



## CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

### CITY COUNCIL 12<sup>th</sup> DISTRICT CANDIDATE: RASHAD STATON

***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?***

As an educator for the last 5 years I am reminded daily how important education is in relation to cradle to career pipeline. In the first two years of my administration I will strongly advocate for increase funding and the allocation of an increased budget for our educational systems in Baltimore, including public school, charter schools, community schools, trade schools, and early childhood education programs. To combat much of the issues that afflict the City of Baltimore, we must first bring reform to our educational institutions and programming that we offer to our youth, millennials, and others that seek education for a better future. Out of school time programming must be restored and properly funded and supported by our school administrators and elected officials. Recreational centers must undergo revitalization and redevelopment and provide a safe haven for our youth, millennials, residents, and others that seek recreational and educational assistance. Our high schools must transition to “college readiness” and cultivate scholars to be prepared to obtain higher education.

***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?***

This is a serious issue that must be addressed. There is a lack of accountability and support coming from our elected officials because they no longer have oversight over the Baltimore City Public Schools. When our Mayor in the past had oversight of BPCS, Baltimore was known as a “City That Reads”, we have lost focus of providing an efficient and proper education to our youth. We must include the Mayor and City Council as overseeing authorities of our schools, so that constituents can know who to address, when we fail our youth by continuing to allow them to enter failing schools.

***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?***

I am a strong advocate for out of school time and after school programming. Within the last four years, I worked and partnered with four individual out of school time (OST) and after school programs, because I have a passion for helping to develop and cultivate young minds to achieve scholastic excellence and motivate them to use education as a gateway to achieving their dreams. OST provides many resources and youth developmental programming and skills that are often not accessible to our scholars during regular school hours. Having outside partnerships and programs for after school programs gives



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opportunities to other like-minded individuals as myself to reach and educate the youth on a more personable level, offering many of them 1 on 1 tutoring, assistance, and coaching to kids are in need of such help. OST and after school programming often provide STEM, art, and music program and courses that has been omitted from their schools because of the lack of funding. I will advocate for increased OST and after school programming because I know for certain that these programs offer a safe haven for our scholars to be fed, educated, mentored, and coached, all of which, used to be provided by our recreational centers.

***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?***

It is certain that our Recreation and Parks require major upgrades in programming, physical plant and infrastructure. Recreational programming and opportunities that Rec & Parks offer to the community is a vital aspect of community development, healthy life choices, and creative development for both children and adults. Closing down our recreational centers must come to an immediate stop because the underlying consequences are placed on the livelihood of our youth and adults who often occupy and utilize such spaces for their personal and professional growth. In order to create opportunities, we must properly fund, and support the sustainability of Recreation and Parks that often provide the accessibility and exposure to people in the community. Knowing the City's plan for new community and aquatic network facilities, I think the issue may be addressed in the very near future if development and the proper funding continues as plan. The City has appropriated \$49 million to build and/or renovate 5 new community center and 1 outdoor park pool, with an additional capital of \$136 million in fitness, wellness, community centers, pools, and athletic fields. This would add over 299,000 sq ft of new recreation space and increase number of indoor pools from 3 to 9. Program improvements to expand fitness classes and activities for all ages and summer camps, expand recreation staffing and operating hours. Nonetheless my purpose would be to see fit that these projected developmental ideas are actually implemented within the next 10 years despite the funding coming from garage sales or not.

***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?***

Young people need jobs but most importantly young people need the opportunities and the proper training and education to prepare them for a job and career. To address this issue, I think it would be wise to create both middle and high schools that offer trades in the business and entrepreneurship. Soon to be adults and tax paying citizens, our young people should allowed the opportunity to know how to create jobs for themselves that are sustainable. Recent studies, have shown that millennials are natural entrepreneurs and have the likelihood and mindset of wanting to be their own boss. So we must



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accommodate such demand and help to cultivate these future entrepreneurs. Besides implementing and starting public schools that offer entrepreneurial classes and workshop during regular school time, we must also continue such support and educational opportunities in higher education. With Baltimore having a large amount of public and private colleges and universities, I am advocating that each college has its own entrepreneurial incubator, and offer entrepreneurial workshops to both student and non-students that are interesting in starting their own business.

***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?***

Each school should have full time social worker on staff to work alongside guidance counselors. Trauma and therapeutic specialists who are easily accessible to the youth should be housed within the school. Also I believe that each educator should be trained in conflict resolution and taught meditation to instruct their own scholars in times of high stress level and discomfort. Restorative procedures should be practiced from a top down approach stemming from the principal and school administrators until it reaches and influence their scholars. Positive reinforcement is always better.

***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?***

There are many programs that's already in existence that helps foster a better relationship between youth and law enforcement, one in particular being The Inner Harbor Project. Such organizations are staples within the City that bring school age youth to the table to address the disconnection between the police, business owners, and youth who all so often have dispelling perspectives of one another. I would advocate for such programs to be expanded to each pocket of the city and especially in high areas that often are inflicted with disgruntled police interaction. We must as a City begin to reopen our PAL Center, which offered recreational programming and resources to the community and showed our officers in other roles beside enforcing the laws and criminalizing someone.

***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?***



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As mentioned before in previous questions, I am a strong advocate for community schools. I think that each remaining public school in Baltimore City should transition and be supported in becoming community schools. Community schools offer much to the student experience that often is void and not available at other public schools because of the lack of funding or partnerships. Community schools are strong components of utilizing outside partnerships and organizational programming to offer resources to both scholars, parents, and resident of the neighboring community. Education is not singular but should be addressed holistically and that's what community schools offer.

***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?***

Growing to become a healthy adult first start at birth. The City of Baltimore must support and provide resources that focus on healthy prenatal care. Early childhood education is next. Daycare, Pre K, and Kindergarten education must be fully funded and accessible to each and every community in Baltimore City. Elementary schools must provide healthy food choices and advocate to minimize the snack and unhealthy food choices. Middle school must instruct and provide programs, workshops, or instruction on conflict resolution, conflict, mediation, and problem solving skills. High Schools should be a place where scholars are being molded and cultivated to live a healthy and impactful life immediately following their graduation. To ensure a healthy adulthood, young adults must have a vision and understand their purpose in life, and such awakening should be cultivated inside the school with educators and professional that are skilled to get someone career and job ready. Civic engagement and civic duties should be taught on a collegiate level.

***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 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 everyday safely?***

I think Baltimore City must look into ways to create separate transportation to school age scholars to get to and from school each day. Its very alarming that majority of our scholars must take public transportation daily to get to and from school. This is a public safety issue and should be addressed as such. I am advocate of utilizing our yellow buses to transport our scholars of all ages to their schools. Yellow buses should not be utilized for just particular students but for all, because accessibility to our schools should not be a determinant of whether our scholars are able and prepared to receive a proper education., so they can learn, grow and thrive.