

# Candidate Response to PFT Education Platform

Candidate: Lynne Abraham (D)

Office: Mayor



## Overall Commitment to PFT Platform

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

**Candidate's Agreement: 5**

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## 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**

*We need to work with our Legislature to change the basics of the system in order to secure full, fair funding for Philadelphia students and students throughout the Commonwealth. If we are unable to change the basic system, we should endeavor to persuade the Legislature to increase Philadelphia's allotment for the very factors you have identified: poverty, special education needs and language needs.*

**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**

*I am committed to exploring ways to boost school funding through local sources and, at the same time, working to achieve efficient operational methods within the District to save money that may be used instead to fund the educational component of the budget. The more effectively our tax dollars are used, the less likely any increase in taxes will be. We have already received a tax increase on cigarettes for school funding; Philadelphia has made permanent a 1% sales tax dedicated to education, increased the School Real Estate Tax to 3.5 Mills@10.7M per mill; increased U & O taxes; and increased the City's annual contribution to the SRC from the City Budget.*

*Philadelphia is in need of a complete overhaul of business taxation to make Philadelphia more business-friendly and create jobs, grow the population and strengthen the tax base. Reduction of certain business and wage tax and increase in use and occupancy tax (which goes for schools) are worthy of consideration. Everything needs to be on the table. The whole system needs to be rationalized and simplified, and needless loopholes must be closed. While short- and long-term strategies are required, the ten-year tax abatement for rehab and new construction should be*

preserved as an important component of our economic development. Therefore, I would not support a repeal or diminution of the ten-year tax abatement. Attracting new residents counters the effect of the long-term outward migration of residents to the suburbs, especially millennials and others. The tax abatement stimulates economic development, generates tax receipts, spurs consumer spending, and enhances property tax revenue in the long-run, which benefits our schools.

**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**

The SRC should remain intact until the next Mayor has an opportunity to consult with Governor Wolf to determine, among other things, what are his plans to persuade the Legislature to enact a full, fair funding formula for our children. Whether, and when, this funding formula is available shall be crucial for setting our priorities. The other component is what the Governor and the Legislature will expect, or demand, from us to convince them that, in exchange for appropriate funding streams, we are capable of managing our funds properly. In any event, the Legislature may demand the continuation of the SRC in exchange for funding. While we may desire to return our schools to local control -- with a Board appointed by the Mayor -- a convocation of all stakeholders would be a useful exercise to determine the best way to proceed and who the members of that "representational" board might be.

**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**

b. I support working closely with our educators because they understand how our schools are operating now, and what is missing from the classroom. Everyone understands that teachers have had to pay for everyday school supplies and other necessities out of their own pockets in order to do their jobs. This is a public shame. Every school budget must include adequate money for supplies, tools, and classroom materials. Teachers should determine what is needed to teach children. I am a supporter of collective bargaining. Teachers' contracts must be respected.

**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**

I am fully committed to ensure that our schools are community-based, and I support our school staffs being unionized. I would need more information, including budgetary constraints that may exist, in determining the number of schools that should be developed by 2019.

**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**

*The SRC should judge current and future applicants and existing schools using the standards sets forth in the Charter School Law. A pragmatic approach is required. Each school must be judged on an individual basis. While some schools have displayed innovation and some promising models and meaningful academic improvements, many have been mismanaged, have poor academic outcomes and have been used by profiteers delivering substandard educational services. In any event, there is a fundamental question whether the School District can afford any new charters. We should proceed with caution in order to protect the public school system.*

**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**

*The heart of the American school system is teacher and local school leadership. Teachers must be free to practice their profession. A one-size-fits-all teaching philosophy is a disservice to students and teachers alike. Teachers must be given the flexibility to teach to the student and not to the test. Punishing teachers, students and schools based on standardized testing is inappropriate and counter-productive.*

**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?**

**They are:**

- 1. Full, fair funding for schools.**
- 2. Job creation.**
- 3. Public safety.**

**Additional comments**

*None. Your questionnaire was comprehensive. Thank you for providing me with an opportunity to respond.*