

Candidate Name: Sumit “Sam” Salia

Ballot Position: 1F

Slate (if applicable): Independent Invested Parent

1. What **motivates you to run** for Trustee of the Jersey City Board of Education (the “Board”)? Who do you see as your primary constituency?

I was motivated to run for the Jersey City Board of Education after seeing my property taxes rise while the condition of our public schools continued to decline. When my son enrolled at PS-25, I witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by students and families. Curious about how over \$1 billion of our district’s budget was being spent, I researched extensively but found no clear answers or accountability. Instead of simply complaining, I decided to take action and be part of the solution. For the past three years, I have run independently and tirelessly, driven by the belief that our children deserve transparency, efficiency, and high-quality education. My primary constituency is the families, parents, and taxpayers of Jersey City who want to see real results, responsible budgeting, and improved student outcomes without raising property taxes.

2. During most Board election cycles, the public hears calls for greater “transparency and accountability.” What does **transparency** in this context mean to you? What does **accountability** mean to you?

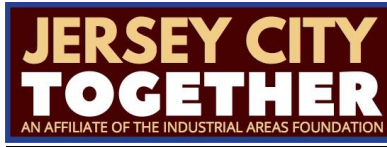
To me, **transparency** means openly and honestly communicating with the true stakeholders — our taxpayers, parents, and residents — about what is happening within our schools and how decisions are made. It means providing clear, accessible information about how funds are used, how policies are implemented, and how each decision impacts students. Transparency builds trust and ensures that the community is never left guessing about the state of our schools.

Accountability means taking full responsibility for outcomes, not excuses. It requires that everyone — from the superintendent and administration to the Board of Education itself — be evaluated based on results, not rhetoric. As a trustee, I believe accountability starts with us. We must measure success by improvements in student learning, fiscal responsibility, and operational efficiency, and we must be willing to acknowledge and correct failures rather than shift blame. True accountability ensures progress, integrity, and confidence in our education system.

3. The Board is responsible for **passing a fully-funded budget** each year. How would you promote meaningful **community awareness of, and public engagement with**, the budget process and of a proposed budget’s impact on their children’s schools?

The Board’s role is to pass a results-driven, fiscally responsible budget that delivers measurable improvements in student performance. “Fully funded” can be subjective — the real goal should be an **effective** budget that prioritizes core educational needs over non-essential spending. With limited financial resources, we must fund programs that directly impact learning outcomes rather than spreading funds too thin or raising taxes without results.

To promote **community awareness and engagement**, I would ensure the budget process is transparent and easy to understand. This means holding public information sessions, publishing simplified budget summaries online, and using clear visuals to show how funds affect each



school. Parents, teachers, and taxpayers should be encouraged to participate in discussions early, not just after a budget is drafted.

Since the Board cannot generate additional funds independently, it is crucial to educate and mobilize the public to advocate for fair state and federal funding. By combining fiscal discipline, transparency, and active community participation, we can ensure that every dollar serves our students effectively.

4. Since the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the School District has incorporated social and emotional learning into the curriculum, established wellness centers at most high schools and health clinics in a few schools, and implemented training for restorative justice approaches to the *Student Code of Conduct*. Describe your views about **sustaining these wellness programs** and using **restorative justice** as the main approach to address interpersonal issues in schools.

I believe wellness programs and restorative justice play an important role in supporting students' overall development, especially in a diverse district like ours. These initiatives help address interpersonal issues, improve mental health, and create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

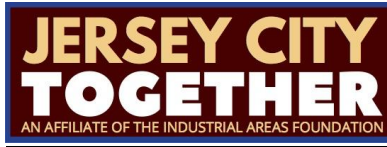
While the programs appear beneficial, I believe it's essential to **evaluate their effectiveness** through measurable outcomes—such as reduced behavioral incidents, improved attendance, and better academic engagement. If the data shows that these programs are making a real difference, I would strongly support sustaining and expanding them across all schools. At the same time, sustainability should come with **accountability and continuous improvement**. We must ensure that staff receive proper training, resources are used efficiently, and students' needs remain the focus. If adjustments are needed to make the programs more impactful or better aligned with student well-being, I would advocate for those changes. Overall, I see these wellness and restorative justice initiatives as valuable tools that, when effectively managed, can strengthen school culture, promote empathy, and improve student outcomes.

5. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District?

Our district must take a hard look at why we are falling short in special education while other districts are succeeding. Despite spending nearly \$100 million, many families still seek support elsewhere or turn to legal action. This shows the need for a **retrospective review** of our programs, policies, and outcomes to identify what's not working.

We must create **specialized learning environments** with properly trained teachers, therapists, and resources designed for individualized care. Accountability and transparency in how funds are used are essential.

I will advocate for stronger parent involvement in IEP development and for partnerships with proven districts and experts to learn from their success. Our goal should be simple: ensure every child with special needs receives the care, education, and respect they deserve—right here in Jersey City.



6. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

Improving street safety around our schools requires close collaboration with the **city, zoning, transportation, and infrastructure departments**. We need to implement practical measures such as designated curbside and school bus pickup zones, one-way streets during school hours, and more trained crossing guards to manage traffic flow safely.

From the district's side, we must ensure **secure perimeters, safe walkways, and well-maintained surroundings** at every school. Each campus has unique safety concerns, so it's important to engage directly with principals, parents, and community members to identify site-specific issues and solutions.

These are common-sense measures, but they require coordination and accountability between the district and the city. By working together and listening to each school's needs, we can create a safer environment for students, parents, and staff during arrival and dismissal times.

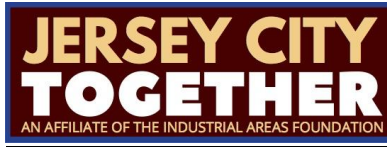
7. How would you work with the City to ensure robust and effective enforcement, collection, and use of the **Employer Payroll Tax**?

As a Board Trustee, I would take a **collaborative and proactive approach** with the City to ensure the Employer Payroll Tax is properly enforced, collected, and allocated to support our schools. While the tax is administered by the city and state—not directly by the district—the funds it generates are vital for reducing the financial burden on residents and meeting our educational needs.

I would advocate for **greater transparency** in how the city tracks and reports payroll tax collections and ensure regular communication between city officials and the Board. By maintaining cooperation and accountability, we can help secure the district's fair share of revenue while promoting efficient use of those funds to benefit students and taxpayers alike.

8. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**, and how do you envision creating a physical environment that imparts dignity and care for every Jersey City student? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements?

Our district's facility problems—broken bathrooms, leaking roofs, failing HVAC systems, and weak security—are not complex engineering challenges; they are **failures of urgency, accountability, and leadership**. As a business owner in manufacturing, I deal with operational challenges daily—and I know that when there's real intention and urgency, things get done. We have a **\$50 million annual facilities budget** and a full maintenance staff. There is absolutely no excuse for students to sit in overheated classrooms or use broken facilities year after year. I will bring **business discipline and results-driven urgency** to this process—identify the schools in most critical condition, fix the basics first, and track progress publicly. Every student deserves to learn in a building that reflects dignity, care, and pride in their education. This is not rocket science—it's about priorities, transparency, and commitment. I will make fixing our schools a **top, non-negotiable priority**.



Candidate Name: Afaf D. Muhammad

Ballot Position: 2F

Slate (if applicable):

1. What **motivates you to run** for Trustee of the Jersey City Board of Education (the "Board")? Who do you see as your primary constituency?

I am motivated to run for Trustee so that I can continue to support the Superintendent and the district as they work to improve the academic opportunities and social supports the JCPS students deserve, and stakeholders are expecting.

During my tenure I served as Chair of a few committees; Student Life and Personnel Services, Special Education, Student Focused Community Outreach, and the Superintendent's Commission to Eradicate Hate Speech which created the Jersey City Board of Education's Official Position on the Use of the "N" Word Resolution, and prompted Words Matter . Through the committees, the supports that were and still are being provided to JCPS students, families, and staff allowing a decrease in suspensions; increase of professional development in trauma-informed and restorative practices for all staff and employees; the Anti-Bullying Forum, and Words Matter were facilitated with the Student Life and Personnel Department.

I see all voters as my primary constituency. I think for the most part voters want school board trustees who hold a value for public education.

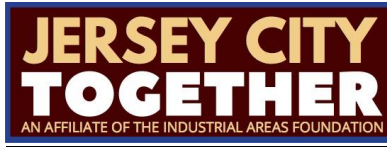
I may be more appealing to the constituents who want a Trustee who will advocate for education justice. A high quality education does not mean AP or honors status. A high
[response cut at 200 words]

2. During most Board election cycles, the public hears calls for greater "transparency and accountability." What does **transparency** in this context mean to you? What does **accountability** mean to you?

When I hear a call for "transparency and accountability" most of the time it is on administrative topics that the board cannot speak on, or topics that are under investigation or legal matters which the results are later announced by the Superintendent. Some people are not pleased with the results, I recommend they continue to follow the process and ask questions for clarity and not for accusation.

3. The Board is responsible for **passing a fully-funded budget** each year. How would you promote meaningful **community awareness of, and public engagement with**, the budget process and of a proposed budget's impact on their children's schools?

If re-elected I would promote meaningful community awareness of, and public engagement with the budget process and of a proposed budget's impact on their children's schools by continuing to support the Superintendent for quarterly updates on how the budget is being used, any special projects that may cause reallocation of funds, and to ensure that meeting announcement emphasize that the budget review will take place.



4. Since the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the School District has incorporated social and emotional learning into the curriculum, established wellness centers at most high schools and health clinics in a few schools, and implemented training for restorative justice approaches to the *Student Code of Conduct*. Describe your views about **sustaining these wellness programs** and using **restorative justice** as the main approach to address interpersonal issues in schools.

From my perspective, in order to sustain the wellness programs and use of restorative justice as the main approach to address interpersonal issues in schools, the supports these programs offer would need to be embedded in the curriculum and culture or environment of the district.

I think the supports that the wellness programs provided should be a part of the Jersey City Public School brand where all schools provide their services through well trained professionals who are already employed at the district.

There may come a time when the funds will not be available to provide outside staff or services. During my tenure I supported the district's efforts to become a trauma informed school district as they provide professional development that trains all staff, parents and board members using Trauma Informed Skills for Employees, and Parents, also known as TISE, and the relationship with the RWJ Jersey City Medical Center who provides the services in the wellness clinics.

5. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District?

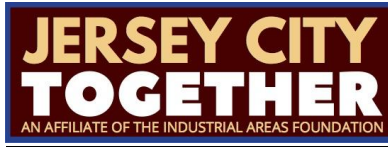
During my tenure I serve as the Special Education Committee Chair. I would continue to support inclusion classrooms, professional development of staff to identify early signs of a student's need for support, and parent support and trainings to explain the difference between special education, IEP and 504 plans. I would also support the work towards removing the label 'special' so that additional support that a student may need would be considered equity instead of 'special' needs or 'special' education. Our current Superintendent shares this vision as well, I would support the direction that special education in Jersey City is heading.

6. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

During my tenure on the board, through the Special Education Committee and with support from former board President Morris advocated for street safety was by supporting the Special Education Department's request for Deaf Child Signs at PS #11.

I would like to continue to support advocacy for: posted decreased speed limits in school zones from 25 to 15; School zone signage and road paint to alert drivers to pay attention to the surroundings; barricades at the least on the road used for drop offs where there will be high traffic from students who are walking to the school and bus drop off; designated drop off points where staff from the school can greet students at the car and parents can be assured their child will be safely escorted to the building, and traffic can keep flowing.

Schools could use parent volunteers or promote crossing guard jobs to parents.



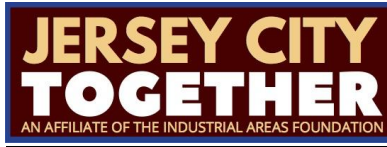
It takes a board that is willing to advocate and support the district's requests and relationship with the city/Mayor, and the willingness from the city/Mayor to provide what is needed.

7. How would you work with the City to ensure robust and effective enforcement, collection, and use of the **Employer Payroll Tax**?

During my tenure as a board member I supported President Morris establishing a working relationship between the board, the district, and Mayor Fulop to collect past funds where it was discovered that the legislation did not mandate the Employee Payroll Tax to be collected. I also participated in the meeting with the District and State officials to review the Employer Payroll Tax to discuss revision of the law's wording to allow the city to collect the Employer Payroll Tax. I would continue to support the nurturing of that relationship to ensure funds are collected and allocated to the district.

8. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**, and how do you envision creating a physical environment that imparts dignity and care for every Jersey City student? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements?

[No answer provided]



Candidate Name: Noemí Velázquez

Ballot Position: 3F

Slate (if applicable): Education Brings Solutions

1. What **motivates you to run** for Trustee of the Jersey City Board of Education (the "Board")? Who do you see as your primary constituency?

First of all, I am an educator by trade. and have dedicated the majority of my career to the students, parents and Jersey City community. With my numerous certifications, I've had the honor, privilege, and pleasure to work as a teacher, supervisor and administrator in the JC public schools. After over 40 years of service I retired, worked as aide to Governor Murphy and returned to serve as Board Trustee. My motivation is the love of education and for my primary constituents, THE CHILDREN! Relying on my academic preparation, my pedagogical experience, along with my central office insight, I knew that my service on the board would bring positive change to the district, and it has.

2. During most Board election cycles, the public hears calls for greater "transparency and accountability." What does **transparency** in this context mean to you? What does **accountability** mean to you?

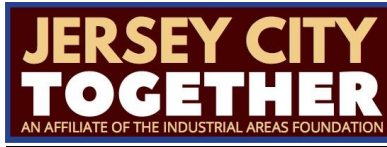
Transparency of the board must ensure that the public has clear knowledge and understanding of the district's day to day functions regarding programs, budget, future plans and every aspect that affect our students. As a trustee I have encouraged that we as an entity maintain full transparency between the district the board, as well as with parents and community at large.

Accountability is major to our responsibility, thus ensuring we exercise optimum ethics and compliance duties to both the authorities and our community. As a board, it is imperative that we are accountable to the community/tax payers with regards to budget/expenditures, student progress and general improvement.

3. The Board is responsible for **passing a fully-funded budget** each year. How would you promote meaningful **community awareness of, and public engagement with**, the budget process and of a proposed budget's impact on their children's schools?

I strongly recommend we begin budget preparations in a timely fashion and include representation of the stakeholders to assist at the State level in order to garner appropriate funds for our district. Early and ongoing community awareness should be established to foster relationships and partnerships, ensuring public engagement to address all levels of government responsible for funding. As a team we must unite and impress upon the City to provide their fair share without creating a burden on the tax payers.

4. Since the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the School District has incorporated social and emotional learning into the curriculum, established wellness centers at most high schools and health clinics in a few schools, and implemented training for restorative justice approaches to the *Student Code of Conduct*. Describe your views about **sustaining these wellness programs** and using **restorative justice** as the main approach to address interpersonal issues in schools.



Kudos to the District for the implementation of varied programs and numerous facilities established to meet the needs of the many students and families. I was proud to facilitate a connection between the GOYA Foundation and the District which facilitated not only wellness, but also safety programs. Unfortunately, due to the government funding cuts and dismantling of programs, the district has had to minimize services. Therefore, I encourage a grant writing campaign in central office as well as in schools to ensure the sustainability of our wellness programs. Also, there is a dire need to develop coalitions with City and County police authorities to collaborate in developing programs focused on interpersonal issues for all age levels.

5. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District?

I will encourage the district to thoroughly assess the needs of the department and sound leadership for the same. Someone who is experienced and knowledgeable in pedagogy, programs, supervision and management.

6. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

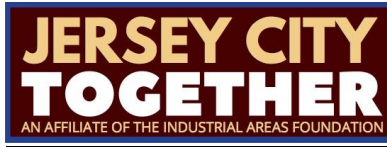
Encourage greater training for the security guards and afford them opportunities to function in positions other than inside the building. Advise the Superintendent to have the Security Director to ascertain the situation and request additional crossing guards and greater police patrol where ever needed.

7. How would you work with the City to ensure robust and effective enforcement, collection, and use of the **Employer Payroll Tax**?

Establishing an amicable, collaborative relationship with the City is always more beneficial than an adversarial one. We must look forward to a sound relationship with the new administration for the sake of our most important constituents, THE STUDENTS! An early intervention meeting with the new city administration to discuss the Payroll Tax is a must. I intend to be a catalyst for this concern and pledge to work with the city with this regard. In the event that we have impasses, I will continue to speak out and publicly address the matter at the council meetings.

8. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**, and how do you envision creating a physical environment that imparts dignity and care for every Jersey City student? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements?

There is a priority facility plan in place and I intend to push for its realization. In the past five years many schools have received make overs as needed. From outside facilities, classrooms, cafeterias, auditoriums, hallways, gyms, boilers, windows, doors, wellness room and much more, the leadership has made every effort to beautify or bring safety to numerous buildings. While much has been done, in a district of this size, much still remains to be addressed. No doubt we will continue to witness improvement.



Candidate Name: Dr. Christopher Tisdale

Ballot Position: 4F

Slate (if applicable): Education Brings Solutions



1. What **motivates you to run** for Trustee of the Jersey City Board of Education (the “Board”)? Who do you see as your primary constituency?

I am running for reelection because I believe in the power of public education to change lives—just as it changed mine. As a proud graduate of Jersey City Public Schools, I’ve seen firsthand what strong leadership, dedicated teachers, and supportive communities can achieve. My motivation comes from a deep commitment to equity, transparency, and accountability for every student, staff member, and family we serve.

During my time on the Board, I’ve worked to strengthen educational outcomes, improve fiscal responsibility, and ensure that decision-making always keeps students first. Leadership, to me, means improving people and systems, not politics. There’s still important work ahead, and I’m running to continue building schools where opportunity, excellence, and fairness are not ideals—but everyday realities.

My primary constituency is the entire Jersey City school community—students, families, educators, and residents. But my deepest commitment is to our students, who depend on us to make decisions that shape their futures.

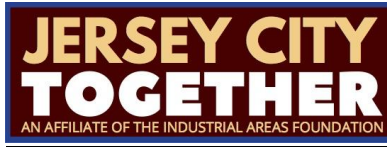
I also recognize that parents, teachers, and community members are vital partners in this work. By listening, collaborating, and staying accountable, we ensure that every child—regardless of background—receives the education, support, and respect they deserve.

2. During most Board election cycles, the public hears calls for greater “transparency and accountability.” What does **transparency** in this context mean to you? What does **accountability** mean to you?

To me, transparency means governing with honesty, openness, and courage—never hiding behind titles or politics. As Vice President of the Jersey City Board of Education, I’ve earned a reputation for asking the hard questions and making the bold statements others often avoid, because the public deserves clarity, not confusion. Transparency is about keeping our community informed—explaining why decisions are made, not just what decisions are made—and ensuring that information is accessible to everyone, not just those in the room.

Accountability means standing firmly behind every vote and action, measuring results, and taking responsibility when things fall short. It means holding ourselves, administrators, and one another to the same high standards we expect of our students.

For me, transparency and accountability are not campaign promises—they are guiding principles. I will continue to question what others accept, demand answers when others remain silent, and advocate fiercely for fairness, equity, and the best interests of Jersey City’s children.



3. The Board is responsible for **passing a fully-funded budget** each year. How would you promote meaningful **community awareness of, and public engagement with**, the budget process and of a proposed budget's impact on their children's schools?

The school budget is more than numbers—it's a reflection of our community's values and priorities. As Vice President of the Jersey City Board of Education, I believe every resident deserves to understand how each dollar impacts their child's education. I would continue advocating for a clear, transparent budget process that includes plain-language summaries, community town halls, and school-based forums where families can ask questions and see exactly how funding decisions affect classrooms, programs, and staffing.

Meaningful engagement begins with accessibility. That means making budget information easy to find, easy to understand, and easy to discuss. I would also push for an interactive tool that allows residents to explore the proposed budget and its direct impact on their neighborhood schools.

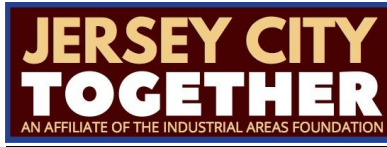
Most importantly, I would continue to speak candidly and challenge vague explanations or incomplete data. Our community deserves straight answers and real insight—not jargon or red tape. By keeping the process transparent, inclusive, and student-centered, we ensure that every dollar spent reflects our shared goal: providing Jersey City students with the quality education they deserve.

4. Since the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the School District has incorporated social and emotional learning into the curriculum, established wellness centers at most high schools and health clinics in a few schools, and implemented training for restorative justice approaches to the *Student Code of Conduct*. Describe your views about **sustaining these wellness programs** and using **restorative justice** as the main approach to address interpersonal issues in schools.

The social and emotional well-being of our students is just as important as their academic success. The investments made in wellness centers, health clinics, and restorative justice training since the COVID-19 pandemic represent meaningful progress—and these programs must not only continue, but evolve. Sustaining them requires ongoing funding, staff training, and genuine integration into daily school culture rather than treating them as add-ons or temporary initiatives.

I believe restorative justice is essential to creating safe, supportive, and accountable learning environments. It teaches empathy, responsibility, and communication—skills that extend far beyond the classroom. Instead of relying solely on punishment, restorative practices help students understand the impact of their actions, repair harm, and rebuild trust. This approach strengthens relationships between students, staff, and families, fostering school communities grounded in respect rather than fear.

As a Trustee, I will continue advocating for resources, partnerships, and professional development that sustain these initiatives and ensure they reach every school equitably. The ultimate goal is a district where wellness and accountability work hand in hand—because students who feel seen, heard, and supported are students who are ready to learn, grow, and lead.



5. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District?

Every child deserves to be seen, supported, and provided with the tools they need to succeed. Our students with special needs are no exception—they deserve equity, not excuses. Improving special education begins with listening to the families, teachers, and service providers who understand these students best. I believe the district must strengthen communication, ensure timely evaluations and services, and hold itself accountable for meeting every student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) with fidelity.

I will continue advocating for policies and resources that make inclusion meaningful—not just a placement, but a practice. That means smaller caseloads for special education staff, ongoing professional development for general education teachers, and classroom environments where students of all abilities can thrive together.

True progress in special education also requires empathy and consistency. We must move beyond compliance and focus on compassion—ensuring that every student, regardless of ability, feels valued and capable. I am committed to ensuring that our district provides not just access to education, but access to opportunity.

6. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

Street safety is a community responsibility that requires coordination between the district, city officials, law enforcement, and families. I will advocate for stronger partnerships with the City of Jersey City to conduct regular traffic and safety audits around all schools—especially during arrival and dismissal times.

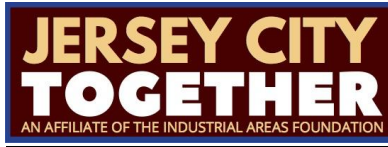
Improving street safety means more than adding signs or crossing guards. It includes better lighting, clearly marked crosswalks, speed-reduction measures, and the presence of trained safety personnel where needed. I also believe in expanding safety education for students and families so everyone understands how to navigate busy areas responsibly and respectfully.

As a Trustee, I would continue pushing for accountability and collaboration among all stakeholders to ensure that no student should ever feel unsafe traveling to or from school. Protecting our children starts with proactive planning and shared responsibility.

7. How would you work with the City to ensure robust and effective enforcement, collection, and use of the **Employer Payroll Tax**?

We have been working diligently—and will continue to do so—to ensure that the Employer Payroll Tax fulfills its original purpose: providing Jersey City Public Schools with the consistent, equitable funding our students deserve. As a Trustee, I will keep advocating for stronger collaboration between the Board of Education and the City to guarantee that every dollar owed is collected, accounted for, and directed where it belongs—into our classrooms.

This means maintaining open communication, regular audits, and transparent public reporting on collections and distributions. The community has a right to know how these funds are managed and how they directly impact student programs, staffing, and school resources.



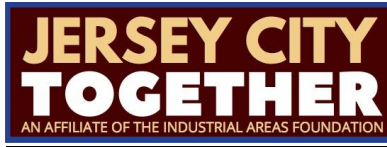
I will also continue pushing for joint City–Board oversight meetings to strengthen enforcement, close loopholes, and ensure no revenue is lost through inefficiency or neglect. Our commitment must remain firm: the Employer Payroll Tax exists to fund education, not bureaucracy.

8. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**, and how do you envision creating a physical environment that imparts dignity and care for every Jersey City student? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements?

The district's most pressing facility challenges include aging buildings, inconsistent maintenance, inadequate air quality systems, and the need for modern learning spaces that support technology, accessibility, and wellness. To address these issues, we must first conduct a comprehensive facilities audit that prioritizes repairs and renovations based on safety, equity, and student impact.

I will continue advocating for transparent capital planning, public updates on project timelines, and stronger partnerships with city, state, and community stakeholders to secure additional funding. New construction and renovations should reflect our vision for 21st-century learning—safe, inclusive, and inspiring environments that nurture the whole child.

Creating spaces of dignity begins with intention. When we build and maintain schools that show care, students rise to meet that same standard of excellence.



Candidate Name: Lorenzo Richardson
Ballot Position: 5F
Slate (if applicable): For Stronger Schools



1. What **motivates you to run** for Trustee of the Jersey City Board of Education (the "Board")? Who do you see as your primary constituency?

I am highly motivated to run again to deliver for our students. I helped find the funding to get the lead out of the water in the schools, I personally brought in the Energy Savings Improvement Program to update our school facilities, costing taxpayers nothing. I found the funding to update our school and district technology with chrome books, laptops, hotspots, servers, wi-fi, and touchscreen wall computers. I also want to help the district develop a top-notch trades program that will set our students up for success if they choose not to go to college. We also need to prepare our students for next generation technology, such as artificial intelligence, and I could work with the district to make that happen. I worked with the district to set up a Cisco networking program while on the board and I believe I can help the district start an artificial intelligence educational program and continue working to set up citywide Wi-Fi. Last, but not least, this board must roll up its sleeves and work very hard with the district to address every aspect of student achievement and college readiness where we fall short and do it with all deliberate speed.

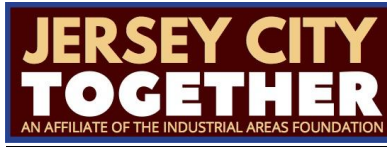
My number *[response cut at 200 words]*

2. During most Board election cycles, the public hears calls for greater "transparency and accountability." What does **transparency** in this context mean to you? What does **accountability** mean to you?

Transparency to me means posting board meetings in reasonable advance. Having information available to the public when questions are asked or at least respond to questions in a reasonable timeframe. Having easy to understand board meeting reports and sharing information with the public that may be of interest, except confidential information and information not allowable by law. I am open, honest and upfront with the public because I represent the public. I am open to having office hours to hear concerns or refer resources in the district. I am also willing to have my committee meetings recorded and streamed as the district used to do in the past.

Accountability to me means being committed to the role of a board member and the mission of providing our students with a high-quality education that will set the foundation for each child to leave our district prepared for whatever college or career path they choose. It also means being honest enough to admit when we make mistakes and holding ourselves accountable. The board must hold itself and the Superintendent accountable for student achievement. If test scores aren't good, if resources are lacking, we need to fix what is not working.

3. The Board is responsible for **passing a fully-funded budget** each year. How would you promote meaningful **community awareness of, and public engagement with**, the budget process and of a proposed budget's impact on their children's schools?



In the past, we had multiple hearings for input in different parts of the city. I want to return to that successful practice. I am also committed to reporting and publicizing every input we receive from the public in a consolidated and organized format for everyone to see. From that point, we can look to see what is achievable with the budget and what we need further planning on. I would also allow a reasonable amount of additional time for public speakers on the budget since it is the public's money we are spending. I would also commit to providing the public an easier to read and understand budget with time to digest the information prior to the budget hearing.

4. Since the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the School District has incorporated social and emotional learning into the curriculum, established wellness centers at most high schools and health clinics in a few schools, and implemented training for restorative justice approaches to the *Student Code of Conduct*. Describe your views about **sustaining these wellness programs** and using **restorative justice** as the main approach to address interpersonal issues in schools.

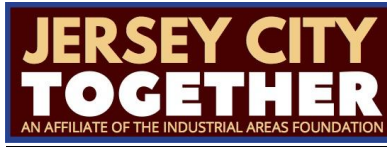
I fully support continuing and finding more ways to uplift and expand these programs to include the entire family. I worked very hard to get resources for students during the pandemic and saw up close how great the need was for mental health resources and addressing student behavior in an empathetic and wholistic way. My focus would be on ensuring we enlist best practices to address these needs, and they are met with high quality. I would also like to add tutoring in every school for students who are struggling as the need for it is greater since the pandemic based on my conversations with parents and educators.

5. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District?

I will continue to work very hard to support Special Education students and advocate for sufficient funding as I did in the past speaking directly with members of congress who fund IDEA for Special Education. I also met and spoke with parents individually and in groups to address concerns and supported facility improvements to Regional Day School, A. Harry Moore and individual School-Based programs like 15, 37, 38 and the move to 26 school from 31. I also advocated for the city to provide land by Liberty State Park for another school to support Special Education as well as one for Pre-K, but they chose to donate the land for a charter school that was later changed to a county school.

6. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

I would have meetings with representatives of the Police Department and City Planning to see what can be done to improve street safety. Some initiatives in response have been to block off streets, but I want to discuss what else we can do to make traffic safer for children crossing streets to get to and from school. I would like to hear the City's side at this juncture to allow us to come back and see if we can come up with creative or innovative ways to address the safety concerns and I would make sure I contribute to the conversation around possible solutions. I spoke with a crossing guard today and I heard stories of concerns around recruitment and other issues. I would like to see if we could talk to the city about looking into other options to support this need.

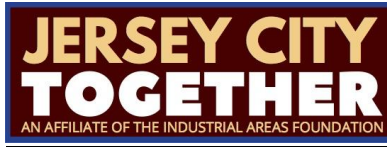


7. How would you work with the City to ensure robust and effective enforcement, collection, and use of the **Employer Payroll Tax**?

Oh, that is easy. I would first listen to the City explain exactly what is the problem or problems it is having regarding the Payroll Tax. I would then document these issues in my notes and would commit to assisting them in finding a solution to their problem by volunteering to be on a committee within the board and work with the district, the City and the State, if need be, to assist in coming to a solution on this matter as quickly as possible. This comes down to resolving the collection, processing, documentation and presentation of Payroll Tax information which needs to be addressed in an orderly, consistent and efficient manner.

8. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**, and how do you envision creating a physical environment that imparts dignity and care for every Jersey City student? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements?

Challenges include restrooms, roofs, doors, pools, windows, air conditioning, auditorium seats, gym floors, environmental issues, the playing or practice field, steps and brick pointing. We will prioritize projects and inform all parties with status updates. This is a full commitment to ensure that every room in every building is safe and all learning spaces are an environment that is conducive to learning. We need to update the Long-Range Facilities Plan and tackle long-term issues and ongoing maintenance items before they become an item to add to the long-range facility plan. From there, we need to meet with each school community to hear directly from "the occupants" what facility issues they see. Once we have our list of short and long-term projects, we need to quickly quantify it and look within our budget to see where and how we should prioritize our efforts. We need to schedule projects in a way that prevents wasteful spending and preserve the integrity of our buildings. We will take input and update the community in their individual school and on the district level in a transparent and convenient way for each school community to be involved, be it staff, students, or community members.



Candidate Name: Brendan Doohan

Ballot Position: 6F

Slate (if applicable): “For Stronger Schools”



1. What **motivates you to run** for Trustee of the Jersey City Board of Education (the “Board”)? Who do you see as your primary constituency?

My son Leo is the north star in my life. Almost everything I do is orientated towards what will benefit him and what will give him the greatest opportunity in life. This includes the decision to run for the Board. Since my son started at PS 28 in the Heights, the lack of conviction and competence on the Board¹ was something I gradually became more aware of. Their mismanagement of ~\$800 million allotted for the Jersey City Public Schools (excluding the money allotted to charter schools and pre-K) has stalled results for the District. So, when I realized that no one had raised their hands to challenge the incumbents—the folks responsible for this mismanagement—I knew I needed to run.

My sole constituency are the children of Jersey City. That being said, if we do it right by the students then we will also serve the taxpayers, teachers, and staff well. Taxpayers will be satisfied that their dollars are being used wisely; teachers will have the enrichment and support needed to do their jobs; and, the staff will have the resources needed to do theirs. Success for the BOE is not a zero sum game.

2. During most Board election cycles, the public hears calls for greater “transparency and accountability.” What does **transparency** in this context mean to you? What does **accountability** mean to you?

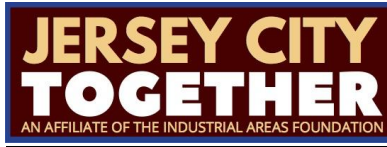
Transparency and Accountability are two of the four pillars of the For Stronger Schools slate because they are essential to restoring the trust that has been lost in the BOE. For far too long, the Board has shirked responsibility for bad decisions or policies. Transparency in this context means presenting the Board’s strategic priorities and budget plans to the public in January, not in late March when it is too late to gather and incorporate any feedback². Transparency means clearly presenting budgetary decisions to the public and explaining what choices were made and why. This also means taking time to disseminate information in a digestible format so that the broader community understands where the money is being spent.

Similarly, accountability means that we take ownership of problems instead of pointing fingers. It means we track the success of programs and initiatives, and, if they don’t succeed, we find out why and change our course. Accountability also means that if we are not doing our job we own up to it. If others are not doing their jobs, we call them out. This is what is needed to foster the trust between the Board, the District and the community they serve.

3. The Board is responsible for **passing a fully-funded budget** each year. How would you promote meaningful **community awareness of, and public engagement with**, the budget process and of a proposed budget’s impact on their children’s schools?

¹ <https://www.change.org/p/changes-needed-to-jc-boe>

² <https://hudsoncountyview.com/op-ed-its-time-for-the-jersey-city-boe-to-prioritize-progress-over-politics/>



As a parent with a full-time job, I understand how difficult it can be to give time and attention to all the urgent initiatives and causes in Jersey City. That being said, the budget is the most powerful tool the Board has to shape student success and community trust. To promote meaningful awareness of the budget I would enlist the help of school principals and PTAs to help convey the priorities and key decisions of the budget isn't just numbers — it's a reflection of our priorities. I would also host public budget workshops in each ward, creating simple summaries and visualizations. I would encourage translation and accessibility for multilingual families. Last, I would partner with community groups and local media to spread clear information.

When families understand how dollars connect to outcomes — whether it's HVAC repairs, smaller class sizes, or more counselors — we build trust. As the Treasurer of the PS 28 PTA, knowing this information would have been very helpful in communicating resource restrictions to other parents when they asked about installing a playground³. As it stands currently, most parents are confused and frustrated by the decisions of the Board due to the lack of easy to digest information.

4. Since the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the School District has incorporated social and emotional learning into the curriculum, established wellness centers at most high schools and health clinics in a few schools, and implemented training for restorative justice approaches to the *Student Code of Conduct*. Describe your views about **sustaining these wellness programs** and using **restorative justice** as the main approach to address interpersonal issues in schools.

Student well-being is the foundation to learning. If a student does not feel safe and supported then they will not be able to learn to their full potential. In the fastly changing world of artificial intelligence and social unrest, social and emotional learning are essential to achieving success. In addition, research has shown that, when implemented effectively, restorative justice programs can help transform a school culture⁴. Focusing on building relationships, social and emotional learning, and conflict resolution can help create healthier school climates and better outcomes outside of the classroom for students.

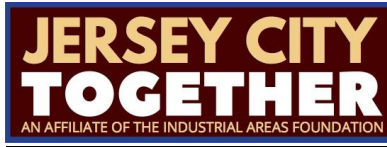
To sustain these programs, we must first hire the psychologists and social workers that were lost to budget cuts from the past. We need to build these capabilities back up so that students have the support they need. Second, we need to provide teachers with better enrichment programs to reinforce best practices for existing wellness programs and restorative justice⁵. Not only will this help ensure equity but it will also underscore our commitment to having safe and supportive schools for every student. Last, we should reach out to the community to find partners that can provide the training and services needed to fully support social and emotional learning.

5. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District?

³ <https://civicparent.org/2025/05/10/jersey-city-public-schools-2025-26-budget-recap/>

⁴ <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/do-restorative-practices-work>

⁵ <https://jcitytimes.com/schools-to-experiment-with-restorative-justice-in-place-of-punishment/>



When I speak with parents I often hear that dealing with the special education program in Jersey City is at best filled with unnecessary delays⁶ and, at worst, adversarial. To improve this, I would focus on strengthening staffing, inclusion, communication, and oversight. Specifically, to address the special education teacher shortage, I would implement aggressive recruitment campaigns targeting special education certification programs at local universities like New Jersey City University. I would work to improve retention and partner with state programs that offer a flexible path to special education certification for existing teachers. The District can also expand its efforts toward creating more inclusive learning environments, including co-teaching models. I would invest in professional development for both general and special education teachers to promote effective co-teaching strategies in inclusive classrooms. While JCPS offers programs for autism and behavioral disabilities, it should provide more resources to support a wider range of high-quality, in-district programs. To increase transparency, I would provide clear, accessible information on special education funding, including how federal stimulus funds and extraordinary aid are being allocated and spent. Improving special education means building a system where every student, regardless of need, has the tools and support to thrive.

6. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

Being able to safely get to and from school is necessary to having a good education. As such, we need to incorporate transportation safety as a key priority within the Board's Strategic Plan⁷. I know the importance of street safety firsthand as I was hit by a bus at the corner of 8th Street and Marin Boulevard when I was 14 years old, coming home from Saint Peter's Prep. To accomplish this we need to collaborate with community groups like Safe Streets JC to better advocate for bump outs, road dieting and other safety measures around schools. We also need to commit to supporting crossing guards, making sure that charter schools have crossing guards even on days when the District is closed (e.g. Yom Kippur in 2025). As President of the Riverview Neighborhood Association, I have worked with Jimmy Lee and others at Safe Streets JC to make streets safer by getting speed humps installed and advocating for new bike lanes and traffic patterns at busy intersections. With efforts like these, we can make the roads around schools safer and allow parents, students and teachers to have peace of mind when coming to and from schools.

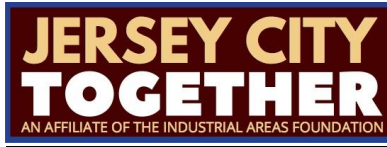
7. How would you work with the City to ensure robust and effective enforcement, collection, and use of the **Employer Payroll Tax**?

It is well known that the payroll tax enacted to support the schools has been coming up short as there are few mechanisms in place to ensure proper collection⁸. We need to gather as much funding as we can to fund these schools. To this end, I would leverage my relationships with the Mayor and the City Council that I have developed as the President of the RNA to identify all the businesses that are required to pay payroll taxes and then help them provide the justification to enforce this tax. This is much more a problem of political will than ability: if we advocate long enough, millions of dollars can be made available for the District. More specifically, we will increase transparency in Payroll Tax collection and allocation to ensure that all funds are directed to classroom and student needs. I will work with experts like Jack Scura to encourage

⁶ [Jersey City Schools Parents Call for Swift Release of Special Needs Audit](#)

⁷ <https://betterblocksnj.org/2025/06/19/analysis-of-jersey-citys-vision-zero-progress/>

⁸ <https://jcitytimes.com/while-schools-plead-for-help-many-businesses-escape-payroll-tax>

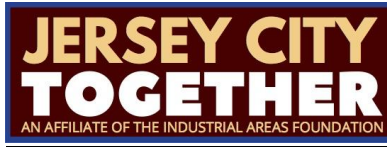


the City to implement the proper financial controls to ensure that all of the funds are being properly collected. We will advocate for clear public reporting and accountability and engage employers and community stakeholders in the process. Moreover, we will use data to monitor compliance and improve efficiency.

8. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**, and how do you envision creating a physical environment that imparts dignity and care for every Jersey City student? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements?

It is clear that the enormous unmet need in the SDA districts like Jersey City is leading to overcrowding and educational inadequacy⁹. In fact, the number one issue we hear about is the lack of safe, functional, and modern learning environments. Toilets are not working, bathroom stalls are missing doors and the parking lots at athletic fields resemble lunar surfaces. When schools do have new modern buildings (e.g. P.S. 26) the parents are happy with the school and feel comfortable sending their kids there to learn. This should be the rule, not the exception. We need to address deferred maintenance and basic facility needs first. To do this we will create facilities assessments and develop a long-term capital improvement plan. We will also leverage City, State, and Federal funding partnerships to get the funds needed. Leveraging my relationships with Ravi Bhalla, Katie Brennan, and Raj Mukherji I will urge the Governor and Legislature to make school facilities funding a top priority in the state budget. We will also engage students, parents, and staff in setting priorities, focusing on safety concerns first and then focusing on aesthetic concerns. We cannot and should not do this alone.

⁹ <https://edlawcenter.org/state-report-finds-two-thirds-of-sda-districts-lack-adequate-school-facilities/>



Candidate Name: Aimee Sharrock

Ballot Position: 7F

Slate (if applicable): "For Stronger Schools"



1. What **motivates you to run** for Trustee of the Jersey City Board of Education (the "Board")? Who do you see as your primary constituency?

I'm running for the Board because every child in Jersey City deserves a strong education, responsible leadership, and a true sense of belonging. As a longtime PTA President and Neurodiverse Chair at PS 37, I've witnessed both the incredible potential of our students and the inequities that continue to hold too many of them back.

My motivation comes from personal experience navigating a confusing, broken system to get my neurodiverse child the support she needed. I'll never forget the nights lying beside her as she cried, asking, "Mom, why am I dumb?" No parent should ever have to explain to their child that the system is what's failing them. What I went through to secure basic services should not be every family's journey through hardship.

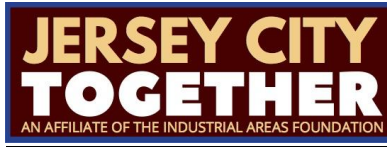
As a Board member, I will fight for transparency, accountability, and collaboration—ensuring decisions are driven by what's best for students, not bureaucracy. A Board member's first responsibility is to students and families, but the broader community also deserves to understand how its investment in education drives student success. My commitment is to advocate for those who feel unseen and to build schools that reflect Jersey City's diversity, resilience, and promise.

2. During most Board election cycles, the public hears calls for greater "transparency and accountability." What does **transparency** in this context mean to you? What does **accountability** mean to you?

Accountability means taking responsibility for outcomes, standing by commitments, acknowledging mistakes, and follow-through. It includes tracking progress on student achievements, fiscal management, and communication efforts. Most importantly, it means reporting those results in clear, accessible ways, including through the district's website in multiple languages. The community must be able to see how decisions impact our schools and where adjustments are needed.

Rebuilding trust and transparency requires action. The Board must listen first, communicate openly, and make decisions grounded in the voices of students, families, and educators. People deserve to feel informed and involved before key votes happen, not after. We should restore the public comment period to five minutes, allow community members to stand together in support, and permit participation via Zoom to ensure accessibility for all.

Only by restoring this relationship can we create schools where everyone feels respected, represented, and part of the solution. Our schools thrive when transparency and accountability are not just promised but practiced. When people are given time and access to share perspectives, trust is built, and better decisions follow. The Board should lead by example by



making engagement a priority, not a barrier, because every voice matters and belongs in the conversation.

3. The Board is responsible for **passing a fully-funded budget** each year. How would you promote meaningful **community awareness of, and public engagement with**, the budget process and of a proposed budget's impact on their children's schools?

The Board has a responsibility to not only pass a fully funded budget but also to ensure the process is transparent and that families understand how it impacts their children's education. Real engagement must begin early, well before the March vote, with clear communication about the budget timeline, key decision points, and opportunities for public input.

This means hosting budget forums and workshops outside of regular Board meetings, at accessible times and locations. These forums must be inclusive, with materials presented in plain language, translated as needed, and available online in multiple formats. We must go beyond PDFs and jargon to clearly show how proposed allocations impact class sizes, school staffing, special education, mental health supports, the arts, and more. Most importantly, these forums must be used not just to inform, but to listen — and to make real adjustments based on what we hear. Community feedback should shape the budget before the March vote, not after.

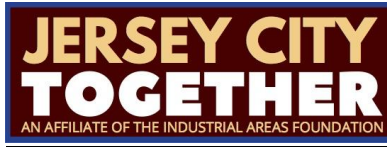
The Board must actively engage with PTA/PTOs, student and educator groups, and community organizations throughout this process. A more open, inclusive, and responsive approach will build trust and ensure the budget reflects the true priorities of our students, families, and educators.

4. Since the peak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the School District has incorporated social and emotional learning into the curriculum, established wellness centers at most high schools and health clinics in a few schools, and implemented training for restorative justice approaches to the *Student Code of Conduct*. Describe your views about **sustaining these wellness programs** and using **restorative justice** as the main approach to address interpersonal issues in schools.

I fully support sustaining and expanding wellness programs and restorative justice practices in our schools. The pandemic highlighted what many educators and families already knew: that students cannot thrive academically unless their social, emotional, and mental health needs are also supported.

Wellness centers, school-based health clinics, and social-emotional learning are not extras, they are essential components of a healthy, supportive school environment. These programs must be maintained, staffed with trained professionals, and evaluated regularly to ensure they are meeting student needs. We must also ensure equitable access across all schools, not just a few.

Restorative justice, when implemented with fidelity, provides a powerful alternative to punitive discipline. It helps students understand the impact of their actions, repair harm, and rebuild relationships, while reducing suspensions and keeping students connected to their learning. It fosters accountability, empathy, and community, and is especially important for addressing disparities in how discipline is applied.



As a Board member, I would advocate for continued investment in these initiatives, robust training for staff, and accountability measures to ensure they are working effectively. Supporting the whole child must remain a district-wide priority, not just in response to crisis, but as part of how we define student success.

5. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District?

As someone with dyslexia, ADD, and a slow auto processor, as well as a parent raising a neurodiverse child in this district, I see first-hand how deep the gaps are in our special education system. Families often face unclear communication, inconsistent guidance, and resistance when navigating the I&RS and IEP process. What should be a compassionate and collaborative journey, instead feels lonely and confusing.

We must begin with clear, transparent procedures on the district website written in plain language with outlined parent rights, responsibilities, and contact information. Each school's SPAC representative should be publicly listed so every family knows where to turn for help. Schools must lead with empathy and partnership; "Let's talk about how we can help" should replace "You'll never get an IEP."

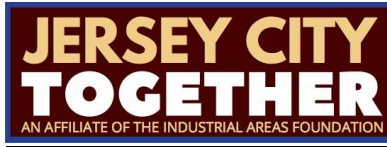
Equally important, case managers must have manageable caseloads, so that they can provide meaningful support, instead of simply managing paperwork. Every child deserves individualized attention, and every parent deserves a responsive, informed, collaborative partner.

I also advocate for recurring parent round-table meetings with the Board, and sensory rooms in every autism hub, funded through grants, not new taxes. With Spring NJGPA results showing the graduation rate of students with disabilities is in the single digits, *[response cut at 200 words]*

6. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

Street safety around our schools is a critical issue. While it's managed by the City of Jersey City, the Board of Education has a responsibility to advocate for the safety of students and families traveling to and from school each day. I've experienced these challenges firsthand at PS 37, where parents and I spent years trying to get a consistent crossing guard at a key post. It took repeated emails and ongoing pressure from families just to get basic coverage and even then, it was unreliable. The burden should not fall solely on parents. What's been missing is active involvement from the Board of Education and the Superintendent's office. To improve street safety, the BOE must maintain direct, ongoing communication with the City and the traffic enforcement division of the police department. Before each school year, the Board should confirm that all crosswalks have coverage and request a clear plan to address any gaps.

The Board must also identify high-risk areas and collaborate with the City to implement solutions like traffic calming, better signage, or safer drop-off zones. Street safety should never be negotiable and the Board must lead by ensuring our children can get to, and from, school safely.



7. How would you work with the City to ensure robust and effective enforcement, collection, and use of the **Employer Payroll Tax**?

To ensure effective enforcement, fair collection, and responsible use of Jersey City's Employer Payroll Tax, the Board of Education's Business Administrator must work directly with the City to improve coordination, close data gaps, and ensure all funds owed are collected and directed to support our schools.

The City must take a balanced approach to enforcement, offering support and flexibility to small businesses, while holding larger or repeat offenders fully accountable. For new or small employers, there should be grace periods, education, and warnings before penalties are issued, allowing them time to understand and comply with the law. However, for those who repeatedly fail to pay or deliberately avoid compliance, the City must impose strong consequences such as fines, audits, license holds, and public disclosure to deter nonpayment and protect taxpayers. Transparency must also improve. The City and Board should jointly publish quarterly and annual reports detailing collections, allocations, and the educational impact of these funds. Establishing an independent oversight committee would further strengthen accountability and public confidence.

By combining fair enforcement with firm consequences and open reporting, Jersey City can ensure the Employer Payroll Tax is collected equitably and used effectively to strengthen our public schools and community trust.

8. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**, and how do you envision creating a physical environment that imparts dignity and care for every Jersey City student? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements?

One of the most urgent facility challenges in Jersey City is the aging and inequitable condition of many school buildings from poor ventilation to outdated electrical systems and limited access to modern learning spaces like science labs, libraries, and accessible bathrooms. These conditions undermine learning, health, and dignity. Every student deserves a school that is clean, safe, and designed for 21st-century learning. Yet the current system for informing the public about facility projects is neither transparent nor up to date. The district's website contains an outdated, hard-to-find Excel list, filled with "TBD" project dates and missing critical updates. This lack of clear, current information prevents families from understanding where progress stands and how resources are being used. To fix this, I would advocate for a comprehensive, equitable, facilities plan. This plan should include a public, user-friendly dashboard, updated weekly with project start and completion dates, funding sources, and progress milestones. We must prioritize repairs based on urgency and equity, ensuring historically underfunded schools are not left behind.

By pairing transparency with accountability and working closely with the City and State to secure sustainable funding, we can ensure our facilities reflect the respect, safety, and high expectations every Jersey City student deserves.