



The Education Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire:

This questionnaire for Mayoral Candidates is to be submitted and collected by United Way and made public.

Questionnaire

**1. What is your vision for education in Los Angeles?**

My focus on education is centered from the perspective of a parent of a student in public school.

Improving our schools has to start with leadership, and we need strong principal leadership in every school to ensure all students' success. The principal is the anchor for teacher development, parent engagement and other key measures to improve schools. As Mayor, I will work with LAUSD Board and Superintendent to make sure the district prioritizes leadership development, and I will work with the philanthropic community to raise money to ensure Los Angeles has the best school leadership training program in the nation.

Beyond leadership, we need to make sure our principals, teachers and parents have the resources and flexibility they need to successfully educate our students. I believe in local control and we need to push as many resources and decisions as possible to principals and teachers at school sites, who know what is best for their students. As Mayor I will advocate aggressively in Sacramento to ensure that Prop 30 funds are spent where they need to be spent – in the classrooms and at schools. I will also work with the Governor and others to ensure fewer rules are dictated from Sacramento and more flexibility is given to local schools. I will push the School Board and Superintendent to minimize rules, regulation and bureaucracy at schools so that principals and teachers can most effectively support their students.

We need to bring as many resources and opportunities as possible to our schools in order to give every student the greatest chance at success. As Mayor I am uniquely positioned to influence policy that is good for students and also bring resources to our schools. I will advocate for quality schools, regardless of if they are traditional public schools, charter schools, or Partnership schools. Parents want safe, quality schools where our children are believed in and teachers are teaching them to fall in love with learning.

I also plan to connect after school programs, social services, and other services to school sites because we know that schools can't do it alone. I helped start LA's Best under Mayor Bradley because we knew that students needed support after the school day, and I plan to help more and more schools connect to quality programs like LA's Best.

I am a parent and I know that I have a responsibility to be involved in my child's education. As Mayor, I want to help all parents in our city be true partners with their children's public schools, and give them the resources, opportunities, and choices they need to give their child the education they deserve.

**2. What lessons have you learned from Mayor Villaraigosa’s work in education? What has worked and what would you do differently?**

Although he hasn’t succeeded on everything he set out to do, I applaud his focus on education and dedication to improving education for our City’s children. As Mayor, I will continue to promote strong collaboration between the City and LAUSD.

I believe in giving parents as many options as possible to help their children succeed. I also believe that all schools – traditional, charter, in-district or out – should be held accountable. So long as the Mayor’s Partnership Schools continue to deliver results for its students and their families, I will absolutely continue to run them as Mayor.

I believe the City of LA, LAUSD, teachers, administrators, students, parents and the private sector must recommit to our shared mission of turning around our lowest performing schools. Making sure our students with the greatest need get more support will be a priority for me.

Improving public schools will be a priority in my administration and the Partnership will be a part of that.

**3. As you know, low student performance significantly impacts a city’s well-being. What are the 3 most important things you would do as mayor to improve our schools?**

I am the only candidate in this race with a child currently attending a public elementary school, I know first hand the challenges that our schools face - reforming the system is personal. While I am proud of the progress our students and teachers are striving to make every day, there is no doubt that the state of Los Angeles schools is far from where it needs to be.

The health of our city – from our ability to create jobs and compete economically with neighboring cities, to our success in fighting crime and lifting families out of poverty – begins and ends with a quality public education system.

As Mayor of Los Angeles, I will dedicate myself to reforming and improving Los Angeles’ schools.

First, I will help put the school district’s fiscal house in order. As the City Controller, I know how to identify and cut waste from the downtown bureaucracy. I will help ensure that Prop 30 dollars are spent as promised, in the classroom.

Second, I will fight tirelessly for more funding for our schools to reward successful teachers and school leaders while pushing for accountability measures to improve the school district.

And third, as a parent of an LAUSD student, I will also work to create more choices for parents, students and teachers by making sure our schools have more local control and innovative solutions. I will work to bring back arts and music education and push for a longer school year to ensure our students are spending more time in the classroom. And I’ll expand after-school programs that work — like LA’s BEST, which I helped start with Mayor Tom Bradley — so schools can truly become the community centers that anchor our neighborhoods. I’m not afraid to take on powerful interests to ensure that our children get the quality education they deserve.

**4. As mayor, would you support John Deasy remaining Superintendent? Would you use your position to champion Deasy's push for reform – and if so, how?**

Since John Deasy became the Superintendent of Los Angeles schools just less than two years ago, he has proven to be a capable and courageous leader of the District. Under his leadership in 2012, LAUSD improved its API score by 16 points, which not only exceeded the California state average, it placed Los Angeles schools highest among urban districts for the second year in a row.

This great progress achieved by our students and teachers was accomplished while the LAUSD has had to face more than \$2 billion in budget deficits. So, yes, I do support John Deasy remaining Superintendent.

As Superintendent Deasy's partner, I will help put the school district's fiscal house in order. We will put money back into the classroom by cutting waste and bureaucracy from downtown and fighting to make sure Prop 30 dollars are spent as promised to us parents.

**5. As mayor, would you support charter school expansion in Los Angeles? Do you see a need to limit charter school expansion or charter school funding?**

I believe in school reform - whatever form it comes in. This is why I don't believe we need to be worried about how many charter schools or traditional schools we have, but rather how do we ensure a strong foundation of good schools operated by LAUSD.

Schools like my son's school, an affiliated charter elementary school, provide local control and give parents a greater say in their child's education. Charter schools are one way of creating greater choice for parents and greater opportunity for our children to succeed. But as Mayor I would advocate for greater local control at all LAUSD campuses, and for accountability for all schools.

**6. Some would consider UTLA resistant to many of the recent reform policies that have been implemented to improve school performance. What is your opinion on this?**

I support our teachers, and recognize that most teachers give of themselves so our children can learn and feel supported in school. That said, I also believe that the positions of UTLA's leadership are not always in step with the views of most teachers. Every decision that is made should be in the best interest of the children in our schools.

The UTLA leadership must work with classroom teachers, principals and parents to embrace new ideas and reforms and so teachers have the flexibility to successfully educate our children.

I believe the leaders of Los Angeles – Mayor, Superintendent, teachers, parents, the business community and UTLA – must work together to improve our schools and that means no one can be resistant to ideas and reforms that work.

**7. It is essential to include student achievement data when evaluating our teachers.**

**-I agree**

**-I disagree**

**(Explain your answer.)**

We know through research and through our common experience that the most effective way to improve academic achievement is to have a great teacher in a classroom every day with children. Great teachers make great schools.

To reward great teachers, and hold accountable but also support those who are still developing their practice, we need an effective teacher evaluation system that includes student achievement data. It is the only way for schools to understand what teaching methods are working and where improvement is needed.

An effective evaluation system must contain multiple measurements that include: 1) test scores measured by academic growth over time; 2) parent and student feedback; 3) assessment of contribution to the school community; and 4) classroom observations.

It's time to value and reward the very people most responsible for student achievement. Teachers deserve our greater respect and have earned greater rewards. Yet with that respect comes even greater responsibility, and a common commitment from each and every one of us to hold ourselves accountable.

**8. If you had a child entering middle school, to which school would you send your child? Explain your answer.**

This isn't just a theoretical question for me – my son Thomas will be entering middle school in a few years, and like all parents I want to make that I place him in the best setting possible during this critical transitional period.

Just down the block from me is Walter Reed Middle School, a traditional neighborhood school with a diverse student body and very successful academic programs. Unfortunately, like most schools Walter Reed has been hit with devastating budget cuts that have impacted their signature programs, like their music program. Despite shrinking resources though, and even with two thirds of the students qualifying for free lunch, the school has maintained very good test scores. This school proves that effective teachers, strong leadership and active parents can ensure the success of a campus.

We know that a good middle school education is the best way to ensure high school graduation and yet too many of our neighborhoods still lack high performing options. We need to ensure that the zip code you live in doesn't determine whether you have access to a quality education - from kindergarten through high school.