

CANDIDATE FORUM

hosted by

OUR SCHOOLS. OUR EXCELLENCE!
Demanding Excellence in Education**Candidate: Cliff Lewis, District 5****On Candidate Backgrounds, Roles and Responsibilities of the Board and Education Issues and Needs**

1. What do you see as the role of the school board and how has your background prepared you to fulfill this role? I see the role of the School Board and its members as the governing body of our school system, tasked with the responsibilities of: evaluating the superintendent, review and approval of the budget one that should be as "actuarially accurate" as possible and to formulate and/or review new and existing policies as they impact student achievement. My experiences as an entrepreneur, executive director of a non-profit for "at risk" youth and eleven years as Parental Engagement Coordinator in the East Baton Rouge System has prepared and qualifies me to represent the families and students of District 5.

2. What are the top two challenges facing public education in our city? The lack of equitable resources in all schools; the seemingly lack of leadership on the board to address the systemic failure and underperformance of schools, Primarily, those schools located in north Baton Rouge.

3. What are two needs that you consider priority for the school board to address? Budget concerns and teacher and staff compensation

4. The School Board only has authority as whole. What skills or traits do you possess that will contribute to the effective operation of the board as a whole? I'm a highly motivated professional with excellent interpersonal skills, with a history of demonstrated leadership ability. During my tenure in the East Baton Rouge School system I've earned a reputation among my colleagues as being someone who's interactions with the community has yields positive results. In Ten (10) years as a Parental Engagement Coordinator, in district schools as well as charter schools, I've gained valuable experience. I have working knowledge of principles and policies related to Title 1 educational budgets. It's my desire, to bring my life experiences, skills and passion for innovative learning to the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board

5. What responsibilities, if any, should school systems assume for addressing societal challenges such as poverty, homelessness, racial disparities and mental health? School systems have a far greater responsibility for addressing societal challenges because those challenges directly impede any positive educational behavior or outcomes. Neither administrators nor teachers are trained to deal with all of societal ills, however, a collaborative effort with community-based organizations that are would help to solidify what's needed to formulate policy procedures addressing such.

CANDIDATE FORUM

hosted by

OUR SCHOOLS... OUR EXCELLENCE!
Demanding Excellence in Education**Candidate: Cliff Lewis, District 5****On Specific Issues of Interest to the Urban Congress on African- American Males, Moms of Black Boys United for Social Change, and The Power Coalition**

6. Currently of the 18,000 students sent to alternative education sites, 85% of them are African American and 66% of them are male. What is your opinion on the disparities that exist in our school system's alternative education and discipline practices? **In as much as all schools in the EBRP School System have their own policy governing discipline practices/alternative education, all**

policers should be reviewed by a Professional Educational Staff to determine which practices produce the most successful results that are non-punitive and more supportive of keeping students in school

7. Do you oppose or support zero tolerance policies that exclude children from the classroom? I have encouraged the supt and attorney to revisit these type policies. **Oppose**

8. If elected, what specific actions will you take to sport schools and school districts to refocus their resources and energy away from harsh discipline and toward restorative practices to address conflicts? **We should identify Best Practices Policies that have been successful in similar Urban School districts and adopt or modify or retrofit those ideas to address our specific discipline practices.**

9. Do you support or oppose increasing the presence of law enforcement officers in schools? **Support** Due to the level of violence (mass shooting) that has taken place in schools around the country, I believe the presence of law enforcement is needed. **However, their purpose must be clearly stated: they are not there to serve as discipline agents for the school. They intervene, only in incidents of criminal behavior that places the students and faculty in jeopardy.**

10. Do you oppose or support mandatory continuing implicit bias training and de-escalation training for educators and school resource officers? I support MANDATORY training in the area of "implicit bias" for educators as well as law enforcement officers who have been classified as resources officers. The United States Department of Justice defines School resource officers (SRO) as "sworn law enforcement officers responsible for safety and crime prevention in schools. Neither that definition, nor the fact that an individual may be a trained educator changes the fact the individuals take actions and make decisions in an unconscious manner grounded in their beliefs.

11. If elected, what specific actions will you take to support schools and school districts to provide the trainings necessary to equip teachers to support a diverse student body? I will advocate for mandatory professional development in the area of "Diversity Training" designed to create school climates where a instructors are trained to recognized and embrace the diversity of it student body as well as faculty in order to create a school climates where inspiration, creativity, curiosity and

12. Support for high quality early childhood is driven by research studies showing that children who participate in such programs can do vastly better in school and in their careers later in life. Do you oppose or support placing a tax proposition on the ballot that would pay for "universal early childhood education" in Baton Rouge from birth to age four? **Support**

CANDIDATE FORUM

hosted by

OUR SCHOOLS. OUR EXCELLENCE!
Demanding Excellence in Education**Candidate: Cliff Lewis, District 5**

13. If elected, what specific actions will you take to ensure "universal early childhood education tax proposition is placed on the ballot? I will lead the charge to form coalitions throughout the city and parish to create a GREATER awareness of importance of early childhood education and its long term effects on our education system and the quality of life for those most impacted by the absence of early child hood education .

14. Racism is perhaps the most elusive, penetrating, and permeating challenge in our society. Since racism is an institutional problem, it needs to be solved through institutional change. When we see that our institutions have shown that they can operate in a way that serves the needs of all people equitably it makes it possible to see that racism can be eliminated. Racism was built into our system, and anything that was built can be dismantled. We must see to it that our institutions rise to the challenge of solving racism. If elected, would you participate in Dialogue on Race Louisiana's Original Series, an important step in a journey toward enlightenment, understanding and the elimination of racism from our society? **Yes.**

15. Would you oppose or support a measure to require the school board and key school board system leadership to participate in the Dialogue on Race Original Series? **Support**

16. Do you believe it is necessary to examine the history curriculum to ensure the curriculum is reflective of "the people's history" as expressed by organizations such as the Zinn Education Project? **Yes.** This country, in my opinion is the greatest country on the face of the earth. We are comprised of people from across the globe. However, many of the contribution and sacrifices made by these "American" have gone unrecognized for too long. The Zin Education Project and other curricula like it are much needed.

17. If elected, would you oppose or support utilization of such educational resources? **Support**

18. What do you think is the role of the community in school system matters? **Schools are funded by tax dollar collected from citizens who make up our communities. Therefore, community input is paramount in all school matter**

19. The School Board has a policy that parent and community engagement must be a priority for schools in East Baton Rouge. What are some specific strategies that the board can do to support schools in the development and implementation of family engagement practices? **The school board should promote parent advocacy, genuinely address the challenge of building school-home, home-school partnerships, work to implement proactive communication strategies and encourage school leaders to develop a welcoming, inclusive school climate where parents are seen as partners in their children's education.**

20. What, if anything, do you believe the school board and school system, should be doing to address the increasing number of low performing schools in certain parts of our city? **School Board members should take the lead by looking at both high and low performing schools inside their districts. Engage leadership in both find ways to collaborate, understanding all CHILDREN have the capacity to learn. It is up to you us collective and individually to provide learning communities where all children are free to learn and express themselves regardless of a zip code.**

CANDIDATE FORUM

hosted by


MOBB UNITED
 MOMS OF BLACK BOYS UNITED
 FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

 OUR SCHOOLS. OUR EXCELLENCE!
 Demanding Excellence in Education
**Candidate: Cliff Lewis, District 5**

21. Do you support more local accountability for the use of ESSA funds in producing better education outcomes in struggling schools? More specifically, do you support the school system annually issuing an ESSA Report to the public that shows how ESSA funds were budgeted and spent, what outcomes were achieved with the use of those funds, and the extent to which achievement outcomes did or did not improve for African American males? **Yes**

22. Data shows there are significant disparities in key indicators of student success between African American males and other subgroups. These indicators include elementary and middle school achievement, high school graduation rates, ACT scores, Advanced Placements, TOPS awards, industry-based credentials, and school suspension and expulsions. What can the school system do to address these inequities? **Provide wrap around services that address these identified educational and social needs of African American males and other sub groups. Additionally, introduce more advance placement classes and advance placement instructors. Add ACT prep as a mandatory class and introduce classes designed for career track students from both groups. Additionally increase effort to recruit, hire and retain more African American Male instructors**

23. What specifically should our school system be doing to ensure that not only do more African-American males complete high school but that they are connected to postsecondary opportunities? **Provide exposure to postsecondary education opportunities. Investments in career education that focuses on 21st Century job indicators such as apprenticeship programs found in many of our local labor unions**

24. Eighty-two percent of EBR students qualify for free and reduced lunch due to their economic status. In a report released by Together Baton Rouge, in 2017, East Baton Rouge Parish sacrificed \$69.6M in property taxes due to Industrial Tax Exemption Programs (ITEP). \$28.1M of this revenue could have been allocated to the East Baton Rouge parish school district. Do you support or oppose ITEP? In its current form, I find it hard to fully support ITEP. I believe the recent changes instituted by the Governor signals a much needed change in the program.