

MEMPHIS SCHOOL BOARD QUESTIONNAIRE 2008

NAME: STEPHANIE GATEWOOD

1. Describe briefly your qualifications for holding the office of Memphis School board member. (Please answer in the space below, but you may also attach a resume or other description to provide us with additional detail.)

Answer:

*The experience that I have gained since being on the school board for the past 4 years, and being employed at the University of Memphis, Center for Research in Educational Policy in the role of Educational Researcher has adequately prepared me for the service on the Memphis city Schools Board of Education. In my role as a board member, I have advocated nationally for public education, the networking with additional board members has been invaluable. I have obtained my Level 4 Boardsmanship award (generally it takes 7 years to obtain such leadership). Our entire board was recently selected to participate in a RGA program, (Reform Governance in Action) which teaches boards how to become more effective in Governing vs. managing. I am also the director of Education for the League of Women Voters. I have 2 children who both attend MCS schools. Both have attended all school aged lives. One child will be graduating next year, and the other child will be entering the 7<sup>th</sup> grade next year.*

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2. In your opinion, what are the three greatest issues (challenges or opportunities) facing the Memphis City School System in the next four years; and what policy changes, if any, would you recommend in dealing with these issues?

*The number one priority is sustainability among those schools that have remained off of the list, We must invest in Early Childhood Education, rigorous workforce development, and a stronger business partnership. Literacy amongst ALL grade levels is key in the progress of student achievement. Preparing students to compete globally and implementing a bench mark to assess how our students should be the desired end result.*

*Public Perception- We must continue to work on the public perception that our schools are not meeting the achievement levels, and that students do not want to learn.*

*Increased post high school readiness- we must initiate programs and services that will prepare our students to be successful beyond high school.*

2. As a Board member, what policies would you support to address the issues of school safety and violence prevention?

*TCA has zero tolerance laws for weapons on school grounds, and bullying; the district has such policies to ensure that we are following state law. School safety is one of the district goals. We must continually focus ore efforts, collectively and individually, on creating school environments that are positive, safe and respectful for ALL staff and students.*

4. Define the role of the School Board in leading the Memphis City School System, and what is that role in relationship to the role of the Superintendent?

*The school board is a corporate body. Our authority rests in that of policy making. As a legislative body, the board only operates when the majority (5) is present, individual board members have no authority. The board is a governing body with the Superintendent being on the Governance team; the board sets the vision, the superintendent carries out the vision. The work of the board is carried out through policy.*

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5. Are there opportunities that could be pursued for collaboration between the Memphis City School System and the Shelby County School System? If so, what are they?

*We have currently been working with SCS, one initiative is a joint school built by both bodies. We are also looking at streamlining more of our textbook services etc.*

6. An educated workforce is one of the key factors that companies consider when evaluating a city for a new operation. What measures should the Memphis City Schools address in order to prepare its high school graduates for the workforce and/or college?

*A holistic workforce development or additional emphasis on post high school development is critically needed. Research indicates that population growth is strongly related to employment growth. The most positive employment growth has been in construction, leisure, hospitality, transportation, trade and utilities, professional and business services, and governmental sectors (Business Perspectives, Volume 19, Number 2 Winter/spring 2008 p. 40) In order for our students to compete globally, we must prepare them with rigor in the classroom and effective extra-curricular activities to engage all students.*

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6. Merit pay for teachers is a major topic of discussion nationally. What are your views on differentiating pay for teachers?

*Merit pay would be one initiative to increase student achievement; however, it is not the only initiative that should be implemented. Houston has recently implemented merit pay; however research is not yet completed on the outcome.*

7. What initiatives do you propose to establish positive, cooperative communication with the funding bodies regarding school funding?

*COME TO THE TABLE! All bodies need to be sitting at the table at the same time. One initiative that I am looking into is the Education Foundation, most districts are going toward this type of funding, I would also encourage a strong conversation about a toll fee for those entering Memphis, Shelby County.*

8. Optional schools have the very positive reputation for high quality education. How do we ensure the same educational standard for all students?

*Make policy that demands all schools offer rigor. We are moving in that direction currently; we must hold administration responsible for accomplishing this task.*