

# Candidate Response to PFT Education Platform

Candidate: Anthony Hardy Williams (D)

Office: Mayor



## Overall Commitment to PFT Platform

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

**Candidate's Agreement: 5**

## 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:** Since I entered public service, I have consistently brought public school funding back to Philadelphia, and I am the only candidate in this race with the experience to work with Harrisburg to do it. Most recently, I led the fight to pass the cigarette tax increase bill, signed by a Republican governor and Republican-controlled state legislature, which has provided \$17M in funding for Philadelphia public schools so far. I fought Gov. Corbett when he tried to hold teachers hostage, and force \$100M in concessions from the PFT for a \$45M one-time state grant. The sales tax extension was my legislation, and it provides \$120M each year to the School District.

As mayor, I pledge to use my two decades of experience as a state legislator to fight for a fair, full, and flexible education funding formula in Harrisburg that takes into account Philadelphia's poverty rate, English language learners, special education population, and demographic changes over time. As a state senator, I supported the last funding formula and education increases proposed by Gov. Ed Rendell. As the second-ranking Democrat in the State Senate, I lead fights for more funding for Philadelphia schools. As mayor, I will be an effective partner, and an advocate for the PFT when it comes to working with Harrisburg to bring more funding back to Philadelphia's children and teachers.

**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:** Over the last several years, the City of Philadelphia increased its contribution to public schools by nearly \$400M through tax increases. As mayor, I will aggressively collect delinquent property taxes, free up dollars for public education by leveraging municipal assets to shore up the city's underfunded pension system, and raise additional property tax revenues by attracting businesses to the city. I am open to working with City Council and the PFT to advance other ideas that address our funding crisis at the local level.

**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: 5**

**Comments:** I believe in mayoral control of schools. The responsibility should be a local one. But before we work to dissolve it, we must address the issue of funding attached to the SRC. The challenge is that without increasing local taxes, nearly 60% of our education funding comes from the state. The primary issue is not who controls the school board, but the full funding of our education system. In partnership with City Council, we need to determine how to provide more city funding for public schools (see previous response), and partner with the Commonwealth without the state owning the governing process. The state has the constitutional responsibility to provide for education and it has not upheld that commitment. As mayor, I pledge to work closely with the PFT as partners on this. In terms of a local governance structure, I will always do what is in the best interest of Philadelphia's children and families first.

**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:** As the son of a former Philadelphia public school teacher, and the father of two daughters who graduated from Philadelphia public schools, I will insist on an integrated approach that centers on the child and parents, focuses on quality and outcomes, and values public school teachers as professionals and public servants. Teachers deserve to work in an environment that is safe, clean, and well-resourced. As mayor, I will fight for fair, full, and flexible funding from the state to increase resources for teachers, and I will elevate the discussion around supporting our teachers with all of the resources they need to achieve great outcomes for our kids. One explicit area in which the mayor can be an effective ally with teachers is with the District's School Redesign Initiative. Teachers should play a much more central role in how schools operate. We should trust and empower our teachers to take an active and engaged role in improving our public education system.

**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: 4**

**Comments:** As mayor, my goal will be to work in partnership with City Council to re-establish neighborhood schools as community anchors. This is a long-term process, but is absolutely necessary for rebuilding trust in the efficacy of our public education system. Parents must be willing to place their children in neighborhood schools because they provide a quality education in a safe, clean environment with excellent teachers, administrators, and staff. Schools can build upon existing community partnerships by utilizing unused space to engage parents, community groups, and deliver other city programs and services. The challenge is the cost of doing this. I look forward to working with the PFT and City Council to find funding for the implementation of the community school initiative.

**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:** I remain concerned about the School District's capacity to thoroughly review the new charter applications, and more importantly, its capacity to provide ongoing and vigorous oversight of public charter schools. Public charters, as all schools across the District, should be held to high standards. Recent news reports noted that the District's public charter office was overwhelmed by the demand, and that public charters are not receiving the oversight that taxpayers demand and families deserve.

The District's public charter office needs to be properly staffed. By contrast, the New York City Chancellor's office has an eight person staff to oversee its 70 public charters, while the School District has a six person staff to oversee nearly 90 public charters. The School District should increase the size of the public charter school office, focus its efforts on supporting, reforming, and ultimately closing under-performing public charter schools, and hold all schools - traditional and public charter - accountable for achieving successful student outcomes.

In 2011, I voted against Gov. Corbett's elimination of the \$220M charter reimbursement line item and it led to significant budget deficits for the School District. In my current position as state senator, I am working with Republicans to re-instate charter reimbursement funding and end the tension between neighborhood schools and public charters. As mayor, my vision is a great public school in every neighborhood, and I will aggressively protect and promote Philadelphia's public schools in Harrisburg.

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 the current culture of punishment associated with high-stakes testing is not beneficial for students, teachers, or schools. I agree that these policies cause the loss of valuable instruction time and student anxiety. Tests should be used to help guide instruction, determine what methods are working, and what interventions teachers can use to help students learn material. As mayor, I look forward to convening parents and teachers, and the School District to discuss the impacts of these tests, and elevate the discussion in Harrisburg and Washington D.C.*

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

<b>Priority/Issue/Concern</b>	<b>H</b> (high priority)	<b>M</b> (moderate priority)	<b>L</b> (low priority)	<b>D</b> (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	

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

**Mandate annual inspections for day care facilities**

**Department of Licenses and Inspections reform**

**Pass an operating/capital budget that increases Streets Department and infrastructure spending**

**Additional comments**

*My mother is a retired public school teacher, and my father was a lawyer and elected official. Growing up I learned two important values: the value of education, and the value of being independent.*

*Every mayoral candidate supports public charter schools. Every mayoral candidate supports more funding for Philadelphia's public schools. But I am the only candidate with the experience - working in Harrisburg with a Republican-controlled legislature - to secure more money for our kids, our teachers, and our public schools.*

*I will work hard for your vote, and I hope that you will support my candidacy.*