



Mayoral Candidates Respond to The Kids Agenda

How will you, as Mayor, ensure that Philadelphia is a city where we have the courage to heal systemic rifts that disproportionately harm children of color?

HELEN GYM

I am running for Mayor because I am a proven fighter who has taken on healing systemic racism and the flawed policies that keep it in place – our under-resourced public schools, an eviction crisis, inhumane conditions for young people in the juvenile welfare and justice system, persistent poverty and violence – and delivered solutions that improve people’s lives and are national models of success.

I ran for public office after two decades of community organizing work changing the political landscape for issues long neglected and overlooked. I wasn’t going to accept a status quo of broken politics; I needed to change the limits of what was possible to win. In less than two terms, I helped end a state takeover of our public schools and started a \$500 million infrastructure campaign that gave clean water, air conditioning, and lead, asbestos and mold removal to thousands of children. I built the most successful eviction prevention program in the nation that slashed evictions by almost two-thirds in one of the highest evicting cities in the nation. I wrote the country’s most expansive Fair Workweek law for advance schedules, built a new Department of Labor to enforce labor laws, and supported unionization efforts at museums and non-profits as well as Starbucks. I led the charge to reform the city’s 10-year tax abatement, and I will continue to lead the city toward common-sense taxation policies that grow our city and make sure corporate entities and wealthy individuals pay their fair share.

I am running to finish the job I started in communities more than two decades ago: to build a city where prosperity is shared among all of us, not just a privileged few; a city where lifelong residents can afford to stay, and where others will want to come. I am meeting the violence crisis head-on. America needs its justice leaders to be both visible and successful in bringing forward real solutions – including mental health mobile crisis units, safe routes for children to and from school, fully opening up public spaces like libraries and recreation centers to be safe havens for youth, and targeted interventions towards those most likely to be harmed or to harm others.

I am the only mayoral candidate who will prioritize our public schools and has a plan to deliver the stable and quality school that every child in every neighborhood needs. I will focus government resources to expand Black and Brown businesses, and ensure our city is in service to small and local businesses, emerging industries, our labor force, and diverse entrepreneurs – not lobbyists. I will rebuild the infrastructure of our city with good union jobs and tackle the climate crisis.

CHERELLE PARKER

I am where I am because my family and community believed in the power of education. My undergraduate degree is in education, and my first job after college was as a teacher. And I am committed to ensuring that every child in Philadelphia has an opportunity to use education and our schools as a tool to do whatever they want.

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But we cannot ignore that Philadelphia is one of the most segregated cities in America. This has been true for generations, and the divide in equity was always far from closing. But the struggles and the challenges of the pandemic shone a light on these disparities, and only increased the size of the rift. And as the pandemic receded, we were left with even greater systemic challenges that we must face.

This is why I support the creation of quality seats in state-of-the-art buildings to have a world-class education system in the city of Philadelphia. This includes both District-run and charter-run schools. And I support holding failing schools accountable. It is in the creation of good seats, irrespective of school-type that we start to create true equity.

But we can't get there if there is a battle between charters and traditional public schools. To bridge this gap, I will lean on my intergovernmental experience to insist that the state legislature reinstate the Charter School Reimbursement line-item that was deleted by the Corbett administration in 2011. Removing this reimbursement that refunded the School District of Philadelphia for students lost to charter schools pitted public schools against charter schools unnecessarily by leaving public school no way to defray the overhead and stranded costs that remained the same despite smaller enrollments. Reinstating this will grow the pot of funds and allow for more opportunity for Philadelphia's students no matter what type of school they attend.

Additionally, with my call for schools to open earlier and close later, so children of every background have the opportunity to participate in enrichment programs, and older children have a chance to get job skills and college preparatory training like those offered in suburban and private schools.

REBECCA RHYNHART

The next mayor needs to pursue a long-term transformation of our school system to create the high-quality education that all of Philadelphia's students deserve, focusing on correcting the racial injustices and disinvestment of the past and present so that Philadelphia's Black and brown children can grow and thrive here.

The places where kids go to learn, play, and create need to be accessible and safe. The School District of Philadelphia is responsible for ensuring that every school is one where students are supported and can learn. Schools need to be clean, healthy spaces. I will appoint school board members who are in lockstep with my vision for this long-term transformation, who put children first, and who will listen to school-based staff. I will ensure that students and families have all the support staff they need – social workers, counselors, school nurses, ESL teachers, reading specialists and special ed teachers. Parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, and libraries must expand hours and programs. We will need to work hard to ensure the city fills all its open positions with competent and caring adults.

In short, our goal should be for SDP schools to look like the best suburban schools in the collar counties around Philadelphia. As mayor, I will fight to ensure that Harrisburg follows through on its responsibility to provide the funds necessary to make this happen. I will also ensure that our city's resources are spent on their highest purpose to support these efforts.

A Note from The Kids Campaign: Responses are as of March 27, 2023. Warren Bloom Sr., Amen Brown, Jeff Brown, Allan Domb, and David Oh did not respond to the candidate questionnaire. James DeLeon responded late and did not directly respond to each and every question.