



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT CANDIDATE: SHARON BLACK, UNAFFILIATED

<http://www.baltimorecampaignforpeoplespower.org/>

- 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?***

The cradle to career and 21st century Schools process has already started the first phase in the Park Heights Community under the Community Schools/INSPIRE Strategy managed by the Family League of Baltimore in partnership with the Park Heights Renaissance. I have and will continue to seek public and private partnerships that will be of benefit to the youth in the community. I'm a firm believer that our youth will aspire to reach their God-given potential if they can see that there is a system in place to support them. The number one way we can dramatically improve our youngest citizens' life potential is with quality early childhood education. The best practices, meetings, forums, and dialogue around early childhood development readiness with local leaders, educators, parents and community members must continue. Conversations must include afterschool learning and postsecondary success. Building a strong network and tracking system is critical and a continuum of services that include health, social and economic support. All community service providers must take responsibility for student outcomes to break the negative cycle into a positive. Every recreation/community center is open for ongoing engagement and community associations have built a coalition. Finally, to address blight elimination, efforts by the Board of Estimates have started, for developer to apply for the RFQ for the major redevelopment area. Many of the pieces are in place, and I will continue to work with all community partnerships and constituents in helping to move forward. A thriving senior center is active and plays a role in the total process as well.

- 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?***

I would be in favor of exploring changes that will bring about substantive change to a system that has not yielded the best results in terms of proving out youth with a quality education that prepares them to compete on a global stage and equally important, prepare them to be good citizens. I would also support/discuss the idea of a partially elected school board. I would continue to support organizations like your, that advocates for strong City and State legislation for the betterment of our Youth.

- 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***



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

people to caring adults. If elected, what would your approach be to addressing opportunities for youth beyond the school day and school year?

My term in office has been focused on and continues, ensuring that our youth are engaged in afterschool enrichment programs that augment classroom learning, and provides a safe environment for academic and social interaction.

- 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 am fortunate that several of the recreation centers in District 6 are connected to schools which provide a smooth transition from the classroom to the recreation room. Many are private partnership, like, with the Boys and Girls Club. I also have a center that has been through a multi-million dollar renovation and set to open this spring of 2016. And while it is great to have recreation facilities, the other challenge is to identify programming that is of value, and reinforces/augments classroom instruction. Community engagement must participate in the programming process. One example: The Callow Hill Aquatic Center (Rec. & Parks property) is on the campus of the Pimlico Elem. revitalization efforts and the architects have included it in the physical plans, but now efforts must be made to incorporate programming with the new school. Communication, cooperation, and consideration are the key, and community engagement / partnerships within the 21st Century plans are a must.

- 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?***

I will continue to support programs that pique the entrepreneurial interests of our youth. I plan to reach out to our local businesses to explore ways to offer onsite observations, shadowing, and other mentoring opportunities to our youth. I have been a strong supporter of the Baltimore Youth Works program; I employ a student from my district to work in my office each summer. Park Heights held its first successful Annual Youth Entrepreneur & Arts Festival (Ages 12-23) last summer with Project PAYE. Also, a new anchor tenant at the old MAGNA Center is now occupied by the Jane Adams Resource Center which offers a variety of training with an emphasis on manufacturing training. The Park Heights Renaissance also hires many youth works workers for summer experiences throughout the community.

- 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***



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

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?

I will continue to work with the existing outreach efforts that are provided throughout the Baltimore City School System. Additionally, I will work with community health outreach centers such as the Park Heights Community Health Alliance (PHCHA), and in anchor in the community, Sinai Hospital/Lifebridge to explore ways to integrate their community outreach services into the community to have more impact in creating positive quality of life outcomes.

- 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?***

When this idea was first introduced, I held a successful meeting, at the request of the community group, to get more detail information on process and implementation. With regard to the curfew centers, I would support the continued operation of them in an effort to keep our youth shielded from the crime that might await them in the streets. It should be noted, however, that the number of youth that are taken to these curfew centers is statically down, significantly. In building more positive interaction between youth and law enforcement, I would start by saying that I am a firm believer in community policing where officers get out of their cars and walk the communities in which they serve. The officers in my district routinely attend community meetings and participate in events throughout the community. It is my hope that we continue to provide opportunities where the interactions between police and our youth are not adversarial. I will continue to support programs such as the Park heights Safe Streets program that has extremely successful in reducing crime in the Park Heights community and work to get expansion of boundaries.

- 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?***

As a former educator, I understand how important parental engagement and strong support services are to helping our children succeed in school. Strategic approaches of a community school, should be implemented in schools that are not totally community schools. All schools should have mechanisms in



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

place, to promote student success. **How would you expand the strategy?** I represent a District that is diverse in many ways; economically, health, and racially. I have independent, faith based, and charter schools. Many of these schools must come out of their “silos” and work together with nearby public/community schools, because at the end of the day, it’s about breaking the barriers that help All students to achieve successfully. I can report that some have started, with outside activity community partnerships. I co-sponsored an educational forum at a public school to help inform and explain the community school strategy and 21st century school construction and revitalization process which has begun in my district. A faith based school/intuition was present and is participating.

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?*

I represent an area that has experienced decades of neglect and disinvestment. City, State, and private partnerships have and continue to pave the way for an improved future. A professional organization was established to work directly with the community to implement educational, health, recreation, employment and public safety services to the families. Addressing the human service needs of our disproportionate effect on minority and low-income youth is a huge beginning. I understand that these conditions may have lifelong effects, starting in childhood and even prenatal period. I’m excited to report that some of these services have been put in place throughout parts of the health disparities zip code, in which I represent. Examples are; a very successful charter school has added the first of its kind in the country, Health Clinic, “RALES” in the school building. For children, the burden of illness is measured in missed school days and loss of physical activity. Chronic absenteeism in early years can also be a predictor of school drop-out and academic failure rates. Another charter school is partnering to help address the food dessert aspect. They partnered with a community health alliance and working on urban agriculture and environmental projects.

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?*

My record will show that I’ve been a strong advocate for making sure the physical aspects of the community ensure public safety (i.e. providing pedestrian friendly sidewalks, paved streets, properly pruned trees, and making sure vacant homes are boarded up). I’ve also advocated on behalf of my constituents to make sure that crossing guards are in place at schools, and that school bus pickups are close to where the children live, and that for students who walk to school, that there is a safe passage to and from school. I am presently working with parents, high schools and DOT Traffic Division to implement a pilot Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Program to improve safety conditions and accessibility for students arriving and departing school grounds.