly to the School District by effectively using outside counsel. In the first four months of 2014, the city collected over $45M in delinquent property taxes, and cut the number of tax-delinquent properties by about 30,000 – a 25 percent reduction. Per law, the City can collect 100% of delinquent taxes through using outside counsel. By shifting more accounts to outside counsel, the City can use its limited resources to focus on selling properties on behalf of the Land Bank, which will lead to increased property tax revenue
for schools. The City can also focus on strengthening existing tax collection to deter new delinquent accounts, and increase School District revenue immediately.

Second, I will convene the largest tax-exempt landholders in Philadelphia to quantify their current financial and non-financial contributions to the School District versus what their tax burden would be. Using this data, we can push for a fair but necessary multi-year plan to begin “payments and services in lieu of taxes.” As Mayor, I will insist that these institutions partner with the city agencies and the School District to identify reasonable ways to give every child access to an equal educational opportunity.

Third, I will partner with City Council to unlock the value of city-owned assets like PGW and the Airport through public-private partnerships and joint ventures that create dedicated revenue streams to reduce pension obligations. This will free up general fund dollars for public education in a sustainable way.

Finally, I will work with City Council to increase the share of local property taxes for schools. Currently, 55 percent of property taxes is allocated to schools. I will propose increasing it to 60 percent, which is estimated to garner between $60M-$75M in annual revenue.

**Testing**

Research by the Council of the Great City Schools revealed that between pre-K and 12th grade, students take 113 standardized tests on average. The National Education Policy Center promotes the consensus that "standardized tests are ineffective and even counterproductive when used to drive educational reform." Moreover, the NEPC found that No Child Left Behind and its associated "test-driven accountability policies" have not closed the achievement gap for low-income students and children of color.

Standardized test preparation further narrows school curriculum: the American Federation of Teachers concluded that in high-stakes testing grades, students can waste up to 110 hours per year on test preparation activities, often at the expense of art, music, and the creative arts.

**1. High-stakes testing is absorbing too many resources, including teacher time, learning time, and real dollars from schools in high-poverty areas. Testing should be reduced and not used to compare resource-starved schools against their wealthier counterparts.**

- Strongly **Disagree**
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

**2. Parents and students have the right to opt-out of High Stakes Tests without fear of reprisal or intimidation or loss of opportunity. Teachers have the right to educate students and families of their right to opt out.**

- Strongly **Disagree**
- Disagree
- Neutral
- **Agree**
- Strongly Agree
Tests serve many purposes – they show progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and help professionals reach competencies in their careers. It is important that we know what areas our students are succeeding in and where they need more support. Furthermore, every single civil rights organization is for these high stakes tests. They support them because they understand the important role data shows in identifying where systems fail poor and minority students, thus calling attention to the problem and forcing officials to solve them. While I believe the test should not be the end game, I do believe they serve a very important role in helping shape and refine how we educate our students.

**Stability and Equity**

Since 2013, the school district has closed 24 public schools in Philadelphia. 6,200 students were uprooted, and many left the district altogether. Families at Steele Elementary and Muñoz-Marin were thrust into tumultuous charter-public battles. The SRC unilaterally canceled the teachers’ contract, knowing the threat of work-stoppage was real.

School district officials account that for every student that leaves a public school in the city to attend a charter school, the school district loses $7,000. The financial and structural chaos push many families out of the city.

1. **The "zero sum game" in Philadelphia is destructive; Philadelphia should abstain from charter conversions or closings until a fair and equitable funding system is in place.**

   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2. **School choice starts with great neighborhood schools able to serve all students.**

   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3. **Strong schools need strong teachers; teachers should be supported with fair treatment at the bargaining table, and deserve the right to organize no matter what type of school in which they work.**

   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

   It is important that every child has access to a high quality school no matter where they live. However, it is unfair to tell parents to wait for a quality school while we attempt to work out a deal in Harrisburg and City Hall, particularly when we have charter providers with a proven record of success. I support higher salaries for all teachers, and will insist on a school culture and climate that treats teachers as professionals and public servants. As the son of a retired public school teacher, this is a priority for me.

**Accountability**
Research by the Philadelphia City Controller (as reported by the Philadelphia Inquirer) reported that “there was a complete and total failure on the part of the Charter Office to monitor charter schools and hold them accountable for how they spend taxpayers’ dollars.” Work by outside groups have unearthed back-door dealings with organizations like The Boston Consulting Group throws doubt on the honesty of our school system. The SRC continues to spend massive amounts of taxpayer dollars without any oversight or accountability to the public.

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I believe in mayoral control of all public schools, and a board comprised of leading educators and parents with a stake in the future of the School District of Philadelphia. Based on my experiences in public service, I do not support an elected school board. In addition to reinstating the public charter reimbursement at the state level which I am championing, we certainly need more robust charter school governance and oversight as well. The School District charter school office has eight staff to oversee 90 charters, and lacked the capacity to handle the influx of new charter applications. I recently called for strengthening accountability and transparency under the law for charter schools, examining cost savings to effectively staff oversight activities, requiring annual reports and financial assessments, and clarifying the law’s vague language that led to lengthy and expensive legal challenges. Otherwise, we will continue to see crises and sudden school closures like the Walter D. Palmer charter school debacle, which left Philadelphians unemployed, and the School District and parents scrambling to find a place to provide their children with a thorough and efficient education - a right guaranteed by Pennsylvania’s constitution.

**Community and Poverty**

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A community school is both an academically rigorous public school and set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. The result is a neighborhood hub that brings together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities.

1. **Community schools that offer wraparound services from certified providers should be the model for the Philadelphia public school system.**

   Strongly Disagree  Disagree  Neutral  **Agree**  Strongly Agree

2. **Poverty is the number one driver of poor school performance.**

   Strongly **Disagree**  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

I believe that all students have the ability to learn no matter their race or family financial situation. Too often we look at poor kids and automatically count them out, lowering our expectations of them. My experiences have taught me that they have incredible determination, perseverance, and ingenuity. Their ability to learn is not predicated on their family's finances, and schools must be equipped with the learning supports for those who need individualized attention. When schools are used by the community during the evenings, weekends and the summer, they become a part of the fabric of that community. Crucial city services, such as mental health services, health evaluations, and adult education can also be provided at neighborhood schools, significantly increasing the accessibility of those services to community members. Additionally, schools can provide much needed space for after-school programs, youth sports, and enrichment programs for the entire community. Rental space fees, where appropriate, can also generate additional revenue for individual schools. As mayor, I will bring national best practices to Philadelphia around community anchors and neighborhood school partnerships, and partner with City Council, and the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors to provide comprehensive wrap-around and evidence--based supports for children, youth, and families.

*Thank you for participating. We all win when people talk about schools, so we look forward to continuing the conversation about education in Philadelphia.*