

Candidate Response to PFT Education Platform

Candidate: Doug Oliver (D)

Office: Mayor



Overall Commitment to PFT Platform

(5 = Strongly Agree and Commit; 1 = Strongly Disagree):

Candidate's Agreement: 4

Responses to Individual Platform Components

(5 = Strongly Agree and Commit; 1 = Strongly Disagree)

1. Partnering with the State Legislature to implement a weighted funding formula, wherein factors such as poverty, special education needs, and English language learner status are considered when determining funding allotments for schools.

Candidate's Agreement: 5

Comments: *I wholeheartedly agree that the City of Philadelphia deserves and needs a full and fair funding formula that takes into consideration the educational needs and challenges of Philadelphia's students. Furthermore, I believe that the state should re-evaluate the charter school funding model, recognizing that the current formula creates additional financial challenges for local district schools.*

2. Working to find additional, recurring revenue from local sources that will help sustain our schools; and exploring options such as reducing or repealing tax abatements or tax breaks for the very wealthy.

Candidate's Agreement: 5

Comments: *For years, we have continued to fight for a full and fair funding formula from Harrisburg. At the same time, Harrisburg hasn't given us (Philadelphia) what is needed. In the meantime, we continue to push kids through an underfunded system, failing both the children and the collective good of the City at the same time.*

I believe that we should continue to apply pressure on Harrisburg for the funding formula we deserve, but as we do so, I think we should be prepared to make tough decisions to generate local, recurring and dedicated funding for our schools. And to the extent possible, I think these new revenue sources should be created without raising taxes, which makes the City uncompetitive on other fronts.

Ideas for that recurring, dedicated funding should include 1.) the consideration of PILOTS for colleges and universities and other non-profit entities that currently operate without paying taxes. 2.) selling City asset(s) using the proceeds for pension fund, freeing money that would be dedicated to schools. 3.) extending hours in key entertainment districts beyond 2am, dedicating new tax revenue

generated after that time to our schools. 4.) explore the idea of reducing or eliminating tax abatements.

These alternatives would stay in place until we get the funding formula that we need from Harrisburg at which point these other measures could be re-evaluated.

Note: I am not a privatization fan. I do not propose selling City assets because I like the idea, but rather only because we can't allow the school system to limp along as it has for far too long.

3. Supporting the dissolution of the School Reform Commission, and working with the PFT and community partners in creating a new, representative school board model for Philadelphia.

Candidate's Agreement: 3

Comments: I would prefer to see the School Reform Commission remain as a five member board but with three appointed by the Mayor and two by the Governor. This shift allows for more local control, while still keeping Harrisburg at the table. If we expect Harrisburg to play a critical part in funding our schools, then I think it's reasonable to allow them to have a seat at the table. We elect a Mayor, in part, because we trust him/her to make solid and appropriate appointments. If we do not like the appointments, we have a person we can hold accountable. Same holds true for the Governor. Also, in giving the Mayor three appointments, it allows for easier alignment of goals, aims and purposes for City Council, the Mayor, the Superintendent, the PFT and parents alike.

This is my personal opinion, but I am not opposed to other configurations. I would certainly be open to considering other ideas. This just gives a sense where my head is on the matter.

4. Collaborating as an ally to educators in Philadelphia: ensuring that they have access to necessary classroom tools and materials; and the ability to collectively bargain for better learning conditions for Philadelphia's students.

Candidate's Agreement: 5

Comments: Teachers cannot be blamed for the state of our schools. We have asked them not only to serve as teachers, but also as nurses, counselors, teachers' assistants and, unfortunately, as parents. If we expect teachers to be successful, we must give them the tools they need to be successful. I will be an ally for teachers. At the same time, I recognize that there are some truly underperforming teachers. They represent only a small minority of all of teachers, but I will fight as vigorously to remove them from the classroom as I will to support those that work hard every day.

5. Committing to working in partnership with the community to develop and implement 25 unionized community schools by 2019, with a long term goal of expanding on this number.

Candidate's Agreement: 5

Comments: *I envision a high performing school in every neighborhood across the City. I do not have a problem with the expansion of high performing charter schools, and so I CERTAINLY don't have a problem with expanding district schools that are high performing. The key factor is the performance of the school and working with principals, teachers, the SRC and parents to ensure that curriculum is appropriate, goals are fair and measurable and that kids are well served.*

6. Advocating for more charter school accountability; and recognition that charter funding has drained the traditional district schools and put neighborhood schools at odds with charters.

Candidate's Agreement: 5

Comments: *We know that both Charter Schools and District Schools perform at roughly the same level, proportionally. We also know that charter schools drain resources from district schools. While the challenge is there whether the charter school is high performing or not, the challenge is only exacerbated when the charter school is both draining resources AND not performing. For that reason, it is imperative that the SRC be able to prevent the operation of low performing charter schools and that requires robust level of accountability. I will advocate for strengthening oversight of charter schools and will work as an advocate with the State to reduce the time it takes to close a low performing charter /cyber school.*

7. Highlighting the negative impact high-stakes testing has on students (such as anxiety, elimination of the arts in the curriculum, loss of instructional time); and promoting policies that put an end to the current "test and punish" environment that links the fate of schools and educators to high-stakes standardized tests.

Candidate's Agreement: 5

Comments: *I believe that we spend too much time standardized testing our children, perhaps unnecessarily, particularly given the variety of backgrounds that our students come from, their unique needs and the negative impacts of such frequent standardized testing. Furthermore, there is ambiguity around the effectiveness of such standardized tests. There are other indicators of success that would both hold our teachers accountable for teaching, but also allow them to do their jobs in a way that is beneficial to students and their educational outcomes. What those actual standards are should be determined by a cross functional group including, educators, administrators, subject matter experts and elected officials.*

Additional Information on Issues and Priorities Rate the following priorities for your term in office:

Priority/Issue/Concern	H (high priority)	M (moderate priority)	L (low priority)	D (disagree)
Reduce class size		X		
Increase support personnel in schools	X			
Settlement of a fair contract that is good for Philadelphia's educators and students	X			
Mandate full time, unionized registered school nurses in every school	X			
Mandate full time, unionized counselors in every school		X		
Mandating of wraparound services in schools		X		
Attendance and graduation improvement initiatives	X			
Access to high quality technology and high speed internet access in every classroom	X			
Expansion of Pre-K eligibility and opportunity	X			
Elimination of teacher seniority			X	
Using taxpayer money to pay tuition for private and religious schools				X
Modifying or reducing pensions			X	

What are your top 3 legislative priorities for your term in office?

- 1.) Any enabling legislation that is needed to fully fund our schools.
- 2.) Create a more competitive tax structure to attract businesses to the City and incentivize hiring Philadelphians.
- 3.) Legislation that both encourages investment in neighborhoods while protecting those who live there.

Additional comments

With respect to [rating legislative priorities from High to Low], I felt limited in my ability to respond with only the choices given. I am happy to discuss the details of my choices when we meet.