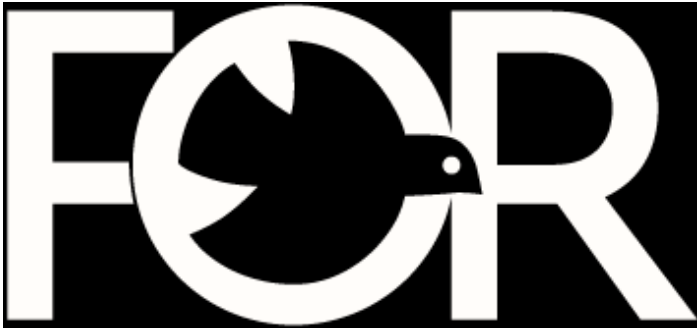




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FOR 2026 Questionnaire for Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) School Board Candidates in District 4

Candidates:

Kimberly Vinegar School Board District #4 Candidate



I am originally from Three Oaks, MI. I attended college at St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer, IN where I received my bachelor's degree in education--and met my husband, Robert Vinegar Sr. We moved to Louisville in 1997 and have two grown sons-- both proud graduates of JCPS. Robert and I continue to live on the edge of Fern Creek and J-Town and have a lawn care and property maintenance small business that keeps us very busy.

I taught special and general education at Kennedy Montessori Elementary. I then became a district-wide consulting teacher for special education.

Later, I was hired as a placement specialist at central office, working solely in Early Childhood, getting 3 and 4 year olds with special needs-- a physical or mental health condition that substantially limits a major life activity-- into preschool. My final position in JCPS was as the district supervisor for this Federally mandated work-- Section 504.

Over the years, I obtained my master's degree in education from Bellarmine University, followed by getting my principal certification. I retired at the end of June 2025 after 28 years of service to JCPS. I'm stepping up to bring transparency, collaboration, and a relentless focus on student success to every decision made for our schools.

Website: <https://www.kim4kids.org/home>

Trevin Bass School Board District #4 Candidate

Mr. Bass is an incumbent member of the JCPS board of Education. He is a Seneca HS class of 09 graduate. Went to Spalding University and completed Bachelor of Science in psychology. He has over a decade of volunteer experience working in public education--former PTA president and Vice president of Fundraising at Schaffner traditional elementary school. I have a host of family members, including two sons, who attend JCPS.



Bass works for the Louisville Metro Office of Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods and is the former legislative assistant for Louisville Metro Council's District 3. He was selected to manage the "Love your block" grant from Bloomberg philanthropic orgs.

Website: Bass For District 4 (trevinbass.wixsite.com)

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61560307831870&mibextid=LQQJ4d>

Michelle Patrick School Board District #4 Candidate



Dr. Michelle E. Patrick, the eldest of three children, aspired to teach from a young age. She graduated from Shawnee High School in Louisville. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Education, a Master of Education, and a Doctor of Education. Her 27-year career at Jefferson County Public Schools included teaching, serving as an assistant principal, and working as a Multicultural Consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education. She also taught at Spalding University and at Midway College and served as First Vice President of Student Affairs.

Deja Brennan Jackson School Board District #4 Candidate



Deja Jackson is a community leader, nonprofit professional, and proud JCPS parent running for Jefferson County Board of Education District 4. As the daughter of an educator, public education is personal to Deja and her family. For nearly a decade, Deja has built a career in nonprofit leadership and community engagement, bringing together families, educators, businesses, nonprofits, and community partners to create opportunities and strengthen communities. As Director of Community Engagement at Family Scholar House, she leads partnerships across multiple sectors and works to ensure families have access to the resources and support they need to thrive. Deja believes JCPS needs leadership rooted in transparency, fiscal responsibility, and meaningful community voice. She is committed to supporting educators and staff, strengthening partnerships

that surround students and families, and ensuring the community has a seat at the table before major decisions are made. She is running because every JCPS student deserves a high-quality, fully supported public education and every family deserves to be heard, respected, and included in the decisions that shape their schools.

Deja has been endorsed by the United Auto Workers (UAW), the Greater Louisville Central Labor Council (GLGLC), Greater Louisville Association of Realtors (GLAR PAC), Teamsters 89 and 783, C-Fair, and Better Schools Kentucky (JCTA).

website <https://www.djforjcps.com>

Questions for candidates

1. Background: During and after the pandemic, former Superintendent Marty Pollio, his team, and the boards took advantage of available Federal COVID era funding to make critical new program investments for JCPS, e.g.,

- a. 1:1 chromebooks and wi-fi so all students could be computer savvy at graduation, not waiting at a public library;
- b. Mental health professionals in place at every school;
- c. Nurses at every school; and
- d. New research-based literacy and numeracy curricula rolled out with teacher professional development for early school years.

Superintendent Pollio, board and chief financial officer knew this COVID money would end, but they believed the programs would help JCPS students move forward. They knew there would be deficits, and that cuts or more property tax income would be needed to maintain the successful improvements. Indeed, they set up a committee of community groups (including Fellowship of Reconciliation) to consider the possibility of a recallable tax increase to be able to retain the best of the new programs.

Here are two detailed stories from local media. They reported on the process and timing around making these important decisions and, also, the making of the first \$100 million of cuts under former Superintendent Pollio and the board at the time:

Jess Clark of Louisville Public Media, in August of 2023: <https://www.lpm.org/news/2023-08-29/amid-budget-shortfall-jefferson-co-board-of-education-lowers-tax-rate-for-2023-2024>

[Fernando Garcia-Franceschini](#) of WAVE TV in May of 2025:

<https://www.wave3.com/2025/05/14/jcps-cut-close-100-million-its-upcoming-budget/>

Over the last year and during the selection of a new superintendent, various state and local officials, local media and social media have berated previous decisions as financial mismanagement.

The current board just accepted the new nonrecallable property tax rate of 70.3 cents/\$100 assessed value. Because the assessments are higher, the actual rate was dropped from last year's rate of 71.7 cents/\$100 assessed value. The board meeting on Tuesday (youtube at JCPS Board Meeting Materials on JCPS website) September 22, 2026 will show that while there may be "tax anticipation" notes to cover salaries that must be paid in late fall of the next three years, the major cuts are over and the deficit not as large as anticipated last year.

Question: How will you as a board member, working with the Superintendent, rebuild trust in JCPS management with the community and with the legislature? How will you evaluate what programs and staffing should be retained or could be scaled back? Is there a path to COLAs? Under what circumstances/when might you be open to calling for and promoting a recallable tax increase to be able to retain the good programs and teachers that grow our learners?

Response by Kimberly Vinegar:

To rebuild trust, I believe every decision must be part of the public record, and our processes should be clearly explained as we work through the budget. Transparency is the foundation for restoring confidence with both the community and the legislature.

I would begin by reviewing central office staffing. We need to understand where roles overlap, where workloads are unbalanced, and where adjustments could improve efficiency. Programs should be evaluated based on whether students show growth over time, not just mastery on a single measure. Growth tells us whether a program is truly helping students move forward.

We must also provide cost-of-living adjustments for school staff if we expect to retain high-quality educators. Competitive compensation is essential for stability and student success.

I support a tax increase when it is clearly tied to retaining strong programs and the teachers who help our learners thrive. Our city is only as strong as our school system, and investing in JCPS is investing in the future of Louisville.

Response by Trevin Bass:

As a board member currently, I have weekly meetings with the superintendent about daily operations in the district, addressing questions and concerns from my district to the superintendent in real time. When issues arise in my district I reach out to the superintendent and receives a response within 24 hours. the transparency between myself, the superintendent and community has been nothing but a breath of fresh air for many in the district who states in the past they had no way in connecting their board member and the superintendent.

The way I will evaluate the programing is trusting the report provided by the superintendent and evaluate the return of investment of the programs we are paying for and seeing what we can do stretch dollars and choose effective programing. I believe everyone should be retrained to ensure everyone is on the same page.

I believe we will need to work close with JCTA and the negotiation on COLA and raises. I do believe that before things gets too bad that we will call for an increase of taxes is the last thing I would want to happen.

Response by Michelle Patrick:

Transparency is the primary means of restoring trust. As a board member, I would request that financial reports be shared with the community each quarter during scheduled board meetings. Any budget reduction would make me hesitant to reduce classroom resources; however, programs and staff effectiveness should be judged by how well students achieve measurable academic goals. As a board member, I would assess whether capital projects or new construction might be postponed without risking children and staff safety or creating higher future costs. Regarding a path to COLA's, I would support providing teachers and support staff a cost-of-living wage by reviewing Central Office spending before advocating for taxes on Jefferson County residents. I firmly believe the district budget should mirror its priorities, and my priority would be keeping resources near students and the local school building.

Response by Deja Brennan Jackson:

My approach to rebuilding trust is rooted in transparency, accountability, and meaningful community engagement. The community including JCPS families, educators, staff, and other members should understand not only what decisions are being made, but why they are being made, their financial implications, and how they will affect students over time. The community should also have opportunities to provide input before major decisions are finalized, not after the fact. As a board member, I would make proactive communication and accessible community engagement a priority.

When evaluating programs and staffing, I would ask: What is the purpose? What outcomes are we seeing? Does this directly support student success? Is there a more effective or sustainable way to accomplish the same goal?

I believe COLAs and competitive compensation must remain part of the conversation because retaining excellent educators is essential to student success. Before asking taxpayers for additional revenue, however, we should examine every available option, including state funding, partnerships, grants, and responsible efficiencies. If those avenues are insufficient to preserve essential programs and retain educators, I would be open to a recallable tax increase if the community has clear information about the need, the proposed use of funds, and measurable accountability for the investment.

2. Background: You as a board member will plunge immediately into helping the JCPS superintendent, staff and community create a five-year plan for improved outcomes for all our students, especially those who have been struggling. In parallel, you will oversee three-year, rolling budget projections.

Two JCPS schools were recently identified as being among the best schools in the country. Both schools had relatively selective entrance policies. Among the rest of our nearly 170 schools, several dozen schools—generally with most of their students living in poverty-- are among the bottom 5% of public schools in Kentucky.

Children living in poverty have extra basic needs, from safety in their home neighborhoods, to adequate meals and sleep every day. In some cases, working parents facing a lack of time together to fully shape their children's character and adaptability and to engage with their school. JCPS has important family support staff (FRYSCs) for helping to address some of these needs.

In the class rooms, we are seeing some improvements from new literacy and numeracy curricula in the lower grades. We also must assess and address the needs of older (middle school and up) students

who were not exposed to the new curricula, so that they can also graduate with English and math skills of a lifelong learner.

Data from Stanford University Education Data Archives--Educational Recovery Project showed that the last three years (2022-2024) Dr Yearwood was Superintendent at Columbia (MO) public schools, the average change in reading scores was +0.04 for low-income students. JCPS' change for the same time period was -0.23 for our low-income students. Those same students in MO raised their average math scores 0.39, while scores for the equivalent student in JCPS rose only 0.19. Dr, Yearwood and his CAO did improve outcomes in reading, and more so in math.

Question: We have talented teachers and they need to be supported, but what extra is necessary to catch these struggling children up? Who should be guiding/coaching teachers at these high-needs schools? KDE? The CAO? Should principals be administrators or chief teachers? Do teachers need more time to confer with other teachers in their school to identify each child's specific way of learning? Do we have the right curricula to speak to these struggling students? Do we need more teachers who look like their students? Is it a matter of extra contact time after school for individualized help? Summer study and enrichment? What questions would you ask of Dr. Yearwood's approach? As you visit your district schools, what questions would you ask of JCPS teachers/principals who may have successfully turned around underperforming schools?

Response by Kimberly Vinegar:

Students need differentiated instruction. We cannot teach all children the same way and expect them all to learn. Every child is different, and our special education, multilingual, and gifted students each have unique needs. We must also teach using multiple modalities — oral, written, tactile, and more — so every learner has a way to access the content.

Teachers need time to plan together and share ideas. While PLCs are helpful, educators would benefit from additional unstructured collaboration time to reflect, adjust, and support one another. We already have strong curricula designed to meet student needs, but we rarely give teachers the time necessary to determine whether those tools are truly working.

It would also be beneficial to have more teachers who reflect the diversity of our students. Representation matters, and students thrive when they see themselves in the adults who teach and support them.

Response by Trevin Bass:

The extra support that is needed to help catch our children up is wrap around services that support not only the students but the teachers and families as well. The additional support will look like after school

assistance from grassroot and other non-profit organizations in which stronger relationships will be built from such initiative. The guidance should come from the superintendent as well as the team he's placed to assist our principals who return helps their teachers and so on. Principals should have a great say in the structure as well as our teachers. Yes, we need more teachers who can relate to our students. More summer programs that's universal across the district. The main questions I ask teachers and principals, How can I help make things flow better. Dr. Yearwood I am always asking the question, does it help or hurt our students, Our teachers, our families?

Response by Michelle Patrick:

We don't need to rename individuals who work directly with children and teachers. What we need is to ensure that teachers have the knowledge base to work with children that have deficits in their learning. This can be obtained by making sure that the Superintendent and his/her cabinet provide meaningful professional development that helps teachers interpret and use assessment data to identify where students are struggling and to develop instructional strategies that address those specific needs. As a board member, my responsibility is to establish and evaluate policy, not run the day-to-day operations of a school; however, I can help with making sure that educational resources are available to ensure that all children have access and opportunity for academic success. I can also see that measurable goals and regular academic progress reports are reported to the public. Ultimately, student achievement isn't about adopting another program, changing people's titles, or teachers' ethnicities; it is about making sure that teachers have the tools and support they need and that every student receives the appropriate instruction to be successful.

Response by Deja Brennan Jackson:

Our teachers are talented, but they cannot be expected to solve every challenge their students and families face alone. We need a village approach that brings together educators, administrators, families, nonprofits, community organizations, and other partners to support the whole child.

I don't believe there is one answer. I would want to understand what support teachers need, what interventions are working, and what evidence tells us where additional resources will have the greatest impact.

I would ask the Superintendent: What specific interventions are being used at high-needs schools? What evidence shows they are working? How are we identifying students before they fall significantly

behind? How are we supporting teachers implementing these interventions? And which community partnerships could strengthen this work?

As a board member, I would regularly engage with teachers and principals, including attending staff meetings and listening directly to educators about the barriers they face. I would also look closely at curriculum, tutoring, summer learning, family supports, and culturally responsive approaches. Our goal must be clear: help every student reach grade-level proficiency while giving educators the support to make that possible.

3. Background: According to the US Census, children born from today forward will graduate high school and plunge into life in a “majority minority” country. JCPS is already a majority minority district, i.e., our students are mostly people of color. JCPS must meet the needs of all our students for their personal success and for creating the Jefferson County of the future. It is a matter of fairness—of equity.

Gap reduction requires that underserved groups of students improve faster than more privileged demographic groups. Our students come from many racial and ethnic backgrounds, and students from immigrant families may speak one or more of over 100 different languages heard in JCPS. A majority of our students come from low-income families. Some are homeless. Some have special developmental or disability challenges. We must find the best ways to reach and teach all of them.

Research shows that all students respond more easily to teachers who look like them. For a variety of reasons, not the least of which are the demographics of our state, we have only about 20% of our teachers who are people of color. JCPS has been active in trying to grow and recruit more.

Following a model used by Miami Dade (FL) school district and others, JCPS created a path to provide extra money for a school, based on the percentage of the school’s population which came from low-income households, were immigrants, had special needs, etc. During the recent cost-cutting to reduce the deficit, half of these targeted funds were cut. Some have been restored.

Question: You will be helping shape the diverse future of our city and country. How will you look at apportioning resources to help our diverse groups overcome challenges so that all become proficient at the skills of lifelong learners?

Response by Kimberly Vinegar:

To help shape the diverse future of our city, we must allocate resources in ways that recognize the different challenges students face. Every learner deserves access to the supports that help them grow into confident, lifelong learners. That means investing in differentiated instruction, multiple learning

modalities, and targeted services for multilingual learners, students with disabilities, gifted students, and those who simply learn differently.

Resources should follow student need. Schools serving higher-need populations must have strong staffing, training, and wraparound supports. Teachers also need meaningful collaboration time to adjust instruction, share strategies, and evaluate whether programs are helping students make growth over time.

A diverse city also needs a diverse educator workforce. Recruiting and retaining teachers who reflect our students' backgrounds strengthens relationships, builds trust, and improves outcomes.

By aligning resources with student needs, supporting teachers, and focusing on growth rather than one-time mastery, we can help every learner build the skills and confidence required to thrive long after they leave our classrooms.

Response by Trevin Bass:

It is important that we not only bring in data but listen to the very people we are looking to serve. As a current board member, I am focus on how we can spread our resources the best way to assist as many as possible. This is done through research and evaluation. As Dr. Yearwood has mentioned, we are to truly dive into the programing already placed and see the return of investment in our students. I believe that doing so we will be able to meet the needs of our students from all backgrounds. It is also best practice to see how other areas are taking care of challenges.

Response by Michelle Patrick:

It is a moral duty to direct resources toward the district's varied student body. The Office of Access and Opportunity should hold evaluative power to examine why children from diverse backgrounds struggle and then act to correct those gaps. This district must invite and involve families from low-income households, helping them feel essential to their children's success and the school community. Jefferson County Public Schools has policies, yet they are not consistently enforced or backed to secure access and opportunity for different ethnicities.

The district is responsible for expanding opportunities for children of color in multiple programs and for offering teachers, staff, and principals meaningful professional development centered on culturally responsive teaching that welcomes diverse students. As a board member, I would back initiatives from the

Office of Access and Opportunity that propose programs or strategies producing results for children of color to help students achieve academic success.

Response by Deja Brennan Jackson:

Equity means recognizing that students do not all begin with the same circumstances or have the same needs, and our resources should reflect that reality. I would look at academic outcomes, student needs, family circumstances, and barriers to opportunity when determining where additional resources are necessary.

That includes ensuring students see themselves reflected in their teachers, administrators, and staff; providing meaningful language access for multilingual families; protecting LGBTQ+ students from discrimination and harassment; and ensuring students experiencing economic hardship or other barriers have access to the support they need to succeed.

The Department of Diversity, Equity and Poverty should have the resources and authority to help JCPS identify gaps, develop innovative solutions, and connect schools with community partners. That could include using technology thoughtfully to address language barriers, strengthening recruitment of educators from diverse backgrounds, and building partnerships with nonprofits and businesses that have expertise serving specific communities.

On the campaign trail, I have repeatedly heard from families that students are falling through the cracks. We have to build systems that identify those students earlier and connect them with support. Equity cannot be an initiative that serves some students; it must be a commitment to every child.

4. Background: Immigration has been a primary source of population growth in Jefferson County for more than a decade. While our current federal government has reversed that policy, approximately one out of every five JCPS students is part of an immigrant family. Almost 40% of these students may have been born in the US and are US citizens, but many speak a different language with their family at home.

There are a limited number of ESL (English as a second language) teachers available for hire regionally. We do have some who are immigrants themselves. We have never had an immigrant on the board.

JCPS was actually an innovator and early adopter of real-time translation technology to allow more teachers to work with these students successfully. JCPS created the Newcomer Academy for initial intensive English language training for new immigrant students before they were mainstreamed in schools. Some immigrants arrived at an older age and became Newcomer students. Some of these students are now graduating from Newcomer directly, without first being mainstreamed.

Almost a decade ago, the JCPS board created a sanctuary policy to prevent federal officials from upsetting our school communities for immigration enforcement. Today the pressure has been compounded by new federal directives. Schools must be a safe space for students and their studies. Students should not have to be concerned about being taken from the schools, about being used to track down their parents when they come to the schools, about needing to be absent to work enough to support families where parents are at risk. We have a JCPS police force of over 70 officers, specially trained to support and protect our students. The JCPS board and lobbyists have thus far resisted ICE and legislature efforts to create 287g partnerships to support ICE enforcement.

Question: Each of you will have immigrant students in your district schools. How can we better support their educational challenges and better protect their families as they participate in our community and its schools?

Response by Kimberly Vinegar:

The first step is expanding our Multilingual Learner (ML) department. The number of ML students grows every day, and the need for specialized teachers far exceeds our current staffing. While we cannot hire someone who speaks every language represented in JCPS, increasing linguistic diversity beyond Spanish would make a meaningful difference for families navigating a new school system.

We also need to ensure that the Newcomer Academy continues and has the ability to expand. It plays a critical role in helping students transition academically, socially, and culturally into JCPS.

Protecting immigrant families means creating schools where they feel welcomed, informed, and safe. Clear communication, culturally responsive practices, and staff who understand the challenges of resettlement help families participate confidently in their children's education.

By expanding staffing, increasing language access, and strengthening transition supports, we can help immigrant students overcome barriers and thrive in our schools.

Response by Trevin Bass:

The best way to support is to be involved and to be engaged. The way we can support their educational challenges is to address all of their challenges entirely. Language barrier issue has to be addressed as well as figuring out a way where the students who they are interacting with is able

to learn from and with the students as well. The best way to protect our students and families is placing strong policies that protect them from agencies that could cause them harm.

Response by Michelle Patrick:

As a board member, I can help ensure immigrant students gain access to resources that remove learning barriers by providing translators for them and their families. We can make sure materials appear in their language while supporting their adjustment to English and school culture. Although a board member cannot override laws, we can create policies that sustain learning when students are absent from class.

Response by Deja Brennan Jackson:

On the campaign trail, I have met with families and advocates who have shared concerns about how immigrant students and their families experience JCPS. Too often, families are not receiving adequate or timely communication about their child's academic progress, and parents may only be contacted once a student is already struggling significantly.

Every child has a right to a quality education, and every family should feel safe, respected, and welcomed in their school community. JCPS should continue to uphold policies that protect students and families, regardless of immigration status, and ensure families understand their rights and the resources available to them.

We also need to strengthen communication with multilingual families so they can meaningfully participate in their child's education, not simply receive translated information after decisions have been made. Schools should proactively connect families with trusted community organizations that can provide legal, social-service, and other support.

JCPS does not have to do this work alone. Louisville has nonprofit, faith-based, immigrant-led, and community organizations with expertise that can help us build stronger systems of support. Our goal should be for every immigrant student to feel that their school is a place where they belong, can learn safely, and can thrive.

5. Background: Teachers and classroom aides are the core of who interact directly with our students and help them become lifelong learners. Teachers need time to plan, time to collaborate,

time for professional development. JCPS' "product" are all the new members of our Louisville community.

Wages for teachers, aides and other staff haven't kept up with inflation since 2008. Part of this is JCPS, part of it is reduced SEEK funding from the state. Teachers did not create the JCPS deficits and they should not be borne by teachers and school staff.

Salaries and benefits need to keep pace with inflation so that: 1) older, more experienced teachers don't retire at the first opportunity and 2) that we can't compete for teacher talent with surrounding districts and states. A cost-of-living allowance (COLA) costs about \$10million/per year for each one percent for all teachers. This year inflation has been high across the country, around 3%. This spring the teachers settled for one-time payments, not a COLA, because of the deficit. Other staff union contracts follow the percentages for JCTA salary increases.

We cannot count on massive funding for public schools from the coming Federal education \$1700 tax credit program. The program can pay for individual students' tuitions for private schools, but there is no tuition in public schools. Our students might have smaller expenses like after school tutoring or transportation to extra curriculars.

Question: Given that we are reducing the deficit from COVID spending, how can we find money for COLA so that we can continue to attract new teachers and retain our most experienced teachers? How do we find and prioritize funding for those in front of the classrooms?

Response by Kimberly Vinegar:

To remain competitive and retain experienced teachers, we must prioritize COLA even while reducing the post-COVID deficit. The first step is identifying what directly impacts students and protecting those investments. That means reviewing central office structures, unused programs, and non-instructional spending to ensure classroom staff come first.

We also need to examine temporary COVID-era initiatives that are no longer essential and redirect those dollars toward salaries. Strategic reallocations, efficiency audits, and stronger oversight can free funds without harming student learning. Partnerships and grants can support supplemental programs, allowing district dollars to focus on the people who teach our students every day.

Attracting and retaining high-quality educators requires predictable, competitive compensation. When teachers feel valued and supported, students benefit.

Prioritizing COLA is not optional — it is a commitment to stability, experience, and the long-term health of JCPS.

Response by Trevin Bass:

The best way to find more money for COLA for me is to revisit our previous negotiations with companies like Churchill Downs and the Kentucky lottery to get up to date on what a reasonable donation yearly can look like. I would also like to explore our current state of investments being invested into things to bring us a larger return. We should also see how metro council and the mayors office can assist us with covering what we have lost.

Response by Michelle Patrick:

*My primary objective would be safeguarding students and educators. I would strongly resist reductions that directly impact instruction, teacher compensation, or the academic resources essential to student success. Before requiring classrooms to absorb such cuts, I would conduct a comprehensive review of district expenditures—specifically central-office costs, administrative staffing, external contracts, underperforming programs, and other opportunities for operational efficiency. I would also evaluate whether major capital projects or new construction could be responsibly deferred without compromising safety or incurring higher future costs. Should a substantial deficit persist after these measures, I would be prepared to engage in a transparent public discussion regarding additional revenue sources, including property taxes. However, before requesting further taxpayer contributions, **I believe we must demonstrate responsible stewardship of existing funds.** Ultimately, a district budget should align with its priorities, and mine would be directing resources as close to students and classrooms as possible. I would assess whether compensation is competitive, whether cost-of-living adjustments meet educators' needs, and whether extraneous administrative duties divert teachers from their core responsibility—teaching. I do not wish merely to express appreciation for teachers; I intend for our policies, budgets, and working conditions to reflect that commitment.*

Response by Deja Brennan Jackson:

If we want to attract and retain excellent teachers, competitive compensation has to be part of the conversation. We should prioritize funding for the people who are directly educating and supporting our students. That means looking beyond the district's existing budget. JCPS should work with local and national foundations, businesses, nonprofit partners, and city and state governments to identify

additional resources. We should also examine how comparable large school districts are funding teacher compensation and retention and identify strategies JCPS has not yet considered.

Most importantly, JCPS needs a stronger and more productive relationship with the state legislature. We should be advocating for sustainable state funding for public education and working collaboratively to identify additional revenue streams that benefit JCPS and school districts across Kentucky.

At the same time, we have to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. Before identifying new revenue, we should understand where existing dollars are going, what programs are producing results, and where efficiencies can be found. My priority would be to protect classroom instruction and the educators who make student success possible while pursuing every responsible avenue for additional funding.

6. Background: JCPS is continuously evaluating programs for their value in improving student outcomes. Over the past year of deficit reduction, JCPS produced millions of dollars in savings by scaling back or eliminating some programs, such as poorly attended summer and tutoring programs. We have urged the administration to listen to and engage with the community about equity before decisions are made.

One example of a non-academic program that the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) believes should be considered for elimination is the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program, which costs the District approximately \$1.4 million per year. Open Records Requests over the years have shown that many students in JCPS' JROTC programs have been leaving the programs instead of staying in until graduation. In the class of 2023, 54% of the cadets left early. The class of 2025 is similar-- just over 50% left JROTC early. Over the last two years, two schools have independently dropped the JROTC program for lack of student enrollment. In four other schools, JROTC enrollment recently fell below the minimum required by the schools' contracts with JROTC, but the programs were allowed to continue. The district should be listening to students and their parents and scrutinizing JROTC district-wide.

Unlike the highly-successful Academies of Louisville program – which creates links between academics and career training -- JROTC has no ties to academics. JROTC instructors (now 18 in the nine JROTC units) are not certified teachers. JROTC curriculum is supplied by the Pentagon and is not subject to District review. There is no academic focus aligned with state standards. Nor does JROTC offer a career-training advantage. At graduation, any 18-year old can walk into a recruiting office and enlist in the military.

But the most significant shortcoming of JROTC may be the opportunity cost to students. The 120 to 180 class hours per year spent in JROTC classes reduce time available for arts, music, foreign languages and computer skills – subjects proven to improve academic achievement and social/emotional development. Numerous studies link arts participation to improved literacy, math performance, and problem-solving skills. Music programs, for example, strengthen pattern recognition and mathematical reasoning, while

theater and visual arts improve reading comprehension and verbal communication (Public School Review). Foreign language classes develop cognitive flexibility, memory, and cultural awareness, which support learning in other subjects. JROTC offers none of these benefits – and for the over half of students who exit the JROTC program early, it prevents them from gaining the full advantage of the other Academy programs offered at their school.

Question: How would you evaluate the value of investing in JROTC and other nonacademic offerings compared to further support for Related Arts offerings such as arts, music, or foreign language classes? What would you do to make sure that JCPS students, parents and community are given objective, balanced information to make informed decisions, both for their own family and for JCPS' consideration, of nonacademic offerings like JROTC? Should we also be assessing different Academies for students quitting a pathway, similarly to JROTC cadets?

Response by Kimberly Vinegar:

I am never in favor of cutting programs that reach students. While data may point out shortcomings in JROTC or other nonacademic offerings, we cannot ignore the students who benefit deeply from them. For some learners, programs like JROTC are the reason they stay engaged in school. JROTC also provides structure, discipline, and a sense of purpose that some students do not find in the general curriculum. At the same time, we should not reduce access to arts, music, or foreign language. These offerings are essential to developing well-rounded, creative, and confident students. It should never be an "either/or" scenario.

Families deserve clear, objective information about all nonacademic programs so they can make informed decisions. JCPS should provide balanced data on enrollment, outcomes, and student experiences across JROTC, Related Arts, and Academy pathways. And yes, we should evaluate Academy pathways for students who leave them, just as we review JROTC participation, to ensure every program is serving students well.

Our goal should be expanding opportunities, not narrowing them.

Response by Trevin Bass:

I believe this is where the principals and their schools should have the say and opportunity to invest in programs such as JROTC and other non-academic offerings compared to supporting the related arts and foreign language classes. It should be mandatory that a language is set for our students for at least two years for high school, this is bare min. The best way is to give the families and schools the options and this can help with community buy in. I would make sure the information is posted not only with jcps, but

throughout the community as well ensuring the relationship we have created with the community feels heard and that the programs are engaged and highly attended.

Response by Michelle Patrick:

It is essential to first examine the rationale behind parents' and students' perception of JROTC as a viable career trajectory. The program appears to offer financial relief for economically disadvantaged families who may perceive limited access to postsecondary education. Should these programs lack sufficient liberal arts and humanities instruction, the district must identify mechanisms to deliver such coursework—potentially by extending the academic day for affected students.

Response by Deja Brennan Jackson:

My background is in community engagement, so I believe decisions about programs like JROTC, arts, music, foreign language, and career pathways should include meaningful input from students, families, educators, and the broader community.

I would not support eliminating JROTC or another program simply because it is categorized as nonacademic. These programs can provide students with mentorship, leadership development, career exploration, discipline, creativity, and a sense of belonging. Families and students deserve objective information about their options, including what each pathway offers and what happens when a student decides to leave it. The same standards for evaluating participation and outcomes should apply across programs, including academies and career pathways.

As a board member, I would want JCPS to provide transparent data and multiple opportunities for community input before major changes are made. Every program to be evaluated using transparent criteria, while ensuring students and families have meaningful choices.

7. Background: This new board, along with the legislature and the Ky Department of Education (KDE), will face policy issues around technology and its impact on student learning. The current board has wrestled with phone use by students during school and seems to have created workable policies. The next set of issues for the board may concern screen time limits and use of and or reliance on AI. The challenges are about ethical use.

Educational psychologists have over the last two decades seen reductions in critical thinking ability as screen time increases. TV, without educational programming, detracts from socialization, physical

activity, sleep, etc. At the same time, increased screen time and AI hold promise for more individualized and creative work, drawing on more sources. There is also the opportunity for misrepresenting work as a student's creation and loss of independent writing skills.

Question: How should teachers use these tools to create personalized work products for learning without becoming dependent on these tools? What role does the board play in limiting screen time of students, while still providing technology for all students who otherwise might not have access. Do we still need one-to-one Chromebooks provided and maintained by JCPS?

Response by Kimberly Vinegar:

Teachers should use technology and AI as tools to personalize learning, not as replacements for thoughtful instruction. These tools can help differentiate assignments and offer alternative ways for students to engage with content, but teachers must remain the designers of learning. Professional development should focus on how to integrate technology without becoming dependent on it, keeping creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking at the center.

The board plays an important role in balancing screen time. We must set clear expectations for when technology enhances learning and when hands-on, offline, or peer-to-peer work is more appropriate. At the same time, we must ensure equitable access. Many students rely on school-provided devices to complete assignments and communicate with teachers.

One-to-one Chromebooks still serve an important purpose, especially for students who lack access at home. However, we should regularly evaluate whether the model is being used effectively and whether adjustments could improve learning while reducing unnecessary screen time.

Technology should expand opportunities — not dominate them.

Response by Trevin Bass:

The teachers should use the tools to stay up to date and to be aware of what is out there, but they should rely on their trainings and their own expertise. The tools should be use to assist. The board can vote on limited screen time through regulating how much time is spent per subject, but unless it is enforced by those in the schools, we are limited. We will have to also provide something equal or greater than resource to assist less screen time. Chromebooks should be maintained at school

unless on snow days. Laptops staying in the school building limits recurring issues that we now see with broken and misplaced devices.

Response by Michelle Patrick:

As with any new educational initiative, the district must provide teachers with meaningful professional development to enhance student learning. Artificial Intelligence can be a highly beneficial tool in this regard, and educators need the training to present it effectively, fostering critical thinking in students.

If policies are developed to limit student screen time, it is my duty as a board member to ask pertinent questions regarding their impact on learning and how we will measure our goals. I am committed to ensuring that no policy lessens academic progress. It is essential that our students graduate with the skills necessary to be competitive in the modern job market. Finally, regarding the Chromebooks provided by the district, I want to ensure their continued purchase remains a cost-effective choice for classroom instruction.

Response by Deja Brennan Jackson:

Technology should be a tool for learning, not a replacement for teachers, relationships, critical thinking, or hands-on experiences. Students need to learn how to use AI and other technologies responsibly while also developing the ability to think independently and evaluate information critically.

I also recognize that JCPS is not alone in wrestling with these questions. School districts, educators, and families across the country are trying to determine what role technology and AI should play in education, how much screen time is appropriate, and how to ensure students benefit from technology without becoming dependent on it.

I believe technology access should be a baseline for students because it is increasingly necessary for learning and opportunity. At the same time, access does not mean technology should be used constantly or in every classroom. The board should help establish a thoughtful framework while allowing educators to determine when technology enhances learning. I would want JCPS to continually evaluate how students and teachers are using these tools, whether they are improving learning outcomes, and whether we are maintaining meaningful human connection in our schools. Technology should enhance education—not replace the people and relationships at its center.

8. Background: Part of the pledge made by the previous JCPS management and boards was for improving near West End schools—creating the schools of the Choice Zone-- and providing transportation to and opportunity for attending engaging magnet and Academy schools for the African American students. Our current COO who has thankfully led us back to adequate general bus service in 2026, has said he believes JCPS has hired all the drivers it can get competitively and retain against UPS, Amazon, etc.

The Magnet Schools of America organization in particular urges intentionally diverse student populations in magnet classrooms, because its data show that a diverse mix of students, exposed to other students' different ways of learning and looking at problems, helps all students be more effective and creative problem solvers.

Question: How do we create the transportation that will allow us to fully live into the promise made regarding African Americans access to magnet schools? Is the answer to fuller transport in TARC, vans, or other paths, such as more mirror magnets in schools in African American neighborhoods?

Response by Kimberly Vinegar:

To deliver true access to magnet schools for African American students, JCPS needs transportation that is reliable and flexible. No single solution will work for every program. Expanded bus routes, targeted van services, and strategic partnerships with TARC can each fill different gaps and make magnet enrollment a realistic option for more families.

At the same time, we should examine whether additional mirror-magnet programs in predominantly African American neighborhoods would reduce transportation barriers altogether. When high-quality magnet options exist closer to home, access becomes more equitable and sustainable.

The goal is simple: transportation should never be the reason a student cannot choose a magnet program. A combination of expanded routes, flexible models, and strategic placement of programs will help JCPS meet its commitment to equity and opportunity.

Response by Trevin Bass:

Transportation issue will continue until every neighborhood has access to desired education, This will mean neighborhood schools will be more invested in limiting the need of transportation or leaving to

shorter routes. Other paths to take would be to contract transportation to assist and cover the grounds to allow all students to have an ideal education.

Response by Michelle Patrick:

Our primary obligation is to honor our commitments by returning to Prismatic's original plan—submitted to and funded by the district—to guarantee reliable transportation for all students. To maintain a stable workforce, we must implement continuous recruitment strategies for bus drivers, mirroring the annual process used for teachers rather than responding reactively to anticipated shortages. We require personnel who prioritize equitable access to magnet schools for all children, regardless of ZIP code or racial background. I believe this issue could have been resolved by placing students at the center of every decision aimed at enhancing student success.

Response by Deja Brennan Jackson:

Transportation cannot be the reason a student is unable to access a magnet school. If JCPS promises families equitable access to magnet programs, the district has a responsibility to address the transportation barriers that prevent students from participating.

I would first want to understand where the largest transportation gaps exist and which students are being disproportionately excluded. From there, JCPS should explore multiple solutions, including strengthening partnerships with TARC, working with community organizations and businesses, and identifying safe community-based transportation options.

I would bring families, students, educators, transportation experts, TARC, and community partners to the table to identify practical solutions. The goal should be straightforward: a student's ZIP code, neighborhood, or family's access to transportation should not determine whether they can participate in educational opportunities available elsewhere in JCPS.

9. Background: Around the country, major school districts are finding they need to close, repurpose, and/ or consolidate schools, as birth rates and lower immigration reduce attendance. We are seeing this in JCPS as well. This fall, JCPS counted just above 90,000 students in classrooms, far below the attendance a decade ago. The Courier -Journal (9/20/26) estimated JCPS has 15,000 classroom seats unclaimed.

Last year, in the interest of reducing budget deficits by cutting operating costs, JCPS closed Martin Luther King Elementary in Shawnee and Zachary Taylor Elementary in the East End. \$5.4 million were saved. Both schools had diverse student populations—people of color, special needs students, students living in poverty mostly. Neither had anywhere near the lowest school occupancy rates. Both had teaching staff that had worked together well and been improving struggling student lives. Parents, teachers, and students came or marched to meetings by candlelight for the opportunity to be heard by the Superintendent and administrative staff, but to no avail. The MLK families told JCPS that MLK was “the heartbeat of the neighborhood”.

The CJ article identifies some key steps other district had identified. Every closure must be preceded by adjustment of the attendance zones not only for student seats, but also for shared programs in all new clusters. Consolidations must look at the mix of demographics, access to special programs, magnets, and student services, etc. Teachers also need to be involved and heard. They can help figure how school populations could be blended and how to avoid the apparently common student slowdowns in progress in English and math, both for the affected students and the receiving schools’ rankings.

Question: How would you look at selecting schools for closure and/or consolidation? Would you support a district-wise approach redoing attendance zones, instead of just finding lower-occupancy schools? How can we take smaller steps in modifying attendance zones with a great deal of cross-community input? How would you involve the teacher and entire community in downsizing discussions long before actual selections were proposed? In what way can we keep a JCPS presence and community centers across the JCPS geography? Schools are community centers for our neighborhoods.

Response by Kimberly Vinegar:

School closures or consolidations must be guided by transparency, data, and broad community involvement. We should not make decisions based only on low-occupancy buildings. A district-wide review of attendance zones — paired with smaller, gradual adjustments informed by cross-community input — is a more responsible approach.

Any building under consideration must also be evaluated for the special programs it houses. Magnet programs, specialized services, and unique offerings can be essential to student success and should be part of the decision-making process.

Teachers, families, and community members must be involved early, long before proposals are drafted. Their insight into school culture, student needs, and neighborhood impact is critical and cannot be replaced by enrollment numbers alone.

Schools serve as community centers, and even when a building can no longer operate as a full-service school, JCPS should maintain a presence through community hubs, partnerships, early-childhood programs, or family resource services.

Thoughtful planning and early engagement help ensure decisions honor both students and neighborhoods.

Response by Trevin Bass:

When closing schools, it's a very difficult process. Learning so, if ever having to close a school again, I will need to really take time to see the pros and cons within a 1 yr, 3 yr and 5 yr plan. What does it look like transitioning, how do we plan our reentry. Another thing to think about before closing schools is the neighborhood it serves and the surrounding supported schools. If it seems like a burden is to occur in the future, it should not be closed. The best way to get anything accomplished is transparency and getting buy-in from the community. I would support a district wide approach to attendance as well as compare to lower occupancy to see if there is a reason or if attendance is low due to enrollment. The best way to keep JCPS the center of attention, JCPS should collaborate and highlight more great things JCPS is doing.

Response by Michelle Patrick:

As a board member, my primary focus would be to acknowledge schools as neighborhood community centers. I would advocate for a 15:1 student-to-teacher ratio, particularly in districts with lower academic performance, as this adjustment offers a robust mechanism for improving learning outcomes. Although modifying attendance zones may yield immediate relief to an attendance solution, I consider it a temporary solution with limited sustainability. In contrast, maintaining a 15:1 ratio represents the most effective strategy for enhancing achievement while preserving each school as a central community hub.

Response by Deja Brennan Jackson:

I believe JCPS should take a district-wide approach to attendance zones rather than evaluating schools solely on an individual basis. Enrollment is important, but it should not be the only consideration. Building condition, the history and role of a school in its neighborhood, transportation, demographics, academic needs, and the broader impact on the surrounding community should all be considered.

Any decision to close or consolidate a school should be made on a case-by-case basis, using transparent criteria and meaningful community input. Families, educators, students, and community members should be engaged well before a final decision is made. I believe the community should receive at least a year's notice before a closure, giving families and staff time to understand the decision and participate in planning for what comes next.

We also need to think beyond whether a building remains a traditional school. Schools are often important community centers, and when a building is no longer being used for education, we should explore whether it can continue serving the neighborhood in another capacity. JCPS should work with foundations, nonprofits, businesses, and other community partners to identify responsible and beneficial uses for these spaces rather than assuming that selling a building is the only option.

10. Background: There are a variety of programs (e.g., PBIS, Restorative Practices, Compassionate Schools, Trauma Informed Care, peer mediation, etc.) and, now, mental health professionals at every JCPS schools where—ideally-- teams of teachers and counselors assess students and implement plans to avoid situations that give rise to behavioral problems for individual students. Teachers are continually being trained to teach and model specific positive behaviors, to understand different cultures, to de-escalate, and to ask not “what is wrong with this child?” but “What has happened to this child?”. Some of this support and healing work must include families, not just students.

Much has happened to our students--increased violence in parts of our community, and the generational stress and trauma of families living in poverty. Absenteeism is soaring at JCPS and elsewhere across the country and is emblematic of the impact of these stresses on student sense of belonging and inclusion and corresponding behaviors. There are increasing the numbers of social workers and mental health professionals in JCPS schools. Because of their limited numbers, though, they may often be called on to respond only after problems occur rather than inviting some students into group counselling.

We already have weapons detection technology and about the 40th largest police force in Kentucky. Nationally, armed, sworn officers in schools have been shown to actually increase arrests and suspensions and decrease student sense of belonging, particularly for students of color. They have not been found to effectively stop mass shootings in schools.

National research data show that out-of-school suspension is a key predictor of future low achievement, dropping out, delinquency, and incarceration. Just one suspension doubles the chance of dropping out. These inequities do not occur uniformly in every school across JCPS.

National research also shows that out-of-school suspensions are ineffective at changing student behaviors. Suspended students are more likely to repeat behaviors-- and consequences-- again. Suspensions accelerate declines in academic performance both because of the lost learning time and the disengagement from loss of a sense of belonging.

Suspensions are also expensive for JCPS—e.g., a loss of attendance-based funding and the cost of providing “alternative schools”. While all that research is clear, some JCPS teachers (as indicated by national TELL surveys) feel they do not have all the skills and resources necessary to maintain their classrooms without using out-of-school suspension for “crises”.

Multiple or serious suspensions can lead to assignment to one of JCPS’ alternative schools. At one alternative school, the 2023-24 student population was almost 78% African American and 33% special needs students. Students at alternative schools are now most likely to continue and graduate from the alternate school, rather than being reinvesting at their previous home school.

Question: How can the schools provide professional, collaborative behavioral assessments of students at every school to help students, parents, and teachers (and, yes, bus drivers) engage positively, before students are stigmatized by disciplinary consequences? What models are needed to build appropriate self-control behaviors and sense of accountability by students, teachers, and parents? How do we engage with and support parents around their students’ challenges inside and outside of school, as well as their learning and school choices? How can student voice help direct this work?

How can we simultaneously create for both students and staff a sense of belonging in safe and welcoming schools? Can we reduce unwanted behaviors and radically decrease use of out-of-school suspensions? How can we decrease the demographic disproportionalities of alternative school placements and, more generally, find ways to keep more students--in all demographic groups--in regular schools where they can develop their social skills and maintain their progress in learning? How would you pay for the programs, training, etc.?

How should student voice help direct this work? Do you support further expansion of armed/sworn officers in JCPS schools?

Response by Kimbely Vinegar:

Behavioral support must start with early, collaborative problem-solving. Schools need trained teams who can assess student needs, guide positive behavior plans, and help adults respond consistently. When students receive support before issues escalate, they avoid being labeled, and staff across the building — including transportation — can work from the same plan.

Building self-control and accountability requires clear expectations, strong relationships, and consistent follow-through. Families should be partners in this work, with schools offering guidance, resources, and open communication about challenges that affect learning and behavior. Students themselves should

help shape expectations and solutions, because their insight strengthens school climate and increases buy-in.

A strong sense of belonging for both students and staff reduces unwanted behaviors and keeps learners connected to their school communities. With effective interventions, suspensions can be significantly reduced, and disproportionalities in alternative placements can be addressed by keeping students engaged in their home schools whenever possible.

Funding can come from prioritizing programs that improve school climate, reallocating existing resources, and expanding community partnerships.

Response by Trevin Bass:

We can achieve this goal through transparency and interacting with families, hosting events and other ways to educate, involved and execute what will make us successful overall. We must seek a common ground on what service looks like across the board. Utilizing our radio and other sources of communication to get the word out about collaboration and unity. All parties especially our students should be involved from the start and not just for questions but for their concerns and utilize them for their critical thinking and ideas to serve themselves and their families. Receiving the youths buy in is important that they know that we are listening and that we understand the effects of our decisions. Paying for programming if isn't in our budget would really request partners and businesses in the community to sponsor and assist with payment. The training will be sponsored and also evaluated based off effectiveness and cost. The students' voice should make up at least 45 percent of decisions made as everything should be geared towards them and their successes. I support sworn officers in JCPS schools. I believe this brings protection mentally and physically to our students. I also believe the relationship building combats with past issue faces with law and our students.

Response by Michelle Patrick:

We must acknowledge that current practices may not consistently foster an inclusive environment. Every student deserves a safe, respectful setting conducive to learning. While students must understand institutional expectations and the consequences of noncompliance, disciplinary measures must be equitable, consistent, proportionate, and aligned with district policy. Parents should be informed about

disciplinary procedures and available recourse for perceived inequities. Discipline should not rely solely on removal from the classroom; we must identify underlying causes and implement preventive interventions—such as counseling, behavioral supports, family engagement, or other strategies—tailored to individual circumstances. I recommend that the superintendent pursue grant funding and Title I resources to expand behavioral interventions. As a board member, I would support robust safety policies and expect their uniform application. Safety and student support are complementary objectives; we can maintain accountability while promoting student success.

Response by Deja Brennan Jackson:

I support restorative justice and restorative practices because accountability and safety should not be competing priorities. When a student is dangerous or seriously disruptive, we must ensure that students and staff are safe, including temporarily separating a student when necessary. But the goal should be corrective action and restoration, not simply removing a student from the school community.

Interventions should happen before disciplinary action whenever appropriate. We should strengthen behavioral supports, counseling, family engagement, and other resources that help identify challenges early and address the underlying issues before they escalate. At the same time, teachers and students must feel safe. I support having the appropriate level of trained safety personnel in our schools—no more, but no less than what is necessary to keep our communities safe.

Ultimately, I believe this is about relationship-building. This generation is navigating challenges that are different from what many of us experienced growing up. Students need trusted teachers, faculty, staff, counselors, and other adults they can turn to when something is happening. Parents should not hear from schools only when something has gone wrong. A more open-door approach creates stronger relationships, earlier intervention, and greater accountability for everyone.

Safe, welcoming schools are built through trust, relationships, and accountability.