



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

CITY COUNCIL 11th DISTRICT CANDIDATE:

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1. Please articulate your overall vision for how young people will be supported from cradle to career in Baltimore City? What will be the priority strategies within your first four years in implementing this vision?

In the first year it is going to be a priority to work with existing service providers to provide vertical alignment of services from birth. One thing that we have lacked is a interactive database of services. With this database we can begin to identify gaps and address the actual need. Next we need to sure up funding for early education centers and Pre-K programs. An investment in early education is an investment in our City's and our Nation's, future. However, to see a return on our educational investment we are going to need to ensure that all families have access to high quality education throughout their formative years. This means securing funding at adequate levels for schools to provide students with the best possible educational experience. This also means establishing programs to recruit, maintain and develop highly effective educators and educational leaders.

As a city we need to build a rich and rigorous educational portfolio that provides students with access to afterschool programs, the arts, science and technology (beyond vex robots), internships, and entrepreneurial training. To do this I intend to reach out to the vast array of business that work with and in the city. These organizations can benefit as much as the students and families involved in programing developed as a joint venture between the city and private organizations. This is a model that has worked well in Baltimore City Schools Career and Technology Education Programs (CTE). Yet, many of these connections between the schools and students are teacher developed and facilitated. I believe that from City Hall programs and partnerships can be developed that have a broader reach to more students lasting from birth through career placement. Furthermore, an initiative that helps teachers have more time and resources to directly educate their students is long overdue.

Lastly, in my first year, safety will be major priority. Plans to provide services, education, and internships mean nothing if our children do not survive long enough to benefit. In my years I have seen an alarming number of students become victims of life changing, and occasionally life ending, crime. This must be addressed. Simply saying it is a City Schools problem will not solve the problem. The city has the resources to address the issue and I have the will to do so.

2. The Mayor and City Council do not currently have oversight authority over Baltimore City Public Schools. Would you advocate changing the current city/state partnership? What changes would you recommend to the overall administration/approach of public education in Baltimore City?



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The partnership between the state, the city, and Baltimore city schools needs to be reevaluated. There are issues within the school system that are being treated like a hot potato that no one wants to be stuck with. Unfortunately there are many points that are overlooked when the continual buck passing happens. My belief is we need to view the roles of these organizations as complementary. Maryland for years has touted education as major reason people to move here, start families, and business. Conversely, one of the difficulties in bringing new families into Baltimore has been the perception of a failing school system.

As an educator, I wholeheartedly believe that the leaders responsible for making policy and having oversight of schools should have educational experience. With former educators at the helm I know policies passed would be more effective and less of a hindrance to the educational process.

Baltimore City Leadership needs to take a more active role in funding Baltimore Schools. Well funded schools have a better shot at achieving success. The Schools and City's success are intertwined; better schools bring more families; more families bring more money to the City's coffers, more money in the City's budget should lead to more investment in schools. A better Baltimore leads to a stronger Maryland.

There needs to be a more symbiotic relationship between the schools and the city leadership; without it, Baltimore continues on it's current path. A better Baltimore requires us to bring the stakeholders to the table and hashing out arrangements that allow for our schools to flourish.

3. Eighty percent of a young person's life is spent outside of school, yet just 15% of Baltimore's school aged young people have access to afterschool programs. City leaders from around the country have begun to identify the importance of afterschool and summer programs as a critical support and have invested in citywide systems. Participation in out-of-school time opportunities boosts academics, attendances, school promotion and completion and it helps connects young people to caring adults. If elected, what would your approach be to addressing opportunities for youth beyond the school day and school year?

Afterschool programs molded and shaped my educational experience. As an educator I say without equivocation that afterschool and summer programs are essential to student success. There is a plethora of data that supports this. There are organizations around Baltimore that have been extremely successful in providing students with high quality programming. Programs like The McKim Center, UMB Cure, Merit, Beat the Streets and others have helped scores of students reach higher educational highs. The most remarkable thing about these programs is that they are not run by City Schools or by the City. What makes that important is that there are programs seeking and finding outside investment for programs that support our kids.

As our next City Councilman I intend to help these programs and others gain access to additional funders in the private sector. By finding ways to help programs that advocate for our students to meet with companies that share similar interest, already do business with the city and provide a mutual benefit. Partnering programs in tandem with city based funding yield a greater return on investment than funding the programs alone.



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4. In the 70's and 80's Baltimore operated around 130 recreation centers. That decreased by nearly half by the early 90's. Currently, Recreation & Parks operates just 40 recreation centers. There are ongoing questions about the available resources of the Department based on the lack of audits. Some of the recreation centers require major upgrades in both physical plant and programming. While a few new, modern recreation centers and being built, it is clear that many neighborhoods lack quality recreational opportunities. How would you change the trajectory of Recreation and Parks? How will you address the challenges of programming and physical plants?

I would change the trajectory of Recreation and Parks by changing the model on how it is run and funded. There has historically been a constant ebb and flow of support for funding Rec centers and physical plants and as a city we can't afford to allow this to continue. It has had resounding effects on our health as a city and in order to ensure better health and better students we need to keep them funded. To do this there needs to be a paradigm shift as to what the traditional recreational center is currently. Centers in the right model could be self sustaining.

Given the rise of maker centers it makes sense to utilize some of the center's capacity as a maker space. There are a multitude of upstarts in the area that could partner with the city to develop this concept. Taking this theme a step further, one could envision a partnership with Baltimore City Schools to develop collaborative engineering learning spaces. Currently there are 9 Baltimore City high schools that have Pre- Engineering programs and 11 middle schools, yet not one collaborative. These kinds of spaces can become a safe harbor and central meeting location for students to work on projects together. Now consider that with adults or seniors. The possibilities are endless.

Imagine a situation where the local colleges and universities that offered marketing, management, and hospitality programs had an opportunity to intern for the city running and managing these centers. We as a city could utilize their collective, creative, unbridled intelligence to develop programming that is both attractive and self sustaining.

Parks and Recreational centers have been the keystone of the bridge between a youth's present and their future. There is a direct correlation between the decrease in access to clean and safe recreational centers and youth participation in criminal activity. The youth need a safe place to explore their creativity and release energy.

5. Young people want jobs and they are natural entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, youth unemployment is at an all time high and young people are denied the experiences and skills they need to be prepared to enter the workforce. If elected, what will be your approach to youth employment and entrepreneurship? How will you partner with Higher Education and Industry?



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As a Career and Technology Education Department chair it has been my responsibility to ensure students receive career and college readiness training. I have helped start clubs, students start businesses and ensure students and families increase earning potential. My students have businesses building, selling, and or fixing tech devices I want to increase this throughout the schools.

Again the CTE Programs throughout the city work. They have been around for decades students have learned cosmetology, culinary arts, plumbing, carpentry, masonry, computer programming, engineering and dozens of other programs. They have provided students and families access to solid unionized jobs as well as access to scores of college programs.

Unfortunately both the City and the State have been failing these programs. A collective failure to adequately fund these programs has severely limited their ability to succeed. To slow the downward trajectory in the last few years I have worked closely with UMBC, UMB, Morgan and JHU to ensure students a pathway into both colleges and careers. I have reached out to companies to develop partnerships that have not only secured funding for programs but placed students in jobs that pay a living wage. I will do this for more students if given the opportunity.

6. The resilient young people of Baltimore City experience trauma every day. They are both witness to and victims of violence. They have very real reasons to feel stressed and afraid. A growing body of research recognizes the importance of understanding and implementing trauma informed care within schools, community services, social services, and law enforcement. What approaches will you take, if elected, to implement trauma-informed-care and/or restorative practices in the public sectors?

With the recent uprising in murder and other violent acts around the city, trauma informed care has become more important than we could have previously imagined. It has become obvious in the classroom, on the street and even on social media that there are many people that need help finding a path to recovering from trauma.

I believe our efforts should begin with getting the word out about trauma, what it can do and what to do about it. There are many people who have yet to hear about Trauma Informed Care and even less that know how to utilize the proper support services. We as a community would serve ourselves best if we learned how to recognize signs of post-traumatic stress and how to respond to someone properly.

I suggest mandatory training for the people involved with our most public spaces. Police, Educators and Public Transit Operators could all benefit from training; getting these people trained properly could ultimately keep our public spaces safe. This in turn, spreads the reach of safe spaces that can include and support trauma survivors.

Lastly, people need to know where to find support. We need to clearly identify and advertise where our citizens can receive help. I don't want our students and neighbors receiving help after they get in trouble, by then they may have already created more trauma survivors. I want the city to become more



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proactive. I would develop an interactive database of clinicians, organizations and human service agencies that support and empower trauma survivors.

7. *In 2014, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings Blake, with the support of City Council, established one of the strictest youth curfew laws in the nation and advocated for year round curfew centers. Proponents of the curfew centers thought they were a good strategy to keep kids safe and to connect young people and their families to services. Opponents feared the curfew enforcement would further strain police community relations and disproportionately target young people of color. Questions remain about the actual utilization of the curfew centers and whether or not the “Youth Connection Centers” serve their intended purpose. If you are elected, what would your position on Curfew and Curfew Centers be? How would you build more positive interactions between youth and law enforcement?*

I think the current curfew practice, is in fact furthering the strain between police and youth. As a teacher and a coach I know the youth have mixed reviews about this program's success and even its worth. They often tell me the only people that get stopped are the kids that weren't causing problems. My students shared that the problem kids would never get caught because where they are causing problems no one would ever see them; especially a patrol officer.

While I cannot personally confirm that to be the case, it is the perception of the curfew by the youth that concerns me. I believe the efforts would be more effective in a bifurcated approach of using social workers to find the mitigating factors that lead the youth out to the streets in the first place and safe places for youth to congregate. Some cities have seen success from opening 24 hour access to centers for youth to study, converse, and/or play sports. There are many programs that we can replicate that harness the creative energy our youth must release. Any place that detains a child must be found to be absolutely necessary and I haven't found any evidence to curfew centers being worth the investment.

8. *The parents and families of young people are often left out of the equation when we are seeking solutions. Family and community engagement requires long term, sustained efforts to build trust and offer authentic opportunities for families to have a voice and feel supported. The Community School strategy has been shown to increase family and community engagement and improve school climate and culture. The city funded community school strategy is currently operating in 50 schools out of 180. Do you think every school should be a community school? How would you expand the strategy?*

Every school should have programs that relate to their community's needs but it's not feasible nor efficient for every school to be a community school. Many of our schools share buildings and thus a duplication of services could lead to much confusion and dilute the positive interactions that the community may have with the school. We would do well to assign communities to their nearest schools and invest in providing vital services in each of those schools.



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Developing and maintaining an interactive database is crucial to communities knowing and using the vital services. These databases should be easily accessible for students and families. Also, there must be regular gatherings of stakeholders and providers to continually assess the needs of the community and update the database.

By developing a targeted approach and utilizing appropriate technology to maintain and distribute the most up to date resources the community school system will be infinitely more efficient.

9. *The Baltimore City Health Department provides chilling statistics in its 2014 Health Disparities Report. Factors of race, gender, economics, and zip code can all be determining factors for a short and painful life, and the trajectories begin even before birth. Given what we know now about what works, how will you approach making sure every child has the opportunity to grow up to become a healthy adult?*

To grow, an organism requires access to proper nutrients and space in which to expand. Too many of our neighborhoods are still food deserts and most options to be productive and grow are stunted by lack of adequate environment.

Access to healthy foods will be my highest priority because it precedes any health intervention or education. We need more community gardens and greenspaces throughout the city, and we need to invest in local coops to help provide fresh foods in all of our neighborhoods.

As a board member of the UMB Cure prog I have directly influenced increasing health participation rates in low income families. Access to health-based education in the community changes some of the practices we have that harm ourselves and others. Practicing prevention can lead to a healthier and more beautiful Baltimore. Increasing programs like UMB Cure and Bon Secours Health Empowerment Zone will be a major focus of mine, these programs lead to our students being more career and college ready as well as potential breakthroughs in problems that plague Baltimore. This is Baltimore studying Baltimore to become a Better Baltimore.

After the Affordable Care Act being put into motion, there are still gaps in care. I plan to find ways to fill those gaps. I would like to see more health centers spread throughout the city. Access for some of our city's residents needs to be more than just an insurance plan, but also a place that is closer to where they live.

Access to healthy foods, affordable healthcare and health-based education has been the fight of this generation. And I plan to do all I can to help as we Grow, Live and Work together.

10. *The bright green footprints painted on Baltimore City sidewalks are supposed to denote safe walking passageways for children to get to school. However well intentioned, the reality is that in many neighborhoods there are no safe passageways, and green footprints cut through active drug and gang territory. With schools of choice, some older students are traveling more than 2 hours both*



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morning and evening on unreliable and sometime unsafe public transportation. What will you do when elected to make sure young people can make it to school every day safely?

As a teacher this has been at the center of our students attendance and performance issues. It is difficult to explain to people the particular challenges some of my students face. Its interesting to think that some people would expect children to walk to the bus stop through neighborhoods that they (the adult) would not. Furthermore, these students are asked to do this at hours that many times are as early as 5:30 to 6am to get to class by 8 am. Not to mention how long the return trip may take in the afternoon. Then to add insult to injury if the bus is full at one of their many transfers the student then gets to school late. Those students are met with school rules on attendance that leave teachers with few options and the student with one; leave earlier. As a teacher I am frustrated; because I know these students are handicapped by the three to four hour commute time they have daily, and they are constantly asked to perform on the same level their car driven counterparts are.

That's just the tip of the iceberg when considering the students that walk the entire way to school. It is a wonderful thing that we have crossing guards near our elementary and and middle schools. However we need to find ways to get guard like supports on various pathways to schools. In some cities the safe path program was augmented by veterans that volunteer their time to stand along the pathways to ensure their safety. Sometimes it more about the visible deterrent that an actual authority figure. Studying the successes and finding ways to adapt them for our needs will be first on my agenda.

To that end we must reevaluate and renegotiate how students travel. While they have a right to choose a school to attend, what zipcode they live in shouldn't determine whether their path is safe or not. Without a functional partnership between elected officials, police and the community we won't be able to ensure our children's safety and as a parent and teacher this is priority #1. Constant communication between the community, elected officials and police is the only way for us to Grow, Live and Work productively together.