

Baltimore Arts Education Initiative
Candidate Questionnaire

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1. Why are you running for the Board of Education? If elected, what will be your priorities? Is there a particular issue that motivates you to serve?

This is more than just a campaign for office. It is more than just a single position to make a single person's ideas heard.

This is a movement of people. As I stand in the shadow of this great city and communities the families the people who inhabit such a rich potential it becomes inherent upon me to help guide the totality of all of us for a better future.

The three main points that motivate me to run our first and foremost **community, communication, and conception.**

Education in and of itself is a function of the community. The distribution of knowledge is as important as to breath that we take. As social entities we found the need to communicate in our most basic form. If it were no more than to say this is where the game roams or the seed should be planted, the sharing of this knowledge was essential to our survival. We call this sharing education. The most effective way of sharing this knowledge is through communication. We need to share ideas our visions and our methodologies to be able to thrive.

We need to be able to conceive a purpose, a vision and a specific and manageable goal.

To summarize this in a phrase we have come to a point where I find that I am tired of the foolishness. Aren't you?

For close to thirty years' three decades,' I have dedicated myself to the education system here in Baltimore and have had the opportunity to look at it globally.

I have been a teacher yes, a manager, and a communicator for all this time. I have often said there are three occupational hazards to being a great educator; number one is to be crucified. We have crucified educators by blaming them from everything from the frustration that manifests itself in violence in our streets to the inability to function in a competitive world. These things are task and efforts that must be shared by a broad range of stakeholders. I am tired of the foolishness of looking to pinpoint blame instead of seeking a solution to these problems. We have seen the disrespect of our education systems not only in the media, but spilling forth from our very own mouth's.

We have a cultural change to make, and this takes time, work and a new seed to be planted. I only pray that I can effectively carry the seeds to the soil in which it can survive.

The Second occupational hazard is to drink your own poison and the third is to be crucified by people drinking their own poison.

Yes, I said I have been an educator for close to thirty years but even longer I have been a student, a citizen, a parent and have occupied all three positions of a key stakeholder. The wisdom that I have garnered not only through the challenges but also in observing and having touched the beauty prospering in this environment, impels me to seek this office.

2. When you were a student, what was your experience with the arts? How does that experience inform your vision for board service?

Let me first state that the position of being a student does not begin or end with K-12 education. However, our focus with Baltimore City Public Schools is indeed what transpires in this brief aspect of our lives.

As far back as I can remember I have not only been cradled by the arts but inspired and it is the root of the logic and wisdom with which I operate in my day today existence.

As far back as I remember I carried a small notebook, something to write on and something to write with. I remember sitting on a ledge overlooking the park and reading Siddhartha and numerous other folks. Yes, I played hooky from school, but where was I found when I played hooky? I was either in the central library of the Enoch Pratt Free Library or at the Baltimore Museum of Art absorbing the knowledge and inspiration of artists from around the world.

My typical junior high school days were spent not only in civic activities but also deeply involved in the sciences and also the thoughts and ideas that flourished around me not only from my instructors but from the books and the beauty of the arts that surrounded me.

I remember having a particularly good boy soprano whereas I was invited to sing at many assemblies, and be truthful, I've looked in every gutter in Baltimore City and since my voice changed have yet to find that sing voice again. But it stuck with me. People were sure that I would become a scientist. I went to special programs to study oceanography and astronomy both in junior high and high.

When I entered Morgan State University, I passed all of the College Level Entrance Program exams and was deemed having enough knowledge to forgo any of the basic undergraduate classes in the sciences. Ms. Ruth Brett our counselor wanted me to be well-rounded, so they placed me in a graduate level organic and qual chemistry class. I thought I was well on the way to become the next Cousteau or Einstein, but what fascinated me was a formula and equation that was so elusive that no scientist in the world have been able to calculate its influence. So, after a long matriculation I finally graduated from Morgan state University with a degree in theater arts. This allowed me to walk a mile in somebody else's shoes, to see through somebody else's eyes to hear from somebody else's ears. It was the arts.

Now in my senior years I find myself informed greatly by the song that I hear, by the sights that I see, by the emotion that I feel through my contact in the arts.

Still a student, I grow every second, every moment that I listen to a Coletrain/ Hodges, every moment that I look at a Dali or a van Gogh, every time I direct a play or act in the show, every time I pick up a Camus or Cullen, or here the sweet strains of Mya Angelo, every time I listen to a flowing political speech or rhythmic sermon. I grow.

How do I relax? I listen to my music, play my guitar my cello, my bass, or my keyboard, or I create the fantasies of stage. Now I have not forgotten the technical aspects of my life in the interim. I've recently, just in the last weekend stage managed the Baltimore Jazz Alliances Jazz Fest.

Maybe I speak too much but, I say all this to say, I am fully swaddled in the warm embrace of the beauty of the methodologies of communication of all aspects of our existence through the arts.

- 3. In 1994 the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 13A. 04.16) established requirements for fine arts education (dance, music, theater, and visual arts) every year for students K-8 and one credit of a fine arts discipline for graduation from high school. In 2017 the Maryland State Board of Education, following a review that included opportunities for public comment at locations throughout Maryland, reaffirmed the COMAR Arts regulations, adding media arts as a discipline, and strengthening requirements for sequential study at all levels. You can read the regulations here: <http://mdrules.elaws.us/comar/13a.04.16.01> Baltimore City Public Schools adopted the [2017 Fine Arts Strategic Plan](#) to move towards compliance with COMAR. How will you support the Fine Arts Plan, if elected?**

After a review of both documents, I fully agree with the objectives. Resources need to be dedicated to the development of measurable curricular goals. It will be one of my primary foci, to make sure that any plan that is instituted in Baltimore City Public Schools is inclusive of these objectives. Curricular planning and smart goals need to be spelled out in detail. A panel should be formed for this specific purpose. Given the diversity of modalities of our population of scholars there must be a mandate for implementation of an aspect of these goals in any and all curricular. The absence of this particular matrix should be reason to discredit any plan for implementation and scholarship development. This plan while specific to scholars should also be expanded in the inclusion of community development or service-learning hours. As we do with the graduation requirement of having a certain number of community-based participation, we should also set aside a portion of that or add to it some level of goal achievement that encompasses the arts.

- 4. In an effort to provide principals flexibility to meet school and community needs, the Baltimore City Public School district adopted a site-based management model giving major budget and scheduling decision-making to principals. While there are benefits to this structure, when there is a lack of oversight site-based**

management results in great inequities, especially in regard to access to arts education. If elected, how will you address inequities across the district?

As of now, principals have the flexibility of inclusion or exclusion of arts curriculum as a whole or in part in their over all programming. This should be a mandated portion of their operation. While at the same time we are developing new schools and institutions we cannot leave out this important aspect of development. We need to hold not only our developers but also our operations with an eye toward the inclusion of these arts mandates.

Twenty-first century schools need to include laboratories for development. We all too often include laboratories for technical development, and negate the laboratories for artistic development. This is a trend that needs to be halted. I have personally seen the degradation of arts laboratories including theaters and music facilities and art supplies and athletic platforms that do not include dance and motion expression. The inclusion of these collaborative efforts and laboratories with those people who are experienced to manage them will create a stronger culture and climate for the totality of our community.

5. **According to Maryland Citizens for the Arts, the arts and cultural economy has an annual economic impact of \$828.7 million statewide and provides a multitude of viable career opportunities. As of School Year 2020-21, less than half of the district's high schools offered a sequential college and career learning pathway in any arts discipline. Not only does this hamper a student's ability to learn an art form and pursue the arts after high school, but it also denies students the opportunity for arts-related scholarships and opportunities. If elected, how will you support equitable access to college and career pathways in the arts?**

I would not only support this, but I would champion a structure close to those structures used for CTE or a full incorporation of arts curricula in Career Training Education.

6. **What is the connection between the arts and social and emotional learning?**

while I think I've stated this in the tone of my previous statements, social emotional learning, in which I have been trained, is dependent upon several aspects. Let's take the social aspect first. Arts and of itself is a social endeavor. Even if we take the quote isolated artists there exists three levels at its core of collaborative learning. There is the communicator or artist, the medium by which they choose to express themselves, and the audience or receiver of the information in that they are trying to share. We constantly gauge ourselves on our ability to understand how to coalesce these three aspects. As pertaining to the emotional aspect, it is basic to our core to be able to express ourselves to others. Whether it is the cry of a baby in a crib or the grown of an elder nursing those aspects of age, we need others to know of our existence and about our experiences in this world. We cannot afford to isolate ourselves from each other. If anything, that this recent worldwide crisis has taught us it is the minefield that lays before us in the state of isolation. Yes, we have found ways to move her around certain

pitfalls, but we have not diminished them, we have not erased them, we have not overcome the residual effects of isolationism. As if we remember, we hungered for just the basic human contact. I have long said that the arts are the keys to our civilization. We're not talking about great empires but the quiet civilization that we find in a family, and a colleague, a friend, or the voices within our own souls.

7. Would you support a school system policy designed to set standards and procedures for the development of an arts education program in BCPS that would provide for more equitable arts education access?

It is funny that we derive the model for our education system is from both not only the industrial age which creates a matrix, but also from the age of Enlightenment that is truly developed on a basis of elitism. In the very name we say public schools. This denotes in for equality across the board. For too long have the Arts been relegated to those who can afford it even within the public-school environment we find certain neighborhoods where "the luxury" of the arts is enjoyed. But the arts are not just a luxury it is the lifeblood of our community of our people and our vision for a stronger tomorrow.