

**CANDIDATE FORUM**

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Demanding Excellence in Education**Candidate: Tramelle Howard, District 3****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? The role of a school board is to be a governing body as it relates to School Policy and decision making. One of the biggest responsibilities of the School board is to hiring and firing of the Superintendent. School Board members also serves as Advocates for the

schools they represent. My experience in the classroom has prepared me to understand the needs of the people on the ground doing the work. My experience working for the Department of Education has prepared me to understand the policy side of things and know that there must be a representative voice on the board that is making decisions with students as the priority.

2. What are the top two challenges facing public education in our city? The top two challenges facing public education in our city are Graduation Rates/School Performance scores and equitable funding.

3. What are two needs that you consider priority for the school board to address? One of the needs that I believe is extremely alarming that the school board needs to address is the graduation rate of African American men within our community. Right now we are sitting right at the 50 percent mark, which means over half of the young African American men within our community are not equipped with the necessary tools to be successful in life. The school board also needs to address the accountability of leadership. Our current school board approved a contract extension of our current superintendent before school performance scores were even released. We must hold leadership accountable.

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 think representation matters. Given that the school board has authority as a whole there needs to be representation to represent the issues that many in our community face. For example, the graduation rate of African American men in our district is right at 50 percent, but currently there's not one African American man who sits on the school board. How can we address the issues in our community when all parties are not represented? Relationship building is also something that I pride myself on. I am able to build relationships with a diverse group of individuals from all sectors. Schools is the foundation for a functioning community. If you are educating people and setting them up for success you have a higher chance of building generational success. Schools should be focused on the whole child and whole community always.

5. What responsibilities, if any, should school systems assume for addressing societal challenges such as poverty, homelessness, racial disparities and mental health? [unanswered]

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 FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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**Candidate: Tramelle Howard, District 3****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? First and foremost, I believe the school to prison pipeline is a real thing. I believe that we are not focused on some of the issues [that]

are keynd the easiest way to not have to deal with it is just to send them away. I believe this practice at its core is just flawed. We have to spend more time and adequate more resources to dealing with the whole child and not just the child that shows up at 8:15 in the morning. I support more social workers in schools and mental health counselors in schools. I also would like for our district to think about uniform discipline proceedings. Schools are using suspensions as a way to get rid of kids and it's not right. I also support due process for all students and parents who are recommended for expulsion and suspension. (Meaning proper documentation)

7. Do you oppose or support zero tolerance policies that exclude children from the classroom?

I oppose zero tolerance policies that exclude children from the classroom. We have to still educate our youth even when they present challenges, our goals

8. If elected, what specific actions will you take to support schools and school districts to refocus their resources and energy away from harsh discipline and toward restorative practices to address conflicts? Being that I spent time in the classroom I know that restorative practices really work, but it takes buy in from all individuals involved in the process. As a school board member I will advocate for Restorative practices to ensure that we are using our resources to help keep kids in schools and even when they are not in school that they are still being educated. We just have to make it a priority and address this long standing issue.

9. Do you support or oppose increasing the presence of law enforcement officers in schools?

A school is just that a school. I'm not a fan of law enforcement being in schools and I oppose adding additional law enforcement. I strongly believe that every child deserves to go to a safe school and feel safe in school but law enforcement is not the only way to do this.

10. Do you oppose or support mandatory continuing implicit bias training and de-escalation training for educators and school resource officers? I support it.

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? We have to make these training a priority. We have to educate the people of this city and a lot of the children in this district are black and brown we must realize this and equip our professionals with the necessary tools to be successful. We have turned a blind eye to implicit bias in this city and we have to understand that it is a reality.

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**Candidate: Tramelle Howards, District 3**

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? I think there are other ways to cut down our budget to increase spending so that we can fund early childhood. I do believe that the people deserve the option to decide if they are willing to pay additional taxes to support such important program within our city.

13. If elected, what specific actions will you take to ensure "universal early childhood education tax proposition is placed on the ballot? [unanswered]

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?[unanswered]

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?[unanswered]

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? I believe it is necessary to have curriculum that is reflective if the students the curriculum serves. Culturally responsive teacher meant the world to me in my classroom so I know that as a district it would be beneficial to students.

17. If elected, would you oppose or support utilization of such educational resources? I would support resources being utilized for culturally responsive teaching.

18. What do you think is the role of the community in school system matters? The roles of the community in school is to be very engaged and make informed decisions as it relates to the school system. Community engagement matters and the best way for the community is to engage is by showing up at forums and meetings, engaging with elected officials and holding those elected officials accountable for the decisions they make.

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 support schools in the development and implementation of family engagement practices? The school board can create a council of students, parent's teacher, and community leaders to engage them in school board process. The school board should be holding forums and town halls to inform the community about issues, not just during voting time. Parents and Teachers should be a part of a transparent process that keeps them informed and engaged with the school system.

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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? *It starts with being aware and making these schools a priority. The system needs to make sure funding is equitable and ensure that programs are competitive and laying the framework for students to be successful.*

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? *I support transparency on all levels and specifically as it relates to the underserved population. I believe the public should be informed on all issues and situations occurring within the school system.*

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? *The school system needs representation that is concerned with this issues and make these issues a priority within our school system. We need to adapt programs that address the whole child and identify areas of concern for African American boys especially. I support collaboration with programs that specialize in the state of Black men and also other community groups that fight for the well-being of black men.*

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? *We should be having programming that prepares them for life after high school. We should be partnering with our local institutions and job arenas to make sure kids are coming out of school with both workforce options and college access options. We should be hosting district wide school fairs and career fairs.*

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? *ITEP is a truly controversial issue that I continue to learn more about. There is a place for business and schools to function together and business do what they need to do to reinvest back into schools. Recently Exxon just received a 13.1-million-dollar exemption as it relates to ITEP, how will they be reinvesting so of that money back into schools would be my question. It should be a marriage that works for both sides and students and schools is my priority. For so long business has been benefiting from this exemption, but no one else.*