

CPPS 2011 Seattle School Board Candidate Questionnaire – Martin-Morris

1. The Seattle Public Schools population is very diverse. Our student population is 57.3% non-white, 24% have an non-English speaking background, and 14% receive special education services. Also, 43.3% receive free and reduced price meals, which is a common measure of the number of families struggling with poverty. What have you done to familiarize yourself with the needs of such families and how are you prepared to serve them as a Board member?

Parts of this I understand from my own up bring. I watched my mother raise 8 children on public assistance. I understand the value of quality public education in breaking the cycle of poverty. To help with other communities, I am meeting with the elders and key communicators within our various communities to gain their prospective on key issues. In addition I visit schools and talk with the staff and students. They are always very direct in what they need to help their students.

2. What should board members and administrators should do to reach out to parents and enhance their participation in District planning and policy-making? How would you, as a board member, ensure that the district considers community input when making decisions?

There are a couple of ideas I have to make the work we do more visible and interactive. First, I would change the format of our committee meetings to allow more direct input from the community. Committee meetings are where the majority of the real work is done. Then I would hold committee meetings in the community to enable more people to participate. Additionally, I have begun reaching out to elders that represent various groups. There are many communities that rely on their elders for guidance and thus conversing with these leaders is the most effective way to communicate to their populations. Since elected to office I have maintained monthly community meetings to enable constituents to work directly with me on issues of concern and for me to communicate what I am doing as board member. Among current board members, my public meetings have been running the longest.

3. What are your top three priorities that would guide your decision-making as a board director and how would you build consensus to support your goals?

4. What are specific ways you would seek to improve underperforming schools in the next year?

Quality pre-school is the most proven way to help low-income students arrive in kindergarten with the literacy skills that are needed to assure academic success. I will continue to work closely with the mayor's Education Department and the district's Early Learning Department to close the gap before students arrive in Kindergarten. Our families in poverty need more opportunities to

achieve academic success. We need to work with our teachers on target strategies to help support individual student needs. We also need staffing flexibility in our schools to allow teachers to provide additional instruction in core areas when needed. Tools to provide for student achievement are pivotal; whether they be extended days for instruction, double periods, or Saturday school. But none of these things can be done without teachers' and community collaboration and in some cases dollars. At this time these funds are not coming from the state or the federal government.

5. What do you think the district should do to ensure that students who are working below grade level will get early and effective interventions that will bring them up to grade level quickly?

There are two things that are key to this work. First, quick identification of what the student needs. This can only be done by the classroom teacher. Second, access intervention that works. I would like to see us create a database of interventions that our teachers have access to. For example if you need an intervention for a 4th grade boys in computational math, there is a things that others have tried with success.

6. What would you do to ensure that students who perform above grade level have access to challenging and rigorous learning opportunities?

I would like to see students given the opportunity to advance in individual content areas where appropriate. In addition a more consistent approach in our schools for all of our ALO programs.

7. Regarding standardized tests: do you think our schools are spending too much time and money on them, not enough, or just right? Please explain your answer with specific examples.

The use of Measure of Academic Performance (MAP) is an important tool for both our teachers and our student in accessing student needs. I do not feel that we are spending too much time with this effort. The MAP has helped us identify under-represented students for advance learning. As we started this year, schools were given the option to only test twice a year. It is interesting that over 40 schools decided to stay with the three times a year schedule. This was an individual school decision and tells me that our schools see the value in the test. I support them and am will to pay for this assessment.

8. What do you think are the most effective specific strategies for closing the opportunity gap? Please provide examples of where you think the district is doing a good job of addressing

the problem (if any) and how the district could do better.

Reducing the opportunity gap that many of our students experience begins at the early stages of a student's education. Our best chance for closing the gap resides in the Pre-K to 2nd Grade. Many of the approaches are in place but have not been brought to scale. Pre-K is the key. Students who arrive into a kindergarten classroom already have an imbalance in preparation. As the beginning years progress these students are left behind and the gap widens. As a community we need to focus on providing pre-school for all students based on the skills needed for them to be successful. We also need better collaboration between our early learning teachers and primary school teachers.

9. How - if at all - would you advocate for enhanced student access to innovative and alternative programs such as language immersion, arts, Montessori instruction, or others?

I would like to see access to more programs in the district. But with our current financial situation it may be delayed. There is some opportunity with some of the new schools that we are opening to take advantage of the timing there. The most important thing is to talk with the community to see what it is that they want. Program placement should be done in collaboration with the community. In addition, we should make sure that we have pathways for students to follow in the upper grades.

10. Please give specific examples of ways you think our district could do a better job of teaching math and science, as well as preparing students for the job market demands for technical skills?

There is always room for improvement. The key is to make sure all of teachers have to tools and interventions to meet the needs of the students in the classroom. Parents also need to be informed as to what they can do to help their students and this is an area we can help.