



ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

JUNIOR BOARD

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.
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2009 Candidate Survey

July 23, 2009

Dear Candidate:

The Junior Board of Advocates for Children of New York is pleased to provide you with this candidate questionnaire to help the public better understand how, if elected, you will shape policy to secure quality and equal education services for all students. With the results of this survey, we hope to assist the public in making informed decisions in this year's elections.

Once we receive your answers, we will compile the data and release it publicly to the citizens of the City of New York. We appreciate your candor about these issues, which will have considerable importance during your tenure. We also applaud your desire to serve the people of New York.

Please take a few minutes to review and answer the following questions and return the completed questionnaire to us by **August 7, 2009**.

You may email the completed survey to Nila Sengupta at nsengupta@advocatesforchildren.org. You can also fax us at 212-947-9790 or mail to the address above.

If you have any questions, please contact Ernie Grigg at 646-244-9568.

Best Regards,

Ernie Grigg
Advocates for Children Junior Board

Candidate Survey – Education Policy

Candidate Information

Candidate Name: Alex T. Zablocki

Contact Name: Alex Zablocki

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General Opinions

Please respond to each of the statements below by double clicking on box that most closely represents your opinion of the statements.

1. All children who are residents of New York City should be guaranteed access to pre-kindergarten.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. Parents who do not speak English should receive copies of school report cards in their native language and have translators for parent teacher conferences.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

3. The Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education should have experience in education leadership.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4. New schools should be required to serve a diversity of students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, from the day they open.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

5. Education outcomes will not improve significantly until class sizes are reduced.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

6. School safety agents should report to principals, not the NYPD.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. A protocol should be established between the Department of Education and NYPD which would require the NYPD to take certain steps – such as issuing warnings and referring to intervention services – before arresting students for minor, school-related incidents, such as graffiti, school fights, or disorderly conduct.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

8. The Department of Education should publicly release data showing why large numbers of students were "discharged" from the school system

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. A student should not be promoted from 8th grade to high school without achieving at or above Proficiency Level 2 on the State Language Arts and State Mathematics Assessments and pass all core academic subjects (Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies).

- Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Neither Agree nor Disagree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Comments

Please provide a short answer to each of the questions below by typing in the grey field. If printing a hard copy, please provide answers on a separate page.

10. What are your three overall education priorities that you would ideally accomplish during your tenure in office. How will you go about achieving them?

The Public Advocate has a unique responsibility in city government - to be a voice for the voiceless and a watchdog over the Mayor and City Council.

Besides advocating against any funding cuts for education by the Mayor and City Council, my three overall education priorities that I can accomplish as your Public Advocate would be:

1. To work with the Department of Education to create more gifted and talented programs as well as special needs services for parents and students in all five boroughs
2. To work with the private sector to help fund educational (art and music) and physical education initiatives in public schools
3. As ex-officio member of the Board of Trustees at the Museum of the City of New York, I would like to work with the museum board to create a local history curriculum for fifth grade students to learn more about their community, local history and New York City history.

11. As principals are given more autonomy and held more accountable for test scores and graduation rates, how do you create incentives to include and invest in populations such as students with disabilities, over-age and under-credited students, and English Language Learners?

Principals, administrators and teachers should be held to the same standards when it comes to these populations as well. Since I believe these populations deserve the same services, if not more, from school officials, as well as the same, if not more, attention, principals should be held accountable for their test scores and graduation rates equally with the rest of the school population. The Department of Education should break down the data amongst students with disabilities, over-age and under-credited students and students speaking English as a second language to determine if a school needs more

resources to allow these students to achieve the same success rate (and improved success rate) as their peers.

12. What do you consider to be the main challenges facing District 75, the Citywide district for students with the most severe special needs?

The main challenges facing District 75 today are the lack of specialized training for low incidence populations amongst new teachers, the inaccessibility of related service providers during the school day and the rise in this population causing the unavailability of space (handicap accessible) in our present buildings.

13. With the rise in family homelessness, the Department of Homeless Services can only place approximately 75% of families in the borough in which they were last living. The Department of Education does not provide inter-borough busing, which effectively forces thousands of children, especially the younger ones, to leave their home schools and transfer mid-year to schools in another borough. What would you do to improve this situation?

The City should provide inter-borough busing, K-6 and provide full fare MetroCards to the remaining school population. If there are direct routes, via public transportation, for these children (K-6) they should have the option, with a parent supervisor, of getting a MetroCard for both the parent and child, to allow them to go to and from the school and their home.

Obviously going through multiple boroughs will not only be costly, but time consuming and impractical (i.e. traveling between the Bronx and Staten Island). With this said, the Department of Homeless Services should better coordinate housing need and housing placement with the needs of children attending public school, to best accommodate the family and most importantly, help the most vulnerable, younger students, during a difficult time for their families.

14. What should the City do to prepare struggling students to meet the tougher Regents standards for graduation that went into effect this year?

The Department of Education should be allocating additional funds and resources to provide classes before and after school to better prepare students for higher graduation requirements.

15. When a school is to be permanently closed, what is the proper role for the school's parents in the decision?

A parent representative should be part of the planning committee for the new school. The Chancellor makes the decision to permanently close schools based on test scores which do not always include annual progress made by the school, as a whole. Parents should have a say in not only the decision to close a school, but also ways to make a school

function better, if kept open and be a part of the decision for the planning for a new school.

16. How will you accommodate the growing number of children entering kindergarten in public schools?

As Public Advocate, you do not have direct jurisdiction over the current school seat shortage across the city. With that said, as Public Advocate I would: 1. Ensure new school seats are provided on all levels, K-12, across the city; 2. Investigate where the need for new seats are the highest and report this information to the City Council and the Mayor; 3. Have a trained staff that could assist parents with issues regarding kindergarten placement for their children; 4. Work with the Department of Education to improve the availability of seats for kindergarten students within ones community. I would use the Universal Pre-K program as a model as well for better preparation. Teachers would have to have the same licensing criteria as the Department of Education teachers and follow the same curriculum.

17. Do you think that charter schools play an important role in New York City? Why or why not?

Charter Schools can play an important role if the community wants a specialized school, money isn't taken out of the school budget to fund these schools, the schools are held to high standards and are accountable and the charter school provides a unique opportunity for a better, more specialized education, than a current school does not provide. Charter schools shouldn't be used to replace new programs and initiatives within our current schools.

Problems with Charter Schools include: 1. They don't allow parent or staff participation; 2. They potentially take the highest achievers out of regular schools; 3. They remove underachievers or students with discipline problems; 4. They can take much needed resources away from public schools; 5. They could potentially create two unequal school systems. That is why Charter Schools need more accountability – but are worth discussing as viable options to traditional public schools.

Charter schools have benefits as well, like private funding, better programs than traditional schools, more flexibility when it comes to teaching and the potential for smaller class size. These are things we should be trying to achieve in traditional public schools as well.

Finally, I firmly believe Charter Schools should not take any seats away from our current public schools and should be housed separately, in separate spaces.

Additional Comments

Please use the space below to add any additional comments about education policy.

It is important that we recognize the role parents can play and do play in their child's education. With the recent legislation passed to extend the Mayor's control of our public schools, we must be mindful of the fact that education is about children and the future of New York, not politics. As a product of the New York City public school system, having attended PS 23 in Richmond Town, SI, IS 75, Huguenot, SI and Susan Wagner High School, Seaview, SI, I know firsthand what the old school system was like and I saw how our schools can often times forget the most vulnerable students. As the son of a 40-year veteran of the public school system, I must also say that teachers, now more than ever, need more control over what is taught in our classrooms and more of a say on how to better educate children – not corporate leaders. As Public Advocate, improving education will be one of my top priorities and I will have a dedicated staff to assist parents AND teachers with problems they are having with the Department of Education.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out our survey. Please return the completed survey by **August 7** to

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