

Candidate Name: Jessica Taube
Ballot Position: 1G
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’ve considered running for years, but something always stopped me: my children were young, work was demanding, or I disliked the idea of fundraising. This spring, I recognized first how my personal and professional experiences have prepared me to help govern the district. Additionally, I have spoken publicly about my challenging experience navigating special education during an intense family crisis. If accessing support was difficult even with racial, economic, and professional privilege, I kept asking: how can families with fewer resources navigate this system?

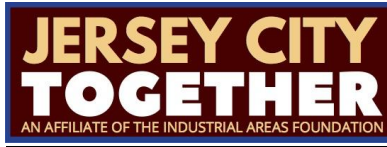
Public schools have the power to positively and holistically impact students, families, and communities. My career has been devoted to working with youth, families, educators, and administrators in public schools and youth-serving organizations. I have organized for improvements in the Jersey City public schools for over a decade. Nothing will change at a systems level until we have a board serious about governance and accountability. I am ready to serve students, their families, educators and other school staff who help our schools be safe spaces for students. They are the heart of our schools, and without their input, we cannot make informed decisions. I bring the skills, perspective, and community support to move our district forward.

2. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District? Given the recent audits of special education programs, what are the lessons learned about District strengths, challenges, and the review process? How will you work to improve **transparency** and **accountability** of special education services provided through the District, and improve tools to help families navigate the process to access services?

I will apply transparency and accountability to every program, service, and budget decision. I will pursue semiannual financial audits, public dashboards for budgets, spending, and contracts, and updated financial systems that strengthen oversight. Major budget and contract decisions will be reviewed against outcomes for students and staff, with input from educators, staff, and families. Hiring and promotion processes should have clear, published criteria.

After navigating special education here, I organized with parents and advocates to address systemic problems. If elected, I will request a full programmatic audit informed by students, families, and staff. Staff must be able to raise concerns without fear of retaliation. I will convene working groups of families and staff to review findings and develop solutions, including exploring universal design and building inclusive, neurodiversity-affirming programs that could reduce costly out-of-district placements.

The district oversees over \$1 billion, and every dollar must be accounted for. Recent audits have identified weaknesses in financial reporting and internal controls, including approximately



\$2 million in special education funds returned to the state because their use could not be documented.

As a founder of Parents United for Special Education Reform, I know that supporting our most vulnerable students strengthens our entire school 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?

I want to convene regular roundtables and listening sessions with community members in an environment that is more conducive to really taking in feedback and engaging in back-and-forth dialogue. An environment where we all sit together. I am an expert in facilitated conversations where people can all share their perspective without just a few people dominating the conversation. These sessions are essential to hold leading up to budget season, well in advance, so we can take everyone's perspective and experience into account – including school staff, parents, students, and other community members. We would need to advertise these sessions widely – through social media, the JCPS app, by creating a formal way for each school's parent ambassador to share with their entire school communities, and more.

4. Some school issues require **collaboration** with City and County entities. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

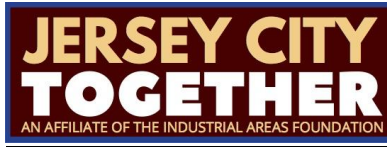
Every school intersection that needs coverage should have a crossing guard, including during the summer when there is summer programming. I have long advocated for a citywide plan that guarantees it, and for a plan to cover crossing guards who are out sick or on leave, time they have earned.

I recently learned about local parents who have formed a volunteer parent committee to greet children and families outside of school in the morning and help answer questions. Parents in other districts have convened "walking buses", allowing families to help one another to get children safely to schools. And here in Jersey City, Bike JC has organized safe "bike buses" over the years to help get children safely to school. I would like to explore ideas like this and more, which would strengthen street safety **and** parent and family engagement.

Longstanding relationships with city and county staff and elected officials make this work possible. Collaboration depends on trust, and trust puts shared resources to their best use. As a trustee, I would work with officials on a proactive street safety plan that brings together public safety staff, parent volunteers, and local business owners.

5. The **Employer Payroll Tax** is a significant source of revenue for Jersey City public schools. How would you work to improve JCBOE public reporting of the funds transferred from the City and JCBOE expenditure of the **Employer Payroll Tax** funds?

Every year, the district receives millions of dollars through the payroll tax. Residents deserve a clear and accessible way to see how these funds are collected, transferred to the district, and ultimately spent. Achieving this level of transparency would require coordination between the Business Administrator's office and the City.



As a board member, I will advocate for detailed and consistent reporting on payroll tax revenue. Reports should clearly identify the total amount collected, the amount distributed to the district, the date the funds were received, and how the district plans to allocate those dollars. I will also review distributions from the City over time to help ensure that the tax is being properly administered and enforced.

A revenue source of this size should not require parents, residents, or members of the public to repeatedly request information. The community should have straightforward, ongoing access to this financial information.

6. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements? What is your experience with local and state partners to affect this?

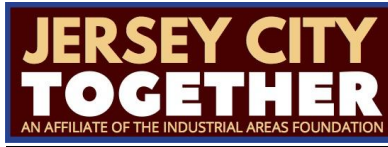
Residential growth in specific parts of Jersey City has outpaced school capacity, while many existing buildings across the district have gone too long without adequate repair. Both problems come from planning that reacts instead of anticipating.

As a trustee, I would develop a public, 10-year facilities master plan that links enrollment projections, housing development, capital investment, and maintenance. Priorities would be set by published criteria, including student safety, capacity, and equity across neighborhoods, and repair timelines would be public. I would also press the state to deliver the capital investment Jersey City has long been promised and make sure we are turning in required paperwork to receive this investment. As part of my volunteer work in Jersey City over the years, I worked alongside other advocates, agencies, and elected officials to install new water fountains with lead-free water to all the schools in Jersey City. This was a huge accomplishment that would not have happened without years of community advocacy and direct coordination with city, county, and state partners.

7. What role should **parent and community input** play in the Board oversight of the District, including but not limited to Board regular meetings? How would you promote a culture of mutual respect to support that role? Would you change policy—time limits, format, frequency—to optimize parent and community comment?

Parent, community, and staff input should shape Board oversight. Those I have supervised describe me as a collaborative leader, and the principle is simple: no one holds all the expertise. Mutual respect starts with modeling it, by listening closely, disagreeing constructively, and treating every speaker as a partner.

Yes, policy should change in four ways. Restore virtual and phone comments. Live-stream caucus meetings as well as general meetings. Move the closed session to a time before the public meeting. Guarantee every speaker three minutes, and up to five when the list is short. Move student performances to before the official meeting, so meeting time goes to Board business and public comment. Student work deserves an audience, and it should not compete with public input for time. Regular conversation sessions, as described in my answer to question #3, would extend that input beyond the meeting room.

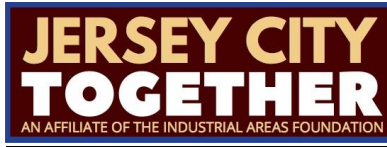


8. How do you personally **handle constructive criticism**, and can you give an example of a time criticism changed your mind on something?

Self-awareness is the foundation of emotional intelligence. It closes the gap between how a leader believes they appear and how others experience them. After decades in social-emotional learning, it remains a skill I work on continually.

Recently, someone told me a question I had asked about a policy was inappropriate. My initial reaction was disagreement. Before responding, I paused, re-read the exchange, and asked trusted colleagues for perspective. That input led me to rephrase the question and contact the person directly, so we could understand each other better. After hearing her out, I realized that the way I had asked her the question put her on the defensive, and she was unable to engage. I changed my mind about how I might approach a similar situation in the future.

Conflict is a regular part of my work as a social worker and community organizer. Handling it well means extending grace to myself and others while holding firm boundaries around justice and respect.



Candidate Name: Danielle Walker
Ballot Position: 2G
Slate (if applicable): For Stronger Schools



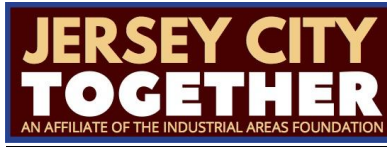
1. What **motivates you to run** for Trustee of the Jersey City Board of Education (the “Board”)? Who do you see as your primary constituency?

I waited a long time to do this. Twenty-one years ago my child was diagnosed with autism. I had no community and no idea how to navigate the system. That isolation never really left. I later spent years as a JCPS paraprofessional, then moved into housing counseling, and kept the same conclusion. Stable housing begets education. Education begets opportunity, and opportunities are how families stay housed and children stay in school. My youngest graduated from Jersey City Public Schools in June. I waited until then on purpose. I did not want anyone saying I used a Board seat for my children’s benefit. That does not mean I am done. I still support my adult children every day. Nothing came off my plate. I am running because this district has to work as a whole, on purpose, toward student success. Each student’s needs have to be met, not only the students who are easy to serve. My primary constituency is students, including twice-exceptional students and English language learners, with or without specialized services. Then their families, the staff with them all day, and the parents I meet in housing work.

2. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District? Given the recent audits of special education programs, what are the lessons learned about District strengths, challenges, and the review process? How will you work to improve **transparency** and **accountability** of special education services provided through the District, and improve tools to help families navigate the process to access services?

I believe a district is only as good as its special education program. Raise the floor and the whole building rises. Chase only the ceiling and classified students never leave the basement. That includes twice-exceptional students, whose strengths can hide a disability, and English language learners, with or without an IEP. Language is not a disability nor an excuse to ignore a real one. I know what it is to get that diagnosis with no map. I also saw it as a para, and later in housing. One family lived in a four-story walk-up. Their child depended on medical devices. Homeschooling should have been simple- it was not. The audits are bad enough: payments that do not match enrollment, therapy billed without clean timesheets, a second report sent to prosecutors while families still cannot read it. Weak controls/oversight fail kids twice. The dollar walks, and the service never shows up. I would push a real programmatic audit, protect staff who speak, provide resources for parents of classified children in plain language (PRISE, Section 504, IDEA rights, I&RS), CST evals and IEP development meetings, and provide friendly navigation so no parent has to do this alone the way I did.

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?



A budget is a set of choices. Most people never see it that way because it arrives as a stack of numbers after the real decisions are already made. At my day job I have to explain federal housing money to families who we address as beneficiaries. I would treat the school budget the same way. Before the Board votes, I want school-level, plain-language breakdowns: what this proposal does to class size, paras, special education, buildings, and transportation at your child's school. Not a 400-page PDF the night before. The requirement would be to hear from the school administrators, not to wait for people to find a council or BOE meeting. Staff, parents, students, and stakeholders who do not have kids in the system all have a claim. Advertise it on the JCPS site, through each school, and through our partner networks. The Board must show and prove. If a reduction or increase is coming, say so out loud, in time for people to respond. Public engagement is not a hearing at the end. It is the work before the vote.

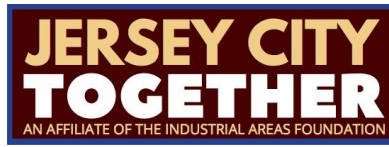
4. Some school issues require **collaboration** with City and County entities. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

When my children attended PS 37, there was a crossing guard on every block of Erie Street starting at 9th on down. There was never one at 10th and Erie. That corner is where traffic from east and west meets and then heads north toward the Holland Tunnel. I implore you to visit that corner one morning. The light is a flashing red, not a full signal. I watched motorists treat stopping like a suggestion, not a requirement. I walked my kids through that. The current model using crossing guards is built around arrival and dismissal. Across the district, many children in the primary grades walk to school and home without adult supervision. Middle and high schoolers in sports and clubs cross later, often in the dark. I want us to look at coverage for both. Put a guard where the danger is, not only on blocks that already look covered, and have a backup when a guard is out. Collaboration between the BOE, City and County is a no-brainer. I would use those relationships to lock in a school-by-school plan. Parent volunteers and nearby businesses can be extra eyes but are not a substitute for trained guards.

5. The **Employer Payroll Tax** is a significant source of revenue for Jersey City public schools. How would you work to improve JCBOE public reporting of the funds transferred from the City and JCBOE expenditure of the **Employer Payroll Tax** funds?

The Employer Payroll Tax is city-collected money that is supposed to land in our schools. The Board does not levy it. We do have a duty to show two things in public: what came over from the City, and what we did with it. Jersey City Together already asked Mayor Solomon for regular reporting of collections, administrative costs, Trust Fund balances, and amounts transferred to JCPS. He said yes. That is the city half. I would match it on the Board side. Every transfer would show up as its own public line, not get swallowed into the general fund with no trail. Then we should say, in ordinary language, whether it went to classrooms, special education, buildings, or something else. This is the work I already do with federal housing grants. Restricted money needs a paper trail, a drawdown record, and a report people can actually read. I would ask for a quarterly joint report from the City and the district, posted online and presented at a Board meeting, with collections, transfers, and expenditures side by side. If the numbers do not match, that is the Board's business the same week, not the next budget season.

6. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements? What is your experience with local and state partners to affect this?



Our buildings have been treated like an afterthought while the city adds housing. I see both sides. I helped families stay in barely code compliant apartments, to then watch their children walk into schools that are overcrowded, tired, and behind on repairs.

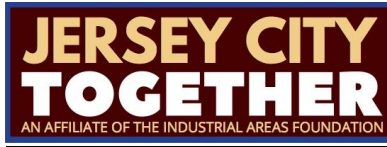
Health and safety, overcrowding, compatible learning environments and systems we keep patching are major concerns. If the building is unsafe or the seat does not exist, talking about achievement does not mean much. Elevators need to work every day for students and staff with mobility issues. I would push a public, dated facilities plan tied to enrollment and to housing we already know is coming, with deadlines. Life-safety work does not wait for a ribbon cutting. I have spent a few years coordinating city/state departments, HUD, contractors, and council offices. I would use that same approach with the Schools Development Authority, and City Hall: keep the list public, keep the pressure on, and stop planning one emergency at a time.

7. What role should **parent and community input** play in the Board oversight of the District, including but not limited to Board regular meetings? How would you promote a culture of mutual respect to support that role? Would you change policy—time limits, format, frequency—to optimize parent and community comment?

Parent and community input is not a courtesy. For a long time I was the parent with no one to call. If the only way in is a microphone at a long meeting, a lot of people will never be heard. I would keep public comments at three minutes but not shorten it when the room is upset. If the list is short, give people a little more time. Bring back virtual and phone comments so a parent on a night shift, or a parent who cannot attend is not locked out. The Board has to answer, in writing, what it did with what it heard. Showing up cannot feel like shouting into a hole. Culture is the harder part. Staff and families should be able to tell the truth without wondering if they will be punished for it. Respect goes both ways, but the Board holds the power in that room, so the Board sets the tone. I would also take conversations out to schools and neighborhoods, because one comment period is not a relationship.

8. How do you personally **handle constructive criticism**, and can you give an example of a time criticism changed your mind on something?

I do not like confrontation nor contention disguised as constructive criticism. I have learned to sit still long enough with criticism however it's packaged. The clearest example is this campaign. People I trust told me not to run while I still had children in the district. They said it would look like I was using the seat for my own household. I pushed back at first. I thought I could keep the two things separate. Then I thought about how fast people assume the worst when an official has a personal stake, and about families who already do not trust the Board. They were right about the conflict. They were not right that I should stay out forever. I waited until my youngest graduated in June. In housing work, applicants told me our packets were written for people who already knew the system. I did not drop the rules. I changed the order and the language. More families finished. On the Board I will not treat criticism as disloyalty. If I am wrong, I change the practice, not defend my pride.



Candidate Name: Chloe Williams

Ballot Position: 3G

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?

Jersey City Public Schools are central to my story. I was born and raised here, attended our public schools, and both of my parents worked in the district. I remain closely connected to young people and families, and I hear concerns about academics, support services, communication, and whether decisions are followed through after they are announced. That is what pushed me to run. I want to bring stronger fiscal oversight, clearer accountability, and better follow-through to the Board.



My primary constituency is the students of Jersey City. My decisions will start with what helps them learn, grow, and prepare for life after graduation: strong academics, access to advanced and enrichment opportunities, safe schools, needed supports, and preparation for college, careers, trades, and adulthood. Serving students also means listening closely to parents, educators, and staff because they are closest to students' needs and strengths, while the broader community experiences the impact of Board decisions every day.

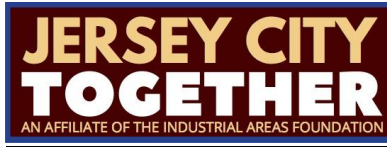
2. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District? Given the recent audits of special education programs, what are the lessons learned about District strengths, challenges, and the review process? How will you work to improve **transparency** and **accountability** of special education services provided through the District, and improve tools to help families navigate the process to access services?

Families should not have to fight through a confusing system to receive services their children are entitled to. I would push for stronger systems that ensure IEP compliance, clear timelines for evaluations and meetings, better communication, and regular public reporting on meaningful measures such as service delivery, staffing, delays, and corrective actions. Parents should also have a plain-language guide explaining the process, their rights, deadlines, services, appeals, and local and state contacts.

I would make time to meet directly with parents and caregivers because sometimes families need a clear answer, and sometimes they need someone to listen. My healthcare operations background taught me how important documentation, privacy, deadlines, and follow-through are when someone is waiting for a needed service. As a trustee, I would ask where delays are happening, whether staffing and provider capacity are adequate, and whether audits and corrective plans are leading to measurable change.

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 budget should be plain, clear, and available early enough for residents to review it before hearings and votes. I would push for the full budget and supporting materials to be released in



advance, along with plain-language summaries showing major changes, school-level impacts, staffing, contracts, grants, and how spending aligns with student needs, district priorities, and goals for special populations.

I would also support additional budget sessions beyond the formal hearing so residents have more opportunities to ask questions and provide input while decisions are still being developed. Public engagement should not depend on sitting through a long meeting, so I would use social media and other district communication channels to share updates and make my contact information available. After adoption, residents should receive regular budget-to-actual updates showing what was approved, what has been spent, whether priorities have shifted, and whether funded programs are producing the intended results.

4. Some school issues require **collaboration** with City and County entities. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

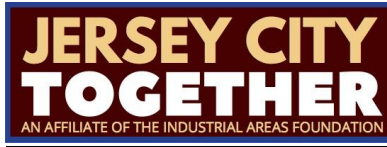
Street safety around schools requires partnership because the Board of Education does not control city streets, traffic signals, enforcement, or the City's crossing-guard program. As a trustee, I would work with the Mayor, City Council, public-safety and transportation officials, crossing guards, school leaders, and families to identify concerns such as dangerous crossings, speeding, double parking, lighting, signage, traffic flow, and crossing-guard coverage.

The district still has responsibility for safe arrival and dismissal procedures on school property, including pickup, drop-off, bus loading, and communication with families. I would support school-by-school reviews during actual arrival and dismissal times and use districtwide feedback from parents, students, staff, crossing guards, and nearby residents to identify recurring problems. Concerns that require City action should be tracked publicly with the responsible agency and current status so issues do not disappear between departments and the Board can follow up without promising authority it does not have.

5. The **Employer Payroll Tax** is a significant source of revenue for Jersey City public schools. How would you work to improve JCBOE public reporting of the funds transferred from the City and JCBOE expenditure of the **Employer Payroll Tax** funds?

Residents should be able to follow Employer Payroll Tax funds from collection to transfer to district spending. I would advocate for regular public reporting, in collaboration with the Business Administrator's office and the City, showing how much was collected, how much was transferred to the district, when it was received, how much has been budgeted and spent, what remains, and which schools, programs, positions, or projects are being supported. The figures should be easy to compare with the adopted budget and prior years so residents can see changes in collections and distributions over time.

Throughout my career in healthcare, small-business, and nonprofit operations, I have worked with expense tracking, invoices, vendor costs, grants, and compliance documentation. That experience taught me to ask direct financial questions: Where did the money come from? What was it approved for? Where did it go? Do the records match? A major revenue source should have a clear public paper trail without residents having to make repeated requests for basic information.



6. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements? What is your experience with local and state partners to affect this?

The most pressing facility challenges are the age and condition of many district buildings, recurring maintenance problems, overcrowding in some schools, underenrollment in others, and the need for clear timelines on repairs and capital projects. Rather than create another plan from scratch, I would use and regularly update the district's existing long-range facilities plan, with a publicly available priority list based first on health, safety, and the instructional environment. For major projects, the public should be able to see the scope, cost, funding source, timeline, and current status.

The district cannot solve every major capital need alone. I would advocate for stronger coordination with the State and our state legislative delegation to pursue funding for major repairs, modernization, and, where necessary, new school construction. I would also be open to appropriate partnerships with the City. My operations and project-management experience would help me ask detailed questions, track follow-through, and keep the focus on safe, functional learning environments.

7. What role should **parent and community input** play in the Board oversight of the District, including but not limited to Board regular meetings? How would you promote a culture of mutual respect to support that role? Would you change policy—time limits, format, frequency—to optimize parent and community comment?

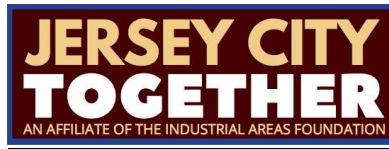
Parent and community input should be part of Board oversight throughout the year, not limited to a few minutes of public comment. I would support school-based listening sessions, multiple ways to submit concerns, written follow-up, and a consistent process so people know their concern was received, who is responsible for addressing it, and whether there has been progress.

I also believe Board meetings should give the public a meaningful opportunity to participate. I would support reviewing public-comment procedures, including reasonable speaking time, the placement of public comment on the agenda, and additional opportunities for input when major issues are being considered. Meetings should remain accessible for people who cannot always attend in person, including strong remote viewing and consideration of lawful remote participation options. People should be able to disagree without feeling dismissed. The Board should listen, respond respectfully, and make clear what can be acted on, what cannot, and what happens next.

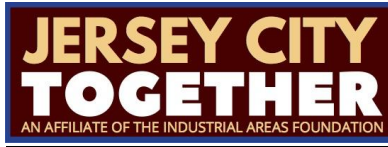
8. How do you personally **handle constructive criticism**, and can you give an example of a time criticism changed your mind on something?

I try to listen intentionally before I respond. I ask clarifying questions because understanding the concern matters more than immediately defending my position. If criticism points to information I missed or shows that changing course could lead to a better result, I take that seriously.

Recently, while campaigning, I was giving my pitch to a voter when he interrupted me and asked, "What's 4 x 8?" I answered, "32," and asked why. He told me I sounded like a robot, like



I had been giving the same speech all day. I thanked him because I understood his point. I had practiced so much that I was focused on getting through my talking points instead of having a real conversation. That feedback changed how I approach voters. I still prepare, but now I slow down, listen, and focus on the person in front of me. I do not see changing my approach after receiving useful feedback as weakness; I see it as responsible leadership.

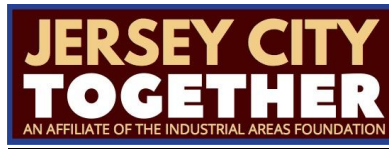


Candidate Name: George P. Blount

Ballot Position: 4G

Slate (if applicable): Education Matters

This candidate chose not to provide written responses.

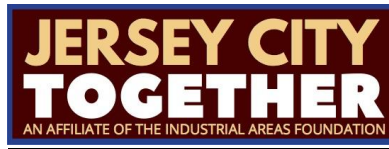


Candidate Name: De'Jon Morris

Ballot Position: 5G

Slate (if applicable): Education Matters

This candidate chose not to provide written responses.

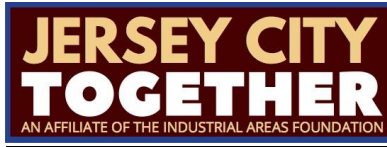


Candidate Name: Alpa Patel

Ballot Position: 6G

Slate (if applicable): Education Matters

This candidate chose not to provide written responses.



Candidate Name: Julietta Vogt

Ballot Position: 7G

Slate (if applicable): Leadership That Listens

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?

All members of the “Leadership that Listens” slate are products of JCPS. This is our opportunity to provide guidance and leadership to the systems that helped shape us.

My love for Jersey City is what motivates me most to run for the Board of Education. Anyone who knows me knows how proud I am to be from this city and how deeply I care about its future. I often say that I want Jersey City to be the only place I ever call home. For that to be possible, it needs to remain a place where people can afford to stay, raise their families, and feel confident sending their children to our public schools. The future of Jersey City depends on the decisions we make today, and education is a critical part of that future. My primary constituency is the students of Jersey City. As a trustee, my responsibility would be to help ensure that every student has access to the quality education, opportunities, and learning environments they deserve.

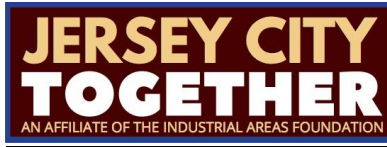
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Special education is a core part of our school system. We will begin by speaking with parents, educators, child study teams, administrators, and other stakeholders to assess what is working and where improvements are needed. The recent audits show that IEPs can require significant resources and support, and there needs to be accountability to make sure they are being properly followed.

We believe every family should have regular opportunities to meet with their child’s principal, child study team, educators, and other appropriate professionals to review their child’s progress and update the IEP when necessary. District leadership must also ensure that IEPs are being properly understood and implemented at the school level.

Transparency also means making the process easier for families to navigate. We will work to ensure parents receive regular information about their child’s progress and that information about special education services, IEPs, and available resources is communicated in clear, accessible language. Great information does not help families if they cannot understand it or navigate the process to access the services their child needs.

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?



We will use online channels and other public forums to make the budget process more transparent, accessible, and easier for the community to understand. That means communicating in clear language, explaining where and when the public can provide input, and giving residents enough information to understand how proposed spending will impact their schools.

We also believe greater detail should be provided at the school level, including how resources are allocated in relation to enrollment, staffing, administration, and student needs. For major investments, we should also evaluate whether that spending is producing meaningful results. A transparent budget should allow the public to understand not only how much we are spending, but where the money is going and what we are getting in return.

4. Some school issues require **collaboration** with City and County entities. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

We will work with City and County officials to identify where the safety gaps are around our schools, while also hearing directly from educators, families, and the individual school communities about their concerns. We also believe each school should have a safety liaison who can work with the community and local officials to address issues as they come up. Improving street safety will require everyone working together and communicating regularly.

5. The **Employer Payroll Tax** is a significant source of revenue for Jersey City public schools. How would you work to improve JCBOE public reporting of the funds transferred from the City and JCBOE expenditure of the **Employer Payroll Tax** funds?

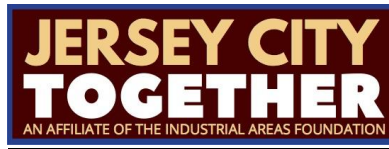
We believe better systems are needed for public reporting of Employer Payroll Tax revenue and how those funds are spent. More detailed information should be included in the budget and made easily available to the public. We also need to look at how the Board currently communicates this information and use the channels where residents are most likely to see and understand it. Greater transparency around where this money comes from and how it is being used is important to rebuilding public trust.

6. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements? What is your experience with local and state partners to affect this?

Our biggest challenges are aging buildings, deferred maintenance, and making sure our schools can keep up with a growing city. Jersey City has seen a boom in development, but that growth has not always translated into more resources for our schools. PILOT agreements, for example, have historically not provided the JCBOE with the same direct funding as traditional property taxes.

We need to be more creative about finding resources. That means working with the City and State, looking at ways PILOT revenue can support our schools, and building partnerships with developers, nonprofits, and other organizations that can help.

We would prioritize projects based on safety, urgency, and how they impact students. Our team has experience working with local and state partners and understands that the Board cannot



solve these issues alone. A big part of our job will be bringing the right people to the table and advocating for the resources our schools need.

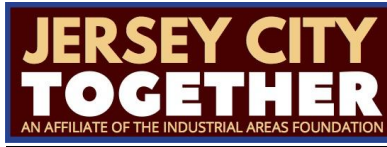
7. What role should **parent and community input** play in the Board oversight of the District, including but not limited to Board regular meetings? How would you promote a culture of mutual respect to support that role? Would you change policy—time limits, format, frequency—to optimize parent and community comment?

Parent and community input should play an important role in Board oversight, and we need to make sure there are meaningful opportunities for people to be heard. Not every concern needs to wait for a Board meeting. Principals should be accessible to their school communities and hold regular opportunities for parents to raise concerns and provide feedback.

We would also support dedicated forums or town halls for issues that need broader discussion, with that feedback brought back to the Board when appropriate. We are open to looking at the current public comment format, time limits, and other policies to determine whether they are giving parents and community members a meaningful opportunity to participate. Mutual respect starts with listening, being transparent about what can and cannot be done, and making sure people know their concerns are being taken seriously.

8. How do you personally **handle constructive criticism**, and can you give an example of a time criticism changed your mind on something?

I take constructive criticism seriously, even when I may not agree with it initially. I am a decisive person and usually have a clear idea of how I want to approach something, but I have learned throughout my career that being challenged can make the end result better. There have been times when a colleague questioned how I was approaching a project, and after hearing their perspective, I realized their approach made more sense and changed course. I believe being a good leader means knowing the difference between standing your ground and simply being unwilling to change your mind.



Candidate Name: Videsh A. Bahadur

Ballot Position: 8G

Slate (if applicable): Leadership That Listens

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?

All members of the “Leadership that Listens” slate are products of JCPS. This is our opportunity to provide guidance and leadership to the systems that helped shape us.

As a lifelong Jersey City resident, a product of Jersey City Public Schools, and now a parent of a student in the district, I am personally invested in the future of our schools. I am motivated to bring my experience in education and workforce development to the Board to help ensure our students are prepared for their futures and that we are responsible with the resources entrusted to our school system. My primary constituency is the students of Jersey City, while also listening to the parents, educators, and community members who support them.

2. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District? Given the recent audits of special education programs, what are the lessons learned about District strengths, challenges, and the review process? How will you work to improve **transparency** and **accountability** of special education services provided through the District, and improve tools to help families navigate the process to access services?

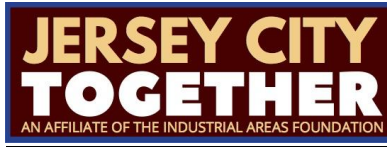
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We believe every family should have regular opportunities to meet with their child’s principal, child study team, educators, and other appropriate professionals to review their child’s progress and update the IEP when necessary. District leadership must also ensure that IEPs are being properly understood and implemented at the school level.

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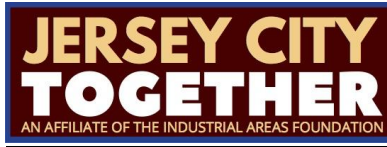
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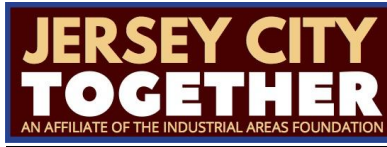
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8. How do you personally **handle constructive criticism**, and can you give an example of a time criticism changed your mind on something?

I believe constructive criticism can help us see ourselves from a different perspective and recognize where we may need to adjust. I have always been a private person and, admittedly, have avoided social media. However, my teenage daughter gave me some very direct criticism and reminded me that if I am asking people to support me, I need to be willing to share who I am, my experience, and my deep roots in Jersey City. She was right, and I have since made an effort to step outside of my comfort zone and be more open with voters.



Candidate Name: Fernando Garcia

Ballot Position: 9G

Slate (if applicable): Leadership That Listens

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?

All members of the “Leadership that Listens” slate are products of JCPS. This is our opportunity to provide guidance and leadership to the systems that helped shape us.

My career in education and workforce development has shown me firsthand how powerful education can be in shaping a person’s future. That experience motivates me to run for the Jersey City Board of Education because I believe we have a responsibility not only to prepare students for graduation, but to help them understand and prepare for the opportunities available to them afterward. My primary constituency is the students of Jersey City, while also listening to and working with the families and educators who support them every day.

2. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District? Given the recent audits of special education programs, what are the lessons learned about District strengths, challenges, and the review process? How will you work to improve **transparency** and **accountability** of special education services provided through the District, and improve tools to help families navigate the process to access services?

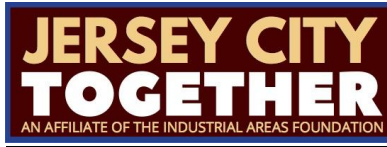
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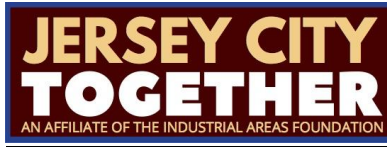
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We need to be more creative about finding resources. That means working with the City and State, looking at ways PILOT revenue can support our schools, and building partnerships with developers, nonprofits, and other organizations that can help.

We would prioritize projects based on safety, urgency, and how they impact students. Our team has experience working with local and state partners and understands that the Board cannot solve these issues alone. A big part of our job will be bringing the right people to the table and advocating for the resources our schools need.



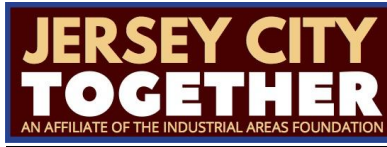
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We would also support dedicated forums or town halls for issues that need broader discussion, with that feedback brought back to the Board when appropriate. We are open to looking at the current public comment format, time limits, and other policies to determine whether they are giving parents and community members a meaningful opportunity to participate. Mutual respect starts with listening, being transparent about what can and cannot be done, and making sure people know their concerns are being taken seriously.

8. How do you personally **handle constructive criticism**, and can you give an example of a time criticism changed your mind on something?

I welcome constructive criticism and see it as an opportunity to learn and improve. Throughout my career, there have been times when feedback from colleagues or those directly impacted by a decision helped me see an issue from a different perspective and adjust my approach. I believe good leadership means being confident in your decisions while remaining open to changing course when presented with new information.



Candidate Name: Gina Verdibello
Ballot Position: 10G (1-year term)
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 running for the Jersey City Board of Education because I believe our students and families deserve a school district that is accountable, transparent, and focused on providing every child with a strong education.



Having previously served on the Board, I understand both the responsibility of the position and the importance of asking difficult questions. My experience also taught me that Board members must listen to the people they represent. I am running again because I want to bring that experience back to the Board while continuing to advocate for stronger academic outcomes, safe and well-maintained schools, responsible budgeting, and greater transparency.

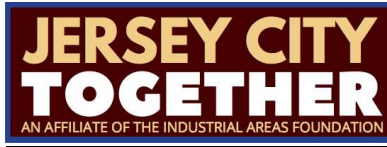
My primary constituency is the children of Jersey City. Every decision we make should begin with what will help them learn, grow, and succeed. But serving children also means listening to parents, educators, staff, taxpayers, and community members. Their voices provide the Board with information and perspectives necessary to make responsible decisions.

2. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District? Given the recent audits of special education programs, what are the lessons learned about District strengths, challenges, and the review process? How will you work to improve **transparency** and **accountability** of special education services provided through the District, and improve tools to help families navigate the process to access services?

Every child deserves access to the services and educational opportunities they need to succeed. For families of children with special needs, navigating evaluations, IEPs, placements, therapies, and other services can be overwhelming. The district should make that process easier, not harder.

Recent audits should not simply identify problems; they should lead to action. The Board must use audit findings to identify strengths and gaps in special education services, establish clear corrective actions and timelines, and regularly report on progress. Most importantly, families should be able to see how these reviews are resulting in better and more consistent services for their children. My approach would be to require clear follow-up on audit findings, measurable corrective-action plans, timelines, and regular public reporting on progress. Families should have easy-to-understand information explaining their rights, available services, contacts, timelines, and the steps for raising concerns.

Board oversight should also examine whether students are receiving required services consistently and whether staffing and resources are sufficient. Transparency must go beyond reporting numbers; parents need to know whether identified problems are being corrected.



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?

A school budget is more than numbers on a spreadsheet, it represents decisions about classrooms, teachers, programs, facilities, and ultimately taxpayers. The Board should make the budget understandable and accessible before final decisions are made.

I would support earlier community engagement, including public budget presentations that explain major increases and decreases in plain language and show how proposed spending affects individual schools and students. Parents and residents should be able to understand where revenue comes from, where it is going, and what outcomes the district expects from major investments.

I would also encourage school level conversations, so families do not have to attend only a formal Board meeting to understand the budget.

Having previously served on the Board, I understand that Board members must balance the educational needs of students with their responsibility to taxpayers. A fully funded budget must also be a responsible budget. The community should have meaningful opportunities to ask questions and provide input before, not simply after, major financial decisions have effectively been made.

4. Some school issues require **collaboration** with City and County entities. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

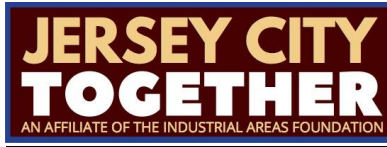
Safe schools begin before students enter the building. The Board cannot address street safety alone, so I would advocate for consistent collaboration among the Board, City, County, law enforcement, traffic engineers, school administrators, and families.

I would start by identifying schools with the greatest safety concerns using crash data, parent and school reports, traffic patterns, and observations during arrival and dismissal. Solutions could include improved crosswalks and signage, crossing guards, traffic-calming measures, better lighting, enforcement of school-zone laws, and changes to drop-off and pickup patterns where needed.

Jersey City already has infrastructure that can support this collaboration. The City's Traffic Engineering Division conducts pedestrian-safety studies and manages speed humps, curb extensions, roadway markings and other measures, while the city renewed its Vision Zero commitment in 2026.

The Board should have a formal process for bringing school-specific concerns to these agencies and tracking them through resolution. Parents should also be able to report dangerous conditions and see what action is being taken.

5. The **Employer Payroll Tax** is a significant source of revenue for Jersey City public schools. How would you work to improve JCBOE public reporting of the funds transferred from the City and JCBOE expenditure of the **Employer Payroll Tax** funds?



The Employer Payroll Tax is a significant source of school funding, and the public should be able to clearly see how much is collected, how much is transferred to the district, when those transfers occur, and how the district uses the money.

I would advocate for a clear, regularly updated public report that reconciles the information provided by the City with the funds received and expended by the Board. The reporting should be easy for the average resident to understand rather than requiring someone to search through multiple agendas, resolutions, and financial documents.

The Board should clearly distinguish Employer Payroll Tax revenue from other funding sources and explain where those dollars are allocated within the budget. If there are differences between projected collections, actual collections, transfers, or expenditures, those differences should be explained publicly.

Transparency builds trust. Taxpayers should not have to guess where these funds are going, and Board members should have reliable information available when making budget decisions.

6. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements? What is your experience with local and state partners to affect this?

Jersey City's aging school facilities remain one of the district's most significant challenges. Students and staff deserve buildings that are safe, clean, accessible, properly heated and cooled, and appropriate for teaching and learning.

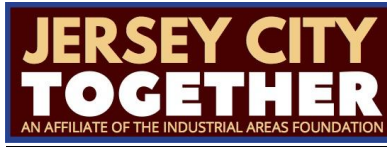
I would prioritize projects based first on health and safety, accessibility, instructional impact, and urgency rather than political considerations. The district should maintain a transparent facilities plan showing the condition of each school, identified needs, estimated costs, funding sources, project status, and anticipated completion dates.

JCPS already publishes a Long-Range Facilities Plan, facilities status information, and a live facilities tracker. The challenge for Board oversight is ensuring those tools translate into timely action and clear accountability.

During my previous Board service, I advocated around facility concerns, including the removal of the Pre-K trailers at PS 23. That experience reinforced for me that progress requires persistence and collaboration. As a trustee, I would continue working with local officials, the State, and appropriate agencies to pursue funding and move priority projects forward.

7. What role should **parent and community input** play in the Board oversight of the District, including but not limited to Board regular meetings? How would you promote a culture of mutual respect to support that role? Would you change policy—time limits, format, frequency—to optimize parent and community comment?

Parent and community input should be an essential part of Board oversight. Trustees are elected to represent the public, and listening cannot be limited to election season.



I would support creating more opportunities for meaningful dialogue beyond the regular public-comment period, including community forums, school-based meetings, committee discussions when appropriate, and clearer ways for residents to submit questions and receive follow-up. At Board meetings, public comment should be conducted respectfully in both directions. Parents and residents should be able to express disagreement or criticism without feeling dismissed, while speakers should also respect reasonable rules that allow meetings to function.

I would review existing policies on time limits and format to determine whether they provide meaningful opportunities for participation, particularly when an issue generates significant public interest. I also believe the Board needs a better system for follow-up. Too often, people speak at a meeting but do not know what happens afterward.

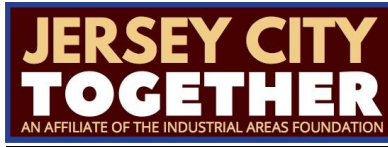
We may not always agree, but everyone should leave knowing that they were heard and treated respectfully.

8. How do you personally **handle constructive criticism**, and can you give an example of a time criticism changed your mind on something?

I believe constructive criticism is an important part of public service. As a Board member, I may come into a discussion with one perspective, but I have always believed it is my responsibility to listen to the community and remain open to changing my mind.

During my previous time on the Board, there was a personnel recommendation that I initially did not support. The Superintendent supported the appointment, but I had concerns and did not initially see the issue the same way. When members of the community came before the Board and explained why they supported the individual and why they believed the appointment was important, I listened. Their comments gave me a different perspective and ultimately changed my mind.

That experience reinforced something I strongly believe serving on the Board is not about me or proving that my original position was right. It is about listening, considering different perspectives, and making the decision I believe is best for our students, families, and school community.

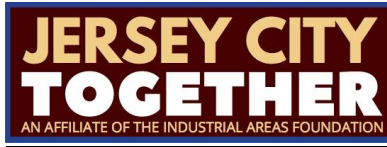


Candidate Name: Vanessa Rodriguez

Ballot Position: 11G (1-year term)

Slate (if applicable): Education Matters

This candidate chose not to provide written responses.



Candidate Name: Zebedayo Masongo
Ballot Position: 12G (1-year term)
Slate (if applicable): Leadership That Listens

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?

All members of the “Leadership that Listens” slate are products of JCPS. This is our opportunity to provide guidance and leadership to the systems that helped shape us.

Education has always been important to me and has played a large role in my professional journey. Getting the opportunity to run and, in some way, contribute to the lives of other students is a great way for me to give back to the thing that helped shape me in the city where I was raised. Everything that’s done is for the students.

2. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District? Given the recent audits of special education programs, what are the lessons learned about District strengths, challenges, and the review process? How will you work to improve **transparency** and **accountability** of special education services provided through the District, and improve tools to help families navigate the process to access services?

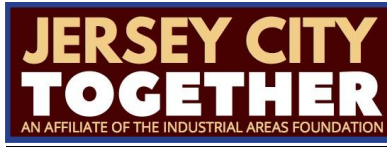
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Transparency also means making the process easier for families to navigate. We will work to ensure parents receive regular information about their child’s progress and that information about special education services, IEPs, and available resources is communicated in clear, accessible language. Great information does not help families if they cannot understand it or navigate the process to access the services their child needs.

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?

We will use online channels and other public forums to make the budget process more transparent, accessible, and easier for the community to understand. That means communicating in clear language, explaining where and when the public can provide input, and giving residents enough information to understand how proposed spending will impact their schools.



We also believe greater detail should be provided at the school level, including how resources are allocated in relation to enrollment, staffing, administration, and student needs. For major investments, we should also evaluate whether that spending is producing meaningful results. A transparent budget should allow the public to understand not only how much we are spending, but where the money is going and what we are getting in return.

4. Some school issues require **collaboration** with City and County entities. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?

We will work with City and County officials to identify where the safety gaps are around our schools, while also hearing directly from educators, families, and the individual school communities about their concerns. We also believe each school should have a safety liaison who can work with the community and local officials to address issues as they come up. Improving street safety will require everyone working together and communicating regularly.

5. The **Employer Payroll Tax** is a significant source of revenue for Jersey City public schools. How would you work to improve JCBOE public reporting of the funds transferred from the City and JCBOE expenditure of the **Employer Payroll Tax** funds?

We believe better systems are needed for public reporting of Employer Payroll Tax revenue and how those funds are spent. More detailed information should be included in the budget and made easily available to the public. We also need to look at how the Board currently communicates this information and use the channels where residents are most likely to see and understand it. Greater transparency around where this money comes from and how it is being used is important to rebuilding public trust.

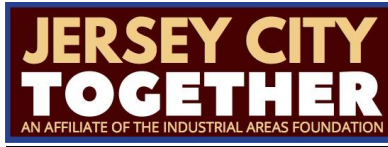
6. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements? What is your experience with local and state partners to affect this?

Our biggest challenges are aging buildings, deferred maintenance, and making sure our schools can keep up with a growing city. Jersey City has seen a boom in development, but that growth has not always translated into more resources for our schools. PILOT agreements, for example, have historically not provided the JCBOE with the same direct funding as traditional property taxes.

We need to be more creative about finding resources. That means working with the City and State, looking at ways PILOT revenue can support our schools, and building partnerships with developers, nonprofits, and other organizations that can help.

We would prioritize projects based on safety, urgency, and how they impact students. Our team has experience working with local and state partners and understands that the Board cannot solve these issues alone. A big part of our job will be bringing the right people to the table and advocating for the resources our schools need.

7. What role should **parent and community input** play in the Board oversight of the District, including but not limited to Board regular meetings? How would you promote a culture of



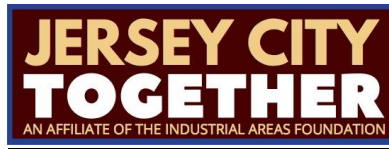
mutual respect to support that role? Would you change policy—time limits, format, frequency—to optimize parent and community comment?

Parent and community input should play an important role in Board oversight, and we need to make sure there are meaningful opportunities for people to be heard. Not every concern needs to wait for a Board meeting. Principals should be accessible to their school communities and hold regular opportunities for parents to raise concerns and provide feedback.

We would also support dedicated forums or town halls for issues that need broader discussion, with that feedback brought back to the Board when appropriate. We are open to looking at the current public comment format, time limits, and other policies to determine whether they are giving parents and community members a meaningful opportunity to participate. Mutual respect starts with listening, being transparent about what can and cannot be done, and making sure people know their concerns are being taken seriously.

8. How do you personally **handle constructive criticism**, and can you give an example of a time criticism changed your mind on something?

I handle constructive criticism well. I've been given constructive criticism throughout my career both academically and professionally. My goal when given constructive criticism is always to inquire about what I can do to improve and what actionable steps can be taken so that whatever mistake I've made doesn't happen again.



Candidate Name:

Ballot Position:

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?
2. How will you work to improve **special education** and the treatment of children with special needs in the District? Given the recent audits of special education programs, what are the lessons learned about District strengths, challenges, and the review process? How will you work to improve **transparency** and **accountability** of special education services provided through the District, and improve tools to help families navigate the process to access services?
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?
4. Some school issues require **collaboration** with City and County entities. What would you do to address and improve **street safety** around our schools?
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6. What do you see as the School District's most pressing school **facility and infrastructure challenges**? How would you address and prioritize needed facility and infrastructure improvements? What is your experience with local and state partners to affect this?
7. What role should **parent and community input** play in the Board oversight of the District, including but not limited to Board regular meetings? How would you promote a culture of mutual respect to support that role? Would you change policy—time limits, format, frequency—to optimize parent and community comment?
8. How do you personally **handle constructive criticism**, and can you give an example of a time criticism changed your mind on something?