

# Candidate Response to PFT Education Platform

Candidate: James Kenney (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**

**Comments:** *It is absolutely vital that the state legislature implement a fair funding formula.*

*Philadelphia has the highest poverty rate of any big city in the country. It's unacceptable that that is not currently factored into how funding is allocated to our school district.*

*We also need a formula that properly accounts for charter schools to ensure that they get an appropriate amount of funding in relation to the services they actually provide without taking necessary resources away from district schools. As Mayor, I would lobby for full reimbursement to the district for charter costs, and ask for a full moratorium on charter expansion in Philadelphia until that reimbursement is restored and a complete review of the quality of existing charters is completed. I was also proud to join PCAPS in penning a letter to the SRC calling for a moratorium on charters this upcoming school year.*

**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:** *Philadelphia's taxes are some of the most regressive in the country and it has to change. As Mayor, I will work with Harrisburg to eliminate the Uniformity Clause of the Pennsylvania Constitution so that we can use the revenue generated from increased commercial property tax rates to ensure that our schools get the resources they need. I will also work to reduce wage and BIRT taxes to encourage job growth and an expansion of our tax base. In the long term, that model will also increase commercial development in Philadelphia, which will increase commercial property values and provide a more stable funding source for our schools that does not increase the burden*

on our working families.

As a City Councilmember I consistently voted to increase school funding when needed. In 2011, I supported a property tax rate increase and other appropriations that brought in \$53 million. In 2012, in addition to raising property taxes for a second straight year, I also held hearings in City Council to draw attention to the over \$71 million that the School District lost through failed Wall Street swap transactions, urging the City to sue the banks and recoup these fraudulent losses. In 2013, I voted to raise the cigarette tax, providing an additional \$90 million a year to the District. And finally, just last year I voted to make the 1% additional sales tax permanent, which gives the School District an additional \$120 million. My record is clear. I have stood up to provide the District more funding every year, and as Mayor I will continue to do everything I can to properly fund education in the City of Philadelphia.

**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:** As Mayor, I will work to make our schools financially stable so that Harrisburg has no reason to continue to saddle Philadelphia with the SRC. If the SRC does vote to disband itself, I would welcome the new school board as an opportunity for parents to hold their elected officials responsible for the quality of our schools. And until that happens, the financial stability of our schools will be my top priority in education.

**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**

I wholeheartedly support the right of teachers to collective bargaining, and I recognize -- as do the teachers -- that all parties need to work together to build a system that fits our budget, protects our teachers, and provides our students with a high-quality education.

As Mayor, I will increase coordination among the city's departments, as well as with non-profits and businesses, to ensure that our teachers have the resources they need and every neighborhood has a quality school at its centerpiece. As a councilman, I was proud to work with teachers to combat bullying. After violence broke out at South Philadelphia High School in 2009 between students of different races, I worked with community partners and school officials to teach tolerance, and the need to embrace people of different cultures. I also worked with the School District to arrange an opportunity for all students to see the film *Bully* to open their eyes on the effect their conduct can have on classmates.

**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:** *As I said in my announcement speech, I will make the development of community schools a top priority by working with educators to identify, align, and provide city services to support schools and develop them as centers of learning, support, and community in their neighborhoods. There are numerous resources that can be aligned to meet the needs of children and families and to strengthen schools as centers of their communities, including health and human services and educational and recreational resources. By supporting the physical, social and emotional needs of children, we can improve their chances of success both in and out of the classroom. Developing schools into centers of their communities will help strengthen neighborhoods and families. Furthermore, this collaboration will result in teachers being better supported in their jobs.*

*My administration will also make developing partnerships with community organizations, non-profits and businesses a priority. Smart partnerships will expand the resources and opportunities available to children and strengthen the learning environment, especially when it comes to after school programs. After school programs ensure our children are in a safe, supervised environment at an influential age, and they also encourage our students to develop healthy, productive academic, athletic or artistic interests. They also support parents who would otherwise be burdened with the cost of childcare after school or risk having their children get involved in criminal activity. Broader participation in schools from institutions will increase the connections to neighborhoods and help facilitate economic development.*

*Another area of focus will be expansion of the CTE program and other job skills programs for high schools students. I have worked personally with the amazing students and teachers of the Philly Hybrid X program that began at West Philadelphia High School, and their enthusiasm for the project and tremendous skills are truly inspiring. I have also spoken with administrators from South Philadelphia High School, who rave that CTE keeps students engaged and interested in coming to school every day. As Mayor I will work to expand and grow programs like this so that we are training students for the 21st Century, and giving some the extra reason they need to come to school instead of dropping out.*

**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:** *Our current charter school law is inherently flawed. The funding system neglects our district schools' fixed costs, and it overcompensates charter schools for special education services that they don't always provide. It was for that reason that I publicly opposed the Philadelphia School Partnerships' \$25 million donation to develop new charters, which ignores the District's fixed costs and covers a fraction of the nearly \$500 million required to enroll just 15,000 more students in charters.*

*As Mayor, I will work with our representatives in Harrisburg to push for a funding formula that accounts for charter schools and asks Harrisburg for full reimbursement for any expenses related to the establishment of a new charter school.*

*My administration will oppose unfettered expansion of charter schools and will work with the departments responsible for planning and economic development to make sure we have a long term approach to ensuring that every neighborhood has a strong community school in place as our first priority.*

*I will also establish more accountability through a collaboration between my administration and the District's oversight staff to monitor the finances and performance of charter schools. We will not promote failing charters or allow charter schools to grow in neighborhoods that already have high-quality public schools.*

**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:** *As Mayor, I will use my position to help highlight the failure of high-stakes tests to address the issues that our City's children face, including poverty and inadequate learning resources. We can champion a more limited role for tests, press district officials to limit the class time used for them and work to ensure that we're using testing to move the school district forward without putting an undue burden on our students and teachers. No child should be stigmatized for their entire educational career because they did not pass a test in 3rd grade, and no good teacher should be reprimanded for cultivating a stimulating learning environment that does not teach to test.*

**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?

1. Supporting the adoption of the community schools and a more aligned approach to delivering education and support to children.
2. Expanding Pre-K and early education.
3. Increasing our public school funding from Harrisburg through a fair funding formula and from the City by increasing revenue.

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## Additional comments

*As Mayor, I will work to make sure every neighborhood has a quality public school at the center of it's community. That means increasing resources and funding for our teachers, better coordinating our city departments to more efficiently and cost-effectively address school needs, creating new partnerships, and working with community organizations to create community schools that provide wraparound services to children and their parents.*

*I will also work to provide quality pre-k for all children in need. Children who attend quality pre-k programs are much more likely to be able to read at grade level by 3rd grade, graduate high school and attend college.*

*Because adequate resources are essential, I will work to ensure that our schools have sufficient funding. I will prioritize working with the state legislature and Governor Wolf for a fair funding formula that increases our District's funding, including ensuring that charter funding is addressed so that the existence of charter schools does not disadvantage district schools or the taxpayers. I will also work to help our schools identify more local resources, including appropriate and fair sources of funding and an expanded, aggressive effort by my administration to identify federal dollars and other grants to support these programs.*