

2021 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
City of Tuscaloosa
Office: Tuscaloosa City Board of Education, District 2

Candidate:
Deon Washington

1. What do you see as the top three issues facing the Tuscaloosa City School System? How should those issues be addressed?

The top three issues facing the Tuscaloosa City School System are a combination of equity and achievement, involvement, and accountability. The mission of the Tuscaloosa City Schools is to create and support a culture of high expectations for each and every student to achieve personal, academic and career excellence. The school system must work together with families and community agencies to ensure students are performing at or above standards. Achievement and equity should be addressed by school administrators and educators monitoring student progress, identifying areas of improvement, and advocating for the implementation of programs to provide equitable learning environments and outcomes for all students. Involvement is vital for student achievement. By creating teacher-parent committees to address student needs, we can foster more involvement, which leads to accountability. Accountability can be addressed in several ways. Proactive communication regarding issues involving students, parents, and educators is key. Punctuality in notifying parents of school activities, deadlines, fees, and opportunities for involvement in an efficient method to allow proper planning for maximum engagement. These issues must be addressed through collaborative efforts of all parties involved.

2. Significant community effort has been dedicated to develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan for the Tuscaloosa City School System. Do you support the implementation of this plan? If your answer is “yes,” why is it important to do so? If your answer is “no,” how would you change the plan?

As an educator I support the plan because it has the components needed to cultivate the “whole child” with opportunities for growth in all areas of learning. It is important that all parties involved be in unison to help the growth and maturation of all learners by:

- 1) Increasing reading and math proficiency to close the achievement gap.
- 2) Promoting student attendance
- 3) Hiring and retaining highly-qualified educators
- 4) Providing equitable learning environments for all students

3. What should be done to address schools labeled as “failing” by the Alabama Department of Education?

To address failing schools in Alabama, instruction must be data-driven. Educators must display and excellence in teaching and leadership practices, cultivate a culture of high expectations for our students, offer intensive tutoring and support services for students and their families, and provide innovative training for educators and leadership.

4. What efforts would you like to see to close the education “slide” students have seen from COVID-19 disruptions?

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I'd like to see policymakers, educators, shareholders, and community members working together to provide support to all students during this time, especially in reading and mathematics. We need to assess research, examine policy, and look at other models to understand potential policies and practices for mastery of student learning recovery. Ultimately, assess the data, curriculum, and instruction to guide support accommodations for all parties.

5. The Tuscaloosa region is expected to have a shortage of skilled labor in future years. What is the role of the Tuscaloosa City School System in helping address that shortage?

First, we need to remove the stigma associated with skilled labor. Educate students by offering a curriculum that addresses the needs of the current and future skilled skill labor careers. We need to partner with local skilled labor businesses to provide information and job opportunities to students. Also, strengthen the collaboration between TCTA and local technical college to cultivate an active and engaging partnership to provide more skilled labor dual-enrollment opportunities. In addition, the Tuscaloosa City School System can conduct job fairs that offer opportunities for employment for students interested in skilled labor. This will attract students interested in skilled labor, allowing them to engage with people in their desired labor fields.

6. What is your vision for the Tuscaloosa City School System in 10 years? How will you, in your role as an elected official, help make that vision a reality?

My vision for Tuscaloosa City Schools is to be the top school system in the state of Alabama and my role as an elected official I would lean on these 4 aspects to make it a reality:

- 1) Establish and aggressively promote goals pertaining to student achievement that result in positive outcomes for all students.
- 2) Fight for equitable educational opportunities, leadership, and resources throughout the Tuscaloosa City Schools System.
- 3) Increase community and parental involvement in cultivating lifelong learners, by education and leadership.
- 4) Ensure educators, students, administrators, and families are held accountable for the well-being and success of our students.

Candidate:
Kendra Williams

1. What do you see as the top three issues facing the Tuscaloosa City School System? How should those issues be addressed?

Trying to return to in person learning. Children learn better when in a classroom setting. (NEA) National Education Association has validated this report. We are aware that a child safety comes first. Therefore virtual learning was instituted for that purpose, however, I will be a driving force to work towards our children returning to a safe classroom.

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I believe that our classroom teachers should receive a raise beyond the 2% that our governor has recommended to the state legislator. Teachers provide valuable duties as it relates to our children learning. Therefore I will continue to fight for high salary for classroom teachers.

The board of education has only one source of state revenue that provide operating costs for the district. The source of these funds are calculated on the basis of Average Daily Enrollment. Which determines the school budget for the following year. I will investigate other sources, to determine how we can increase funding for our school district.

2. Significant community effort has been dedicated to develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan for the Tuscaloosa City School System. Do you support the implementation of this plan? If your answer is “yes,” why is it important to do so? If your answer is “no,” how would you change the plan?

Yes, our school district invested significant funding in developing this plan. I am aware that countless community meetings was held to discuss the plan with community stakeholders. Our superintendent and administrative staff have recommended moving forward with the plan. I am satisfied that the process used to develop the plan was significant, I am ready to move forward.

3. What should be done to address schools labeled as “failing” by the Alabama Department of Education?

I believe that better school performance will out way any other remedy to avoid school failing. I realize that our method of testing should be improved to provide a more adequate result of the school performance. Testing should only focus on what children have been taught as opposed to hypothetical circumstances.

4. What efforts would you like to see to close the education “slide” students have seen from COVID-19 disruptions?

First we should make an adjustment in our grading of students performance during the pandemic crisis. It is my opinion that no child should fail, do the amount of anxiety and other dilemma’s associated with virtual learning. This would make sure that children will continue to feel good about learning. Remediation must be implicated for children who have fallen behind significantly.

5. The Tuscaloosa region is expected to have a shortage of skilled labor in future years. What is the role of the Tuscaloosa City School System in helping address that shortage?

The school district has a tremendous role to play in making sure students are ready to take advantage of these employment opportunity. Workforce development is key for student readiness. TCTA is a tremendous asset which provide the kind of technical training and hands own preparations for skilled occupations. We must continue to invest heavily to provide our students this kind of training.

6. What is your vision for the Tuscaloosa City School System in 10 years? How will you, in your role as an elected official, help make that vision a reality?

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My vision for the TCS system in 10 years can be addressed in two parts. First, we must continue to prepare students for college using the tremendous asset we already have through Dual Enrollment. Next, we must explore and keep [pace with technological advancement which will be critical in preparing students to enter into the work force.