



2021 VOTERS' GUIDE

BY THE COUNCIL FOR INTOWN NEIGHBORHOODS AND SCHOOLS (CINS)

The [Council for Intown Neighborhoods and Schools](#) (CINS) supports the Midtown Cluster of schools through advocacy, investment and community engagement. Our schools are Midtown High, Howard Middle, Centennial Academy, Kindezi Old 4th Ward, and Hope-Hill, Mary Lin, Morningside, and Springdale Park Elementary Schools. To learn more about CINS and to donate to support our annual teacher grants, please visit www.cinsatlanta.org.

REGISTER TO VOTE DEADLINE

October 4, 2021 (passed)

EARLY VOTING

Tuesday, October 12, 2021 to Friday, October 29, 2021

ELECTION DAY

Tuesday, November 2, 2021
Polls open 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

RUN-OFF DAY

Tuesday, November 30, 2021
Polls open 7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

HELPFUL LINKS

- Voter registration, districts, and polling locations at: [My Voter Page](#)
- [City of Atlanta General Election Information](#)
- [Early Voting Locations](#)
- [ABOE District Map](#)

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ATLANTA BOARD OF EDUCATION (ABOE) ELECTIONS

CINS sent questionnaires to the 16 ABOE candidates seeking to represent the intown neighborhoods zoned for Atlanta's Midtown Cluster of schools, which are Districts 1, 2 and 3, and At-large Seats 7, 8 and 9. We received responses from 14 candidates!

We are grateful to all of them for their willingness to serve our community and public schools, and we thank those who responded for the time and thought they put into sharing their views with us. The candidates' websites and email addresses are listed on Page 2 of this Voters' Guide.

The candidates' responses to the 8 questions below are listed by question, then by district, and then in alphabetical order. They were given a word limit of 150 words per question, and we published their answers as they were received without editing or verification; however, fonts were changed and extra spacing was removed in some cases.

Questions to the Candidates:

1. What sparked your interest in running for the Atlanta Board of Education? (150 words)
2. Please describe your experience with public schools. What do you value most about public education? (150 words)
3. What do you view as the Midtown Cluster's largest challenges and how would you help address them in a creative and effective way? (150 words)
4. What are your thoughts on Dr. Herring's proposed use of the Inman campus as a 4th/5th grade academy? How would you help facilitate the smooth transition of this new configuration with respect to the students, staff and parents? (150 words)
5. Other than this 4th/5th proposal, what other solutions would you propose that would address the long-term overcrowding in the Midtown and neighboring clusters? (150 words)
6. What impact do you think the pandemic has had on public education? What new ideas would you propose to address these impacts? (150 words)
7. If you're faced with a significant budget cut as a board member (e.g., if Buckhead leaves APS), what would you view as essential to keep and what would you consider cutting? (150 words)
8. Who was your favorite teacher growing up and why? (150 words)

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, CINS does not endorse candidates. This Voters' Guide is provided instead to encourage voter awareness and participation. Readers can learn more about the candidates through their campaign websites and news sources such as the [Atlanta-Journal Constitution](#), [Atlanta Civic Circle](#) and www.voteatl.org. We hope you find this information helpful!

Candidate Website & Email Address



District/Seat	Website	Email Address
District 1		
Katie Howard	www.katiehowardforaps.com	katiehowardforaps@gmail.com
Wykeisha Howe	www.wykeishahowe.com	wykeishahoweforaps1@gmail.com
District 2		
Aretta Baldon (incumbent)	www.arettabaldon.com	electaretta@gmail.com
Keisha Carey	www.keishacareyforatlantaschools.com	keisha.carey@aol.com
Bethsheba "Queen Sheba" Rem	www.queenshebaforatlanta.com	queenshebaforatlanta@gmail.com
District 3		
Michelle Olympiadis (incumbent)	michelleforboe.com	michelle.olympiadis@gmail.com
At Large Seat 7		
Patricia "Granny P" Crayton	Unknown	patricia4thepeople@gmail.com
Tamara Jones	tamaraforaboe7.com	TamaraForABOE7@gmail.com
Royce Carter Mann	www.royceforatlanta.com	info@royceforatlanta.com
Stephen Spring	www.springboard2021.com	springboard2021@gmail.com
Kanesha "KaCey" Venning	www.electkacey.com	electkacey@gmail.com
At Large Seat 8		
Cynthia Briscoe Brown (incumbent)	www.cynthiabriscoebrown.com	cynthiabriscoebrown@gmail.com
Keedar Whittle	www.KeedarWhittleforAPS.com	keedar@educatorsnowllc.com
At Large Seat 9		
Jason B. Allen	edlanta.org	professorjba@gmail.com
Jason Esteves (incumbent)	www.jasonesteves.com	jason@jasonesteves.com
D'Jaris "DJ" James	www.votedjaris.com	votedjaris@gmail.com

 **Question 1: What sparked your interest in running for the Atlanta Board of Education?**

District 1	
Katie Howard	My work and commitment to our communities' schools and wanting the best for every child they serve, sparked my interest in running for BOE. I've been involved in the Jackson Cluster- where my girls are 8th graders at King Middle- for almost 10 years having served as a PTA/PTSA president, GO Team member and a frequent volunteer, and through those roles I focused on supporting every student and family and building community within and around our neighborhood schools. It's been amazing to see the impact of a cross-section of families coming together and supporting our neighborhood schools, which has increased resources for our schools, and in turn, benefited every student. Being an instrumental part of this experience and wanting to further support all APS schools, as well as believing in APS and its ability to do more, made me decide to take the plunge and run for BOE.
Wykeisha Howe	There were a few things that sparked my interest to run, but one, in particular, was the data that was Present earlier this year by our current superintendent stating that poor children in every cluster were behind.

District 2	
Aretta Baldon (incumbent)	I'm concerned about the poor academic performance of District 2 schools, so as someone who proactively chose to live in this community; I chose to engage when the seat became available. Less than 20% of children in my district are reading and doing math on grade level and the pandemic only magnified and exacerbated their challenges. There is a 60 percentage point gap between the academic achievement of our black students and their white counterparts. I know our children can do better. I'm committed to be a part of the solution that values our most vulnerable population's needs, elevates their voices, and helps the children of my community be globally competitive through a viable and equitable public education. I started the work 2 years ago, and I intend to see it through.
Keisha Carey	I am running for the Atlanta School Board not only as a candidate but as a graduate of the APS. My top priority as school board member, is to restore the confidence of the constituents and stakeholders regarding transparency in education from Pre-K -12th grade, specifically within the Atlanta District 2 neighborhoods. I also believe that every student should be allowed the opportunity to experience a safe, fair and equitable education. As I speak to the community of District 2, one concerns is, people need to feel that they can trust the school system with day- to- day decisions, which need to make practical sense that impact our students, therefore, new leadership is needed. As the next Atlanta school board member of District 2, I plan to restore trust by bridging a partnership in a collaborated effort to include students, parents, educators and staff.
Bethsheba "Queen Sheba" Rem	I know what it's like to learn in an underserved school system. I am adopted and was in foster care and I know how instability can cause uncertainty. And I have many amazing teachers along the way that motivated me to become a hardworking, innovative, activist leader. My goal is to bring a unique creative approach to bringing a quality education for ALL children in Atlanta Public Schools. This means making sure resources are equitably distributed and students have their needs met before, during, and after school. Our students will always come first, for me.



Question 1: What sparked your interest in running for the Atlanta Board of Education?

District 3	
Michelle Olympiadis (incumbent)	With extensive leadership roles in Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) at the local, council and district levels, as well as, service on local governance teams, state, district, and cluster advisory panels and committees, I decided to continue my service by running for school board. I thought my experiences would be valuable to the Board of Education and to help improve the district.
At-Large Seat 7	
Patricia “Granny P” Crayton	Did not respond
Tamara Jones	As a long time active APS parent I have witnessed challenges in the organization that have persisted through multiple superintendents. One of the largest has been communication and engagement. I have seen administrations achieve some successes, but more often failures to authentically engage families, communities, educators, and students in true collaborative work. Some time ago I realized that the failure has been on the part of the board to establish a reliable, transparent, and equitable structure for strategic stakeholder engagement that would lead to collaboration and a sense of joint ownership. It is the board’s job to establish that structure. Right now the only structure in board policy is the 2 minute public comment at board meetings and a sentence about GO Teams under school governance. We can do MUCH better, and can look to Atlanta’s NPU system for inspiration on how that might work.
Royce Carter Mann	I first thought about running for the board after attempting to advocate for the creation of a permanent Student Member of the Board position. This is a position that districts in some other states have, and it allows students to elect one of their peers to represent them on the board. Unfortunately, Georgia state law prevents anyone under 18 from serving in any elected office, making it all but impossible for a current student to serve on the board. I realized that the next best thing would be a recent graduate, and though I had never envisioned myself running for public office at 19, the closer I got to graduating, I realized that my policy and organizing experience made me uniquely qualified to be the voice for students that our board so desperately needs.
Stephen Spring	Atlanta Public Schools have lost their way in serving students and families. It is hyper-focused on standardized testing and other centralized mechanisms that take the board’s focus away from learning and teaching. I have been serving public education for over three decades - as a teacher, a curriculum developer, an equity in mathematics professional developer, and as an elected official on Portland’s School Board. This career, combined with my degrees in education and my doctoral coursework in Educational Policy position me as the candidate uniquely qualified to interrupt an ineffective institution.
Kaneshia “KaCey” Venning	My experience over 20 years has allowed me a front row seat to the lives of our students and their families in Atlanta. Also, the 20 young men I work with on the Westside of Atlanta suggested this: “Ms. KaCey, what would happen if you helped all youth the way you help us?” I knew then that a voice was needed on the School Board that still had an ear to the heartbeat of the community to ensure that as we create policy and hold our superintendent accountable, we think of our families and communities in that process. Additionally, I want to serve this city that welcomed me 23 years ago and I want to stay true to my passion of supporting youth.

 **Question 1: What sparked your interest in running for the Atlanta Board of Education?**

At-Large Seat 8

Cynthia Briscoe Brown (incumbent)	When I ran for my first term in 2013, I felt my long experience as a highly involved APS parent, citywide volunteer in schools, and community leader would help bring the BOE out of the cheating and accreditation crises and prioritize the needs of children instead of adults. Eight years later, and in our current time of uncertainty and rapid change, it's even more important to have BOE members with deep and broad experience and knowledge of APS who can acknowledge the past, understand the impact our past has on our present, and use that wisdom to move us into a better future for all our kids. As I run for my third term, I combine the knowledge and skills necessary to move us forward with the passion to enact positive change quickly and effectively.
Keedar Whittle	Graduation rates in Atlanta Public Schools have risen to about 80%, yet only 39% of our students are reading at or above grade level. The numbers are even worse in math. Something's not right there. We're increasing graduation rates in the name of equity, but we're not providing a truly equitable education. Too many of our scholars are graduating without the skills they need to succeed in college, in work, or in life. I have kids in our public schools, and it seems to me that you shouldn't have to be able to afford an expensive neighborhood or private school tuition for your kids to get a good education. Every child in Atlanta, every family in Atlanta should have that opportunity. Our city is too strong, too rich in resources, too innovative and diverse for it to be any other way.

At-Large Seat 9


Jason B. Allen	I am running for the Atlanta Board of Education because our children can't continue to wait on a world class education system. They need it now. I believe our steps to begin this work are simple. Prioritize equitable policies by improving family and community engagement, early education and workforce development. Balance budgeting with academic and wrap around services first for student success. Prioritizing feedback and improving flexibility for teachers and instructors in teaching and learning models. Making Atlanta Public Schools a world class system means making our priority providing better educational opportunities for our students.
Jason Esteves (incumbent)	As a former public school teacher and attorney, I ran for school board eight years ago because I wanted the opportunity to help reset a school system that had been rocked by scandal. Since then, we've made significant progress. Our graduation rate hit a record high (80.3%). We have increased our partnerships with nonprofits and business, which means more students have access to key wraparound services. We increased the number of students taking AP, IB, and college prep classes, and started the Atlanta College and Career Academy to help prepare students for vocational careers after graduation. I am running for re-election because I know the work is not done. There is still much work to do related to closing opportunity gaps, improving communication and engagement, and increasing the quality of teaching and learning in our schools.
D'Jaris "DJ" James	Did not respond

 **Question 2: Please describe your experience with public schools. What do you value most about public education?**


District 1	
Katie Howard	I'm a proud APS graduate of Grady High School, class of '96, and attended Morningside, C.W. Hill and Inman. I loved my APS experience, and one of the things I valued the most about it was that I went to a school with a cross-section of kids- from Ansley Park to Techwood Homes- and not only received a good education, but also learned to be a good citizen. The opportunity for kids from different backgrounds to come together and be educated together- and learn from one another- is one of the things I value the most about public school. I also value the strong connection between schools and community, which was certainly evident during my time at Grady. This strong school-community connection is one I want to make sure is continued and that APS schools are always considered choice schools for the communities they serve.
Wykeisha Howe	I am a public school mom with three special-needs children, one that graduated in May 2021. My experience has been very challenging because I am very vocal and believe in speaking up for those who may not know how to speak up for themselves.

District 2	
Aretta Baldon (incumbent)	My daughter and I are both products of public schools. My education prepared me for Spelman College, and my daughter's prepared her for the University of Kentucky. What I value most about public schools is that they theoretically provide an opportunity for students to ascend and achieve the American Dream, regardless of their starting point. The reality is far too often zip codes can determine the quality of the educational experience. That shouldn't be the case. My daughter and I succeeded because we had parents who advocated on our behalf; I am that advocate for District 2 students specifically and all APS students in general.
Keisha Carey	What I value most regarding public schools from my own experience is: A.) diversity, B.) academic opportunities, C.) extracurricular opportunities, D.) accountability, and E.) results.
Bethsheba "Queen Sheba" Rem	As a positive success story from the Detroit Public School system – the diversity in my classmate's and teacher's backgrounds, ethnicity, upbringing, core values and ideology around economic beliefs gave me insight into the world, while living in my neighborhood. The access to assorted electives and the flexibility in the curriculums during my journey from elementary, to middle then high school introduced me to ideologies and cultures that I may have not been privy to. In my public school experience, teachers were the activists – introducing new perspectives and ways to think – they were there because they wanted to be, and it showed.

District 3	
Michelle Olympiadis (incumbent)	An APS parent since 2007 with three children (two in high school and one in middle school) my experiences extend from local to state and national levels of education. I value the fact that public education is here for all children from special education to gifted and talented no matter their race, religion, or socioeconomic backgrounds. We are a public good.

 **Question 2: Please describe your experience with public schools. What do you value most about public education?**

At-Large Seat 7	
Patricia “Granny P” Crayton	Did not respond
Tamara Jones	My mother was the first in her family to graduate from high school. I went to public schools in Georgia, New Jersey, and Connecticut. I lived the value of public education. My 3 children have attended APS schools in the Midtown Cluster since kindergarten. I have been an active APS parent for 15 years, and have served in leadership positions throughout that time on LSCs, GO Teams, Cluster Advisory, and many district wide committees including SPLOST Oversight, Excellent Schools, and District Executive Committee. Public school systems offer the opportunity to experience how we are all interdependent, and how we are stronger when we work together to address challenges and leverage our mutual assets. It is a direct counterpoint to the “every man for himself” mindset that can be an impediment to a just and inclusive civil society. Public education and locally elected school boards are the bedrock of democracy.
Royce Carter Mann	One of the people I admire most, my grandmother, was a public school educator who worked for APS and later helped launch the U.S. Department of Education as a member of the Jimmy Carter administration, and my dad is an Arts Educator who travels the state and country integrating creativity into all levels of the curriculum. Learning from my grandmother and witnessing my father taught me at a young age the vital importance of empowering students through quality public education. Lastly, as a recent APS graduate, I have unparalleled firsthand knowledge of what it is like to learn in our schools in recent years. Having led the successful effort to rename Grady and having served on the GO-Team as well as the district’s LGBTQ+ task force, I’m ready to be your next Seat 7 at-large member on the Board of Education so that we can truly empower Atlanta’s students.
Stephen Spring	Aside from above, my last five years had me running a second grade bike safety education program with PE/Health teachers in nine APS elementary schools. In my role with the Atlanta Bicycle Coalition, I worked closely with Midtown High Schools Atlanta Students Advocating for Pedestrians group, securing bike rack installations at the school and at four other schools in the cluster. Last week, I transitioned to a full-time consulting job where I lead with three school districts in areas of culturally responsive teaching and mathematics equity. I bring all these recent and current experiences to my role on the Atlanta School Board.
Kaneshia “KaCey” Venning	I attended public school K-12th grade in Virginia Beach, VA. I was one of very few Black or Brown faces in my classes. I either felt overlooked or as the token, especially when it was known that my mother taught school. Lots of attention was paid to me when I would receive straight A's. I didn't know how to process that. But, I also appreciated the opportunity to explore interests without it being additional expenses for my parents. What I value most is that when done effectively, public school can help students build confidence and explore interests while obtaining an educational foundation that can take them wherever they choose.


 **Question 2: Please describe your experience with public schools. What do you value most about public education?**

At-Large Seat 8

<p>Cynthia Briscoe Brown (incumbent)</p>	<p>I am the daughter, daughter-in-law, and parent of APS alumni. My husband and I chose APS for our children because we wanted them to understand and celebrate the enormous diversity of their classmates and city. They attended three Title I schools, and their friend groups encompassed an astonishing range of race, religion, family structure, housing situation, income level, and sexual orientation/gender identity. As a result, APS truly gave our children an education for college, career, and life, combining world-class academics with adaptability, empathy, communication, and leadership skills to become successful and responsible members of their neighborhood, city, state, nation, and world. That’s what public education should do, and I’m a Board of Education member today because I want to make sure APS does that for every single child.</p>
<p>Keedar Whittle</p>	<p>I started as a student at Adamsville Elementary, then Collier Heights Elementary. My mom, Dr. Marsha Whittle, is a retired APS administrator who taught me that education would unlock opportunities. As an adult I started as an 8th grade special education teacher, science coordinator for schools in Boston, substitute teacher for LAUSD and now an entrepreneur in education. I value most the diversity in public schools. Diversity builds empathy for the experiences of other people. That’s a character trait I want in my children, and it’s essential for living in our diverse world. I’ve walked the neighborhoods of Atlanta during this campaign. I’ve seen the struggles of multiple families living together in two-bedroom apartments, kids coming to school hungry, and overall morale and faith in our schools down. Some of our present board’s decisions make me wonder if they understand the struggles our children bring with them to our schools.</p>


At-Large Seat 9

<p>Jason B. Allen</p>	<p>I am a graduate of Atlanta Public Schools. I worked in the Atlanta Public School system for 12 years, public education for 14 of my 17 years. What I value the most about public education is the connection of schools, families and communities.</p>
<p>Jason Esteves (incumbent)</p>	<p>I went to public schools as a child, I taught in public schools as an adult, and I am the parent of a child that attends an APS school. Public education has shaped the person I am today. I know the power of a high quality public education, which is why I am working to continue to improve APS. The most valuable thing about public education is the potential impact it can have on ensuring a community thrives. There is no institution like it--free, accessible, and when effective, able to provide students with opportunities to succeed in life. The only way for Atlanta to become the "City on a Hill" we all know it can be, APS must provide students, regardless of zip code, a high quality education.</p>
<p>D’Jaris “DJ” James</p>	<p>Did not respond</p>

 **Question 3: What do you view as the Midtown Cluster's largest challenges and how would you help address them in a creative and effective way?**

District 1	
Katie Howard	The Midtown Cluster has amazing support and connection with their schools, which is exactly what we want for APS, but it's also an issue that must be proactively addressed when it comes to capacity issues, which is a major one for the cluster. I think APS has to look uniquely at Midtown- as they should at every cluster and their schools- and develop a long-range facility plan that meets the needs of all students, is viable and vetted with the community. Part of this planning should also include allowing for appropriate school autonomy so that strategies and approaches that are working for our students are continued and supported by the District, which I would request be supported by the Office of Innovation. Another challenge is making sure Hope-Hill is fully supported facility-wise and that students continue to have the resources they need even during transitions to the next school level.
Wykeisha Howe	The Midtown cluster is one of the fastest growing clusters and I believe all schools in Atlanta Public Schools need to be thriving, so parents can feel comfortable choosing to send their children to other schools.


District 2	
Aretta Baldon (incumbent)	I believe Midtown Cluster's largest challenge is its growth which has led to capacity issues over the years. Additional challenges within Midtown include the disparities between the academic performance of its subgroups, the socio-economic inequities that exist within its student population; and its fragmented geography and needs. We have to address the disparities in an equitable fashion while imparting a full understanding of what is equity.
Keisha Carey	One of the largest challenges for the Midtown Cluster and across the entire APS district is the impact of the pandemic as it relates to safety. As a school board member, I would ensure that APS keep students, educators and staff safe in schools by appropriately adhering to all mandated required protocols.
Bethsheba "Queen Sheba" Rem	Two of the largest challenges are funding and safety. The unequitable distribution to funds to the schools in the northern part of the city is disturbing. SW District 2 has the lowest budget for educational resources that include but are not limited to: updated curriculum, technology for all students, E-books, upgrades to their facilities, and annual training for teachers and safety officers. Secondly, the children have done an excellent job of navigating uncertainty. As a board member, it would be my job to ensure that there would be as little ambiguity as possible. This means looking hard at hybrid learning being a key part of education, but not the answer to all our problems. This means balancing the interests of students and families with the resources available – while advocating for improvements. Most importantly, this means increasing the support we give students who may be lacking it at home or outside of the classroom. We need to look at each student as a whole human being and make sure every student feels safe and valued.

 **Question 3: What do you view as the Midtown Cluster's largest challenges and how would you help address them in a creative and effective way?**


District 3

**Michelle Olympiadis
(incumbent)**

As a Midtown Cluster parent, our community's largest challenge continues to be addressing our capacity issues. Although COVID delayed the Master Facilities Plan, we are getting back on track in December. We must continue to engage as a cluster and work together to find solutions with the limited land and facilities available in this cluster. Currently the Midtown cluster must find another signature program as the organization which was supporting it has moved to only supporting districts. The community will need to work together to explore the options of STEM/STEAM or International Baccalaureate.

 **Question 3: What do you view as the Midtown Cluster’s largest challenges and how would you help address them in a creative and effective way?**

At-Large Seat 7	
Patricia “Granny P” Crayton	Did not respond
Tamara Jones	A persistent challenge has been capacity. The cluster came together creatively to advocate for the renovation of David T. Howard, although it was highly controversial at the time for some. There has been a lack of reliable data and forecasts, but I am encouraged by the team APS has contracted to conduct the Facilities Master Plan (currently on hold but soon to resume). Another is breaking down the walls between neighborhood schools and the charter schools in our cluster. I would like to see all schools participating in Cluster Advisory meetings. We will be updating the 5-yr Cluster Strategic Plan this year, which will also include outlining a new signature theme (see answer #1 re: engagement, which should have happened before now). Another is funding via the Student Success Formula - I will work to ensure there is a “floor” for the base funding per pupil that is based on an actual metric.
Royce Carter Mann	Segregation through tracking and capacity are two major issues. To address the issue of segregation, we need to work diligently to increase participation in AP and Honors classes amongst students of color and start tracking racial demographics at the classroom level. Once we do this, we can set standards to ensure that a school like Midtown, which has incredible diversity, doesn’t end up segregating students along lines of race and income. To solve capacity issues, we need to explore redistricting our clusters and expanding access to other options aside from our traditional high schools, such as the ACCA (Atlanta College and Career Academy) and the AVA (Atlanta Virtual Academy).
Stephen Spring	I live near Kindezi and have worked in that school as well as Midtown HS, Mary Lin ES, Springdale Park ES, and Howard MS. I listen to parents and teachers and administrators. The problems facing all our schools are problems for the Midtown Cluster. Defund Standardized Testing. Students in our schools are denied up to 60 days of learning each year due to testing and test-prep. It is inequitable with students who are in schools labeled “low-performing” by single-test, narrow measures losing nearly a third of a school year every year. Reallocate tens of millions of dollars upholding ineffective centralized processes to the point of learning. Our teachers deserve to be making pay equal to those of our other public front-line workers like our police officers and firefighters. Empower school community formal and informal organizations to make decisions on curriculum, personnel, and managing a budget with real money. Our schools have GoTeams where these responsibilities are detailed.
Kaneshia “KaCey” Venning	I see one of Midtown Cluster’s largest challenges is overcrowding and a growing enrollment. We have to survey families to see how they are growing in terms of children, ages, grades, etc. to reasonably forecast how we need to make space for students. We should periodically plan for expansions where needed before they are needed and we are able to do this because we are connected to communities and families and their needs regularly. As an At-Large member of the board I see this as a unique position to find innovative and creative ways to hear from our families and ensure that is priority as decisions are made with a perspective on how it can and will affect the whole district.

 **Question 3: What do you view as the Midtown Cluster’s largest challenges and how would you help address them in a creative and effective way?**

At-Large Seat 8	
Cynthia Briscoe Brown (incumbent)	Choosing a new Signature Program, equity in the face of changing demographics, enrollment/capacity issues, and community issues such as crime and housing all affect the future health and success of the Midtown Cluster. These challenges aren’t unique to Midtown, but the solutions to each can be Midtown-specific to account for its important place in our “city of neighborhoods.” I have a long history of bringing people together to solve problems, including starting foundations for sustainable school support, advocating for safe routes to school, and drafting gender-neutral dress code and LGBTQIA+ student/employee support policies. I will continue to unify parents and caregivers, students, APS employees, nonprofits, businesses, and community members so we can be creative and effective together, which is really the only way to achieve our goals.
Keedar Whittle	Our Midtown Cluster has the best schools in APS! Parents move into the neighborhood by any means necessary to take advantage of our state-recognized schools. This influx of people is causing our schools to become overcrowded. We must do everything in our power to address the inequities, challenges and needs at ALL schools to address the whole scholar. There is a clear correlation between high achieving schools and property value. When property values rise, it will attract people who are moving to be interested in ALL neighborhoods of Atlanta and not single out Midtown for our schools. We can partner with outside organizations, provide the services needed to support the whole child and family, and create policies that are measurable and equitable to solve our overcrowdedness.

At-Large Seat 9	
Jason B. Allen	Midtown Cluster challenges include reducing increased class sizes, teacher sustainability and tracking K-2 performance. I believe that we improve teacher sustainability by having goals that address research based practices to improve schools’ expansion, transitions and teacher/leaders opportunities. By providing opportunities that will allow teachers to move into positions in and out of the classroom to help elevate student learning. Improving resources for wrap around services that support our teachers work in the classroom also is a solution. I believe we look at handling increase class size by looking at ways to build the clusters capacity by strengthening the resources and opportunities for teachers.
Jason Esteves (incumbent)	The most significant challenges facing the Midtown Cluster are overcrowding (which will be addressed below) and continuing to increase rigor while closing opportunity gaps that currently exist in the cluster. As we work to recover from the pandemic using the interventions I mention below, we must also work to ensure we continue to raise the bar. We cannot stop increasing rigor in our classrooms across the District. That being said, there are stark gaps between White students and Students of Color in the Midtown Cluster. The new Office of Equity and Social Justice must facilitate the work of helping to close those gaps in a manner that raises the floor, but continues to raise the ceiling.
D’Jaris “DJ” James	Did not respond



Question 4: What are your thoughts on Dr. Herring’s proposed use of the Inman campus as a 4th/5th grade academy? How would you help facilitate the smooth transition of this new configuration with respect to the students, staff and parents?

District 1	
Katie Howard	I'm open-minded to the 4/5 academy while paying close attention to the feedback from families at all D1 schools that would be impacted. If it is the 4/5 academy, APS must have a tailored plan as to how all students- particularly those who are receiving special support services and benefiting from their current environment and resources- are fully supported in a new setting and critical services are continued. Administrators and educators who would be shifted must also be a part of the planning process since they know their schools and students best. Additional explanation on the academic and social benefits to a 4/5 based on the specific schools impacted is needed, as well as some more assurances on logistics, particularly surrounding bus routes. Clear and direct communication is extremely important, and with this being such a significant transition, I think an in-person engagement (with virtual option) would be helpful.
Wykeisha Howe	I first learned about the Inman campus proposal during the October board meeting. I stand with my parents! I do not believe in separating siblings that young and I think the superintendent and her staff can find a better approach.

District 2	
Aretta Baldon (incumbent)	I think that the proposal on the table is a viable option, as is the proposal for a new K-5 schoolhouse. Both options have pros and cons and neither will make everyone happy. My concern however, is that this decision is being made independent of the Facilities Master Plan and does not take into consideration the families in District 2 (e.g. Home Park, Howell Station) that feed into the cluster and are also experiencing capacity challenges. I look forward to further community engagement and the final recommendation from the superintendent.
Keisha Carey	As school board member, I would respectfully assist to facilitate the smooth transition by being open to feedback from the community, students, parents, educators and staff as well as listening to any concerns with the planned process that may be raised either in favor or in opposition. In addition, I would continue to urge full participation with related scheduled APS community meetings. I would also, be fully available to address any related matters that may not arise at these meetings if anyone wished to further communicate with me.
Bethsheba "Queen Sheba" Rem	First, this proposal needs to be addressed by the families. As leaders, it is our job to be a voice for students and families. That said, I understand the merits of Dr. Herring's plan. It would sidestep the need for rezoning, alleviate overcrowding in the area, and allow teachers more time with students. However, we cannot ignore that it would drastically change the way some families interact with school. Many in the area now are able to walk their children to school and this would change that for many families. However, as a leader it would be my job to respond to the needs of the community, not what I think is best.



Question 4: What are your thoughts on Dr. Herring’s proposed use of the Inman campus as a 4th/5th grade academy? How would you help facilitate the smooth transition of this new configuration with respect to the students, staff and parents?

District 3

**Michelle Olympiadis
(incumbent)**

There is no simple solution. This one brings all the students in the cluster together before middle school. To assist in facilitating the transition of Inman, I have already encouraged folks to contact me, 404-502-0725. Engagement is key in informing the administration ways that would be supported by the community. Extending the timeline as well as phasing in a grade level per year could benefit the transition.



Question 4: What are your thoughts on Dr. Herring’s proposed use of the Inman campus as a 4th/5th grade academy? How would you help facilitate the smooth transition of this new configuration with respect to the students, staff and parents?

At-Large Seat 7	
Patricia “Granny P” Crayton	Did not respond
Tamara Jones	I was a supporter of the 5th/6th option that did not make the final cut, but I support 4th/5th for some of the same reasons: a program that specifically supports this critical time in child development. I felt my pre-teens’ need for explicit support in “how to be a student” to prepare for middle school did not receive the attention it deserved. The other aspect that holds promise is bringing students from different schools together as peers before 6th grade. To facilitate the transition, consider how we might loop teachers up and back between the elementary schools and the 4/5 so there are familiar faces and continuity of relationships. Explore letting kids walk to their home elementary school and then board a bus from there to the 4/5 , direct from the elementary to Inman without any stops. Consider “phasing in” with just 4th the first year so there is no cohort that only spends one year in the new school.
Royce Carter Mann	I support the idea, but would only want to move forward with it after more community input and involvement. We need to include the families that will be served by the school in the process of creating the school. If families are invested and involved in the creation of the school, the transition will be smooth because folks will view the transition as a true collaboration rather than something that is being forced or rushed.
Stephen Spring	I love the idea of using this quality space for emerging middle school students. It is this educator’s belief that we must provide students with age-appropriate environments to learn and grow. The physical environment and targeted programming will advance learning and attend to the Social and Emotional Learning needs of 4th and 5th graders. The negatives - the younger (PreK-3) students lose ‘role models’ to look up to. In schools I have worked at that have split buildings into narrower time spans, parents and teachers often remark on this. The other challenge will be in transportation, an area I am highly qualified to offer solutions. It will require awarding schools like the newly configured Inman campus with much greater autonomy in policy and resource allocation decisions.
Kaneshia “KaCey” Venning	A 4th/5th grade academy is not a new idea. One was proposed when talks of school closings were taking place a few years ago. It does allow students the opportunity to grow and mature as students prior to entering Middle School. I would lead a comprehensive community listening session series to receive input from parents and caregivers on how they would like to have an effortless transition. Communication would have to be effective and regular utilizing multiple avenues to share and gather information. For this age group having counselors and wrap-around support service providers would be helpful to have on site. Also, we would need to survey the needs for families related to bell schedules to not add more stress than necessary to having another site for drop off for many families. There is one traditional Middle School in the Midtown Cluster and while the beautiful Howard campus is amazing with the number of families moving into this cluster we are on track to outgrow Howard as well.



Question 4: What are your thoughts on Dr. Herring’s proposed use of the Inman campus as a 4th/5th grade academy? How would you help facilitate the smooth transition of this new configuration with respect to the students, staff and parents?

At-Large Seat 8

Cynthia Briscoe Brown (incumbent)

Dr. Herring and her team are currently incorporating all the community feedback and determining whether revisions are needed. Whatever the final recommendation is, I will insist on a well-developed and detailed plan for implementation, combining a strong roadmap with the flexibility to address issues as they arise. I remember the lessons learned during the rollout of the split-campus schools and will share that knowledge with the team. Choosing the right school leader will be important, as will providing individualized supports for students from each elementary school. We’ll also want to bring together parent leaders as soon as possible so they can begin to build a strong base of support for the new school and make a compelling argument for involvement at multiple levels. In the end, this is a microcosm of my work making our Equity Policy live and breathe, ensuring every child gets everything they need to succeed.

Keedar Whittle


I understand Dr. Herring has to address overcrowding in our cluster. However, this is a bandaid approach to a much larger concern. If this is approved, we need to be intentional about merging the communities of Morningside, Hope-Hill, Mary Lin, and Springdale Park, which have different experiences and needs. There’s going to be some culture shock for everyone to overcome, and good community-building is going to be critical for the plan’s success. We need to prepare staff with appropriate training, including SEL and diversity training, for the new challenges they may face. And we need to make sure that EVERY student has the support services they need to succeed.



Question 4: What are your thoughts on Dr. Herring’s proposed use of the Inman campus as a 4th/5th grade academy? How would you help facilitate the smooth transition of this new configuration with respect to the students, staff and parents?

At-Large Seat 9


Jason B. Allen	My vision as a board member would be to create goals for a Jr. academy, grades 3rd – 5th at the Inman facility to meet the SEL goals and needs of the clusters. The development of adolescents (7-10) is also between grades 3-5 and building culture and unity in this age frame is essential social, emotional learning. Intermediate education begins with 3rd grade which is also the very first year of standardized testing could lead to disruption in learning patterns. This would take away from the cluster goal to improve the tracking of K-2 performance. I believe as a board member, the goals I would recommend will expand space for Pre K through 2nd grades which per the census will see growing numbers in the next few years. I believe the Jr. Academy will allow the cluster to expand the teacher and leader initiatives, continue collaboration and maintain strong culture.
Jason Esteves (incumbent)	I understand the benefits of the 4th/5th grade academy--students from across the cluster coming together sooner, specialized classes and programs for older elementary school students, the opportunity to increase rigor in academic classes, and an increased focused on early education at the PK-3 campuses--and believe it would be beneficial for students. But I'd also like to see how the Administration engages the community on the proposal and addresses concerns related to the number of transitions, transportation, and the potential impact on pk-3 schools in the cluster. Regardless, we have to ensure there is a smooth transition by doing plenty of planning, which likely means we should seriously consider postponing any implementation until the community and staff have had adequate time to prepare. Given the last 18 months, we do not need to rush anything.
D'Jaris "DJ" James	Did not respond

 **Question 5: Other than this 4th/5th proposal, what other solutions would you propose that would address the long-term overcrowding in the Midtown and neighboring clusters?**


District 1	
Katie Howard	One of the first places I would start would be the future of Hope-Hill, which needs to be more holistically addressed by working with the City to formally incorporate the recreation center and redevelop the school property so it can serve more families and be an even greater asset to the community. I'm also looking forward to seeing the full results of the facilities study and audit so that the BOE knows exactly what is potentially available for development/use. If elected, I would always push for proactive planning so we are not behind in planning for school capacity and growth.
Wykeisha Howe	Last year in a conversation with Midtown parents, I learned about students having to travel across town to attend schools. When I think about students having to get up an hour early just to travel across town to attend school is very sad. I can't even imagine what toll this would take on their health, not to mention I was told that they do have to ride the school bus.

District 2	
Aretta Baldon (incumbent)	There are a number of solutions that could address the long-term overcrowding in the Midtown cluster, the first being completing the facilities master plan and taking the entire district's dynamic into consideration before acting. Other solutions include a new k-5 school, redistricting, opening up more virtual options and universal/open enrollment to name a few. All would require a detailed S.W.O.T. analysis, engagement across the entire district and a final recommendation from the administration.
Keisha Carey	If the 4th/5th proposal serves as an immediate solution prior to a long term one, my proposal as school board member for any student transportation issues due to bus driver shortages would be this. A great partnership for APS and the City of Atlanta would be to utilize the resources of Marta. Marta was utilized by APS many years ago for transportation needs at one point.
Bethsheba "Queen Sheba" Rem	I think we can consider the long-term viability of hybrid learning. For some students and families this is the preferred method of education and that could help reduce crowding inside the classroom. Beyond that, we need to fight for increasing and then equitably distributing the city budget in order to grow the resources needed to attract more educators and be able to expand existing facilities.

District 3	
Michelle Olympiadis (incumbent)	We have very limited space in the Midtown Cluster. We need to see what recommendations come from the Master Facilities Plan and be mindful that we are limited by land and facilities for a very fast growing part of the city for families.


 **Question 5: Other than this 4th/5th proposal, what other solutions would you propose that would address the long-term overcrowding in the Midtown and neighboring clusters?**

At-Large Seat 7	
Patricia “Granny P” Crayton	Did not respond
Tamara Jones	Two of my children graduated during the pandemic and spent either all or part of their senior year doing school virtually. Capabilities developed during the pandemic can be potentially adapted to expand more school-based learning options that allow students to continue their learning while pursuing work, advocacy, or philanthropic adventures outside the physical classroom.
Royce Carter Mann	We need to talk openly and honestly about redistricting our existing clusters and ensure that we do so in a strategic way that prevents capacity issues in the future and helps further integrate our schools. We should also expand seats at the ACCA and keep AVA (Atlanta Virtual Academy) enrollment open permanently. Lastly, we need to better utilize buildings and properties that are owned by APS and are currently being unused, and we should even explore how we can use worksites and outdoor spaces to host certain classes.
Stephen Spring	We know Atlanta Public Schools is not adequately providing students with living wage career paths. The latest generation is opting for college and university at lower rates than their parents for the first time in US history. As high, living-wage jobs requiring specialized certifications and skills continue to emerge in Atlanta and around Georgia and the nation, we need to create spaces for students to earn credentials. Imagine if the Midtown Cluster had a HS or a MS/HS that taught kids to be IT specialists, solar panel installers, or APP designers? Imagine a school that prepared students to exit high school at age 18 making way above the city’s median wage as an electrician or an e-bike repair person? I think opening up these 21st-Centry learning environments will help alleviate crowding by providing more options in current campus buildings.
Kaneshia “KaCey” Venning	This is really a symptom of the condition of the lack of affordable housing in our city. People with access to resources and a higher income are flooding certain parts of our city to give their students the education they are worthy of. All of our students are. Specifically, for this proposal I would think through ideas of a magnet, fine arts, music or some specialized education program. This would reduce the number of students in the “main” school buildings thus freeing up some space but still giving all students a great educational experience.

 **Question 5: Other than this 4th/5th proposal, what other solutions would you propose that would address the long-term overcrowding in the Midtown and neighboring clusters?**


At-Large Seat 8	
Cynthia Briscoe Brown (incumbent)	Since I'm not an education expert, a facilities planner, or (most important) an affected parent, my ideas should have a low priority. I am listening carefully and responding to all the community input I receive, talking with APS staff, and learning from research. For the long term, I believe overcrowding solutions lie in a combination of strategies, possibly including use of vacant properties, making full use of technology and virtual learning to offer advanced and specialized courses systemwide, redrawing attendance zones, and offering highly desirable programs in low-enrollment schools to entice families, as well as other concepts. What's most important is for families, employees, schools and clusters to find points of agreement and then work together to make progress towards those common goals, without letting differences of opinion derail them.
Keedar Whittle	The Midtown Cluster schools are overcrowded because we don't have equitable educational opportunities across all districts. Families who can, are moving to Midtown because this is where their children can get a good public education. Who can blame parents for wanting the best for their children? The long-term solution is to strengthen educational opportunities in EVERY DISTRICT! EVERY SCHOOL! for EVERY SCHOLAR! Every neighborhood should have a quality public school option. This will give families more choices for where to live and send their children for a good education. We need to interrogate the current budget and invest more where the needs are greatest. But it's not a zero-sum game. We need to develop stronger partnerships with Atlanta's many major corporations and foundations. As they invest more in our schools, everyone benefits, including their own employees. Building these partnerships will be a central focus of my APS board service.

At-Large Seat 9	
Jason B. Allen	I would address long time overcrowding by repurposing our current APS facilities, locally operated schools and contracts with school operators in the district. The midtown cluster for example will have a lot of growth over the next 3 – 5 years in addition to current increasing student enrollment. I would propose making Inman a 3rd – 5th grade academy, reverting Centennial Academy to its original status of a locally operated year round school to give parents more autonomy and improve K-2 performance data. The CA middle school students would be zoned to John Lewis Academy. The Midtown elementary schools would now have a year round option, additional Pre K option and more capacity of Pre K – 2nd grade students helping improve K – 2 performance data.
Jason Esteves (incumbent)	At the end of the day, we will have to rezone multiple clusters in APS within the next ten years, including the Midtown Cluster. While I think rezoning now is premature, APS will need to consider it once Southeast Atlanta has more fully developed and growth on the Westside provides the District with more data and clarity.
D'Jaris "DJ" James	Did not respond

 **Question 6: What impact do you think the pandemic has had on public education? What new ideas would you propose to address these impacts?**

District 1	
Katie Howard	The pandemic has definitely re-emphasized the importance of public school and their critical role in not only educating children, but also being a safe place to help meet childrens' emotional and physical health needs. It's also been a strong reminder that school systems must be able to fully leverage partnerships and work with community organizations to support all children. As the pandemic continues to impact our children, schools need to be able to stay open (safely) to be there for them and their families at a variety of levels. Lessons have also been learned from this time that school systems must be able to be nimble and prepared to move to virtual school when necessary in order to help prevent learning loss in instances when school cannot be held in-person.
Wykeisha Howe	I think the pandemic just shines the light on an issue that most of us knew had been happening for years. I believe that we should look closer at what worked during hybrid learning. Currently, we have over 1600-1800 students seeking to be In enrolled Virtual Academy. I believe with the help of their parents and community this could be a safe and successful option for those who choose it.


District 2	
Aretta Baldon (incumbent)	The pandemic exposed the inequities in education, income and resources. The main lesson I learned is that the communal nature of public schools demands a comprehensive strategy to ensure safe practices; including masks, social distancing and even vaccines where applicable. The Digital Divide due to inequities in income and resources was also amplified as we went to a digital learning model. We owe it to our students to provide them with the tools and equipment for learning in the 21st century. I also became aware of the mental health impact of isolation on not just students, but faculty members as well. I am in full support of the universal academic and behavior screeners; increases in mental health support and wraparound services; the district shift to 1-to-1 devices, as well as the Equity work in progress.
Keisha Carey	As I speak to the people of District 2, many are concerned regarding the impact of the pandemic academically. The specific question is, "How can we get our students back on track"? We can get our students back on track by ensuring that schools need to be completely open with parents regarding the loss of student learning and set a measurement to access a baseline to determine where students are academically and socially.
Bethsheba "Queen Sheba" Rem	I think first we need to give credit to those that steered us through the beginning of an ever-changing crisis. No one quite knew what we were facing in the beginning, and not only did we adjust, the students did an excellent job balancing the uncertainty of home/health life – some taking care of their parents and elders. The pandemic has brought unique challenges to public schools, including mask mandates and hybrid learning. As I pointed out above, Virtual and Hybrid learning are an important component of being able to reach students where they are, but we cannot rely on it as a one size fits all solution. We need to make sure support is equitable by design, to do that we have to look at how students have different levels of access, safety, and support outside the classroom. As a professor, I have experience working with students in a variety of situations, and helping build learning modules for that specific student greatly increases success.

 **Question 6: What impact do you think the pandemic has had on public education? What new ideas would you propose to address these impacts?**

District 3

**Michelle Olympiadis
(incumbent)**

A tremendous impact in so many areas. We need to continue to leverage the new communication tools we have developed since not having the option to be in person. We have learned that for some a traditional setting is key, however, for others having an online experience expanding learning opportunities. Quality education and equitable access are on a new playing field and we must evolve in our delivery methods. All the new strategies and initiatives we tested and found successful can blend back into how we move forward.

 **Question 6: What impact do you think the pandemic has had on public education? What new ideas would you propose to address these impacts?**

At-Large Seat 7	
Patricia “Granny P” Crayton	Did not respond
Tamara Jones	See answer #5. The pandemic highlighted the need for consistent means of accessing assignments, rubrics, resources, and ways of interacting with teachers. I would like to see many more opportunities for virtual tutorials, as well as virtual study groups for students in middle and high school that are facilitated by the school so they are not the sole province of privileged families. The pandemic has also inflicted psychological and emotional stress on many educators and students that exposes needs that existed even before to be more deliberate and consistent about mental well being. I would like to see more emphasis on emotional literacy, self care, stress reduction, and compassion.
Royce Carter Mann	It has exacerbated and laid bare existing inequities, but it has also forced us to think outside the box, which will be valuable going forward. We need to first support students’ mental and emotional health and then focus on academic recovery, because when students feel well, they learn and do well. We also need to open up the ACCA (Atlanta College & Career Academy) to students who left APS at the onset of the pandemic and have opted not to return, whether they took on a job, were forced to become a caregiver, or simply decided to drop-out due to the pandemic. We need to create flexible options so these students can take advantage of career training opportunities offered at the ACCA in a way that accommodates students’ various situations and schedules.
Stephen Spring	There are many lessons learned. First, our children and families have been asked to ‘pivot’ over and over and over. And, our resilient Atlantans have done that and it has not been easy. All of us have had to re-evaluate our priorities and make real changes in the past two years. Many changes were needed just to figure out how to make it through the day or to the next; others were transformational shifts in the ways in which children, their caretakers, and the city will forever view their families, their communities and their education. I argue that Atlanta Public Schools leadership, and in particular, the Board of Education, missed opportunities to transform over the past two years. When faced with challenges, we need to deal with the crises at hand – but if ignore the real openings for substantive change, then we are not stepping up in the same ways that the children and the families have done in the City of Atlanta. I would like to see: (1) a waiver from high-stakes accountability so students can catch up, (2) an institutional redefinition of what success means, (3) free, online access for all students and free laptops given to students to keep at grade 4 and at grade 9.
Kaneshia “KaCey” Venning	The pandemic forced us to rethink education and how we “do” school. We need a robust overhaul of virtual and digital instruction options, work with energy companies and internet providers to address this digital divide and unequitable access to the internet so that students can learn in a variety of ways while remaining safe. What it also had an impact on what the various learning styles our students have and how that quite possibly plans a part in the academic achievement we hope to see. The pandemic showed us how and why we are one of the most inequitable cities in this country. I would propose learning pods across the District to allow for additional support and assistance where needed. Also, to hold more listening sessions with parents and caregivers to identify unique needs to be addressed that can benefit the whole.

 **Question 6: What impact do you think the pandemic has had on public education? What new ideas would you propose to address these impacts?**

At-Large Seat 8	
Cynthia Briscoe Brown (incumbent)	The pandemic has impacted public education more than any event since desegregation. We must take the lessons of the past eighteen months and use them to more fully personalize education for each child. By making more effective and creative use of technology (including better training for teachers), increasing mental and emotional health resources for students and employees, and continuing to offer the vast array of wraparound services which made APS the largest social service agency in Atlanta last year, we serve the whole child in every child while we make progress towards full implementation of the Equity Policy. The lesson is that we can find creative ways to meet all the needs of students and employees even under unprecedented circumstances. The challenge is for us to continue to be creative in meeting every need, because for a child every new circumstance is unprecedented.
Keedar Whittle	The pandemic highlighted the scale of Atlanta’s educational inequities. Families with money, work-from-home jobs, and high-speed Internet access had their struggles. But families who couldn’t work from home, who lost their jobs, who had no Internet access... their children had a very different experience. We must invest more in the infrastructure of equitable education. We’ve also seen the link between school attendance and crime. Crime among teenagers rises every summer. Extended remote learning increased teenagers’ opportunities and desperation. To lower crime rates, we need to provide safe spaces and critical services for our students, especially during a crisis. The pandemic also revealed a broken communication system and lack of transparency around decision making in APS. Too many families were left in uncertainty and excluded from the important conversations. We need more transparency and better communications systems.

At-Large Seat 9	
Jason B. Allen	I would propose more of an investment of the board of education in SEL programming and school level support, the arts and student activities. The top areas students have stated they missed is socialization. Relearning ways to socialize and engage with persons is an essential aspect of development on each level of learning. Partnering with the City of Atlanta Parks & Recreations and Cultural Arts Dept. would be a valuable partner to help best utilize opportunities to meet the social emotional development needs of our students. Additionally, this is an opportunity for teachers to lead these initiatives building improve relationships and communication with the community.
Jason Esteves (incumbent)	The pandemic has had a dramatic impact on public education--by all accounts, opportunity loss and the emotional trauma are real in our classrooms. I support APS's efforts to address literacy and numeracy through the Academic Recovery Academy, intervention and enrichment initiatives, and more special education support. I also support the \$10m increase in mental health support that will provide more psychologists and social workers in schools. I believe more strategic partnerships are needed to provide wraparound services outside of the school day (afternoon and weekends), particularly related to internships and mental health support. I also believe that APS and the City must partner to launch a major effort around literacy that extends beyond school buildings.
D’Jaris “DJ” James	Did not respond



Question 7: If you're faced with a significant budget cut as a board member (e.g., if Buckhead leaves APS), what would you view as essential to keep and what would you consider cutting?

District 1


Katie Howard	APS' budget must always place teachers and instruction for in-classroom learning at the top and from there all the critical support, specialists and facilities that are needed to make sure all children are getting a high-quality education. I think there are efficiencies to be realized when it comes to the utilization of our facilities and opportunities to lease under-utilized facilities/properties, particularly since APS is the largest real estate holder in the city. I'd also like to see APS explore the development of under-utilized property for future affordable housing (while preserving land for potential school growth), particularly for teachers.
Wykeisha Howe	I'll honestly hope Buckhead does not leave Atlanta. It's no secret that the school system is top-heavy. I would first utilize partnerships firsthand then look at any unnecessary position.

District 2

Aretta Baldon (incumbent)	Our teachers & children, educating & learning, as well as health & safety would be my priorities. I would look to the Chief Financial Officer and the Superintendent on their recommendations and the rationale for cuts that minimize the impact on the classroom and that seek to engage the community for their priorities.
Keisha Carey	If the budget cut would be due to Buckhead leaving APS, this has not been decided by the voters as of yet. More discussions, information and studies would be needed prior to consideration of any impacted budget cuts.
Bethsheba "Queen Sheba" Rem	I would consider a cap on administrative salaries. We should make sure our teachers and classrooms have the resources they need first. Second I would work closer with the city to make sure taxes are being assessed appropriately and funds are not being diverted from the school system.


District 3

Michelle Olympiadis (incumbent)	As the largest landowner in the city, we should begin to put our real estate portfolio to work. In 2019 Ga Tech's City and Regional Planning Master students put together this studio - https://sites.gatech.edu/apsplanningstudio/ - their suggestions were very community supportive and opened the door to solutions around housing and commercial opportunities.
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 **Question 7: If you're faced with a significant budget cut as a board member (e.g., if Buckhead leaves APS), what would you view as essential to keep and what would you consider cutting?**

At-Large Seat 7

Patricia "Granny P" Crayton	Did not respond
Tamara Jones	Before concluding that we need to make cuts if we encounter unexpected tax revenue reductions, I want the board to explore creative revenue generating opportunities that we are not currently utilizing. That could include renting out facilities to third parties for events (such as hosting a summer community theater series in the spectacular new gym/theater space in David T. Howard which has full back-of-house facilities, as well as an easy way to separate that part of the facility from the rest). We also have a large real estate portfolio that offers opportunity for income generation. We do not need to sell properties, but can explore lease opportunities with the right to utilize the property for a school when needed. Legal obstacles that have been raised before are surmountable: it was done by the Board of Regents when GaTech developed Technology Square.
Royce Carter Mann	If we are faced with a major budget cut, I will prioritize funding adequate teacher pay, counselors and social workers, early education, wraparound services, and CTAE (Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education). Instead, I would look to reduce funding for the APS Police Department because it is my firm belief that in our schools, we need counselors, not cops. I would also look to reduce unnecessary spending at the district level by cutting any expensive resources and programs that are barely being utilized.
Stephen Spring	I would decentralize assessment, curriculum, and other inefficient bureaucracies in order to reallocate money at the point of learning. Rethinking transportation expenses by working with the city to provide free MARTA transit passes while empowering MARTA to serve as a feasible and accessible mode of transportation for all middle and high school students.
Kaneshia "KaCey" Venning	Our students are currently experiencing a large achievement gap and that was only made worse by the pandemic. There isn't much that we can cut if we want to work together towards lessening that gap. It's time we get creative in how we use the real estate and other assets we have to fund education and the wrap-around services that students need.

 **Question 7: If you're faced with a significant budget cut as a board member (e.g., if Buckhead leaves APS), what would you view as essential to keep and what would you consider cutting?**

At-Large Seat 8	
Cynthia Briscoe Brown (incumbent)	While I don't believe Buckhead de-annexation is a significant threat due to the enormous constitutional, legal, financial, and logistical hurdles, it's important to plan ahead for economic downturns or other financial setbacks. APS is currently in its strongest financial shape in over a decade. My colleagues and I have redirected tens of millions of dollars out of central office into classrooms, achieved pay parity and given all employees multiple raises and bonuses, guaranteed a living wage for every employee, created the Student Success Funding Formula to ensure every student has everything they need, and restored healthy fund balance reserves, all while lowering the millage rate. As a result, we can withstand difficult financial times by using reserves and strategically cutting in areas least likely to affect students and staff. I would also consider returning to prior millage rates before cutting programs and services our students depend on.
Keedar Whittle	In the city that's home to Home Depot, Chick-fil-A, Delta Airlines, Coca-Cola, UPS, and the Blank Foundation — with major presences by Microsoft, AT&T, and Google — I reject the fear-based, defeated thinking of “what would we cut first?” The better, solution-based question is, “How can we leverage community partnerships to make up shortfalls and invest more in QUALITY education across every district in Atlanta?” These organizations have a responsibility to their communities, and it's in their best interest to invest in our schools. Maybe they don't believe that APS schools can become a pipeline of talent, and a selling point for talented recruits. Let's help them believe it. What's essential to keep? Money to support teacher training and rigorous curriculum development like International Baccalaureate programs, Dual-Language Immersion programs, AP access, STEM enhancements, and student services to name a few. In short, high-quality education for every student in Atlanta.

At-Large Seat 9	
Jason B. Allen	After review of our budget and needs assessment, I would cut two (2) of the newest departments within the system, the police department and the equity department. The police department is not essential to improving schools. A partnership with the Atlanta Police Athletic League to support safety of our schools and facilities would help us redirect dollars for training and coverage of events. Adding SROs to student services and facilities would allow for SRO's to be funded specifically to reduce conflicts in schools and support patrolling of
Jason Esteves (incumbent)	Because we are facing the prospect of de-annexation, the first thing I am doing is actively speaking out against it. The proposed new city would have a devastating impact on APS and its students, and we have a responsibility to do all that we can to stop it. We have also worked (unrelated to the de-annexation) to shore up our finances and increase our reserves to near record highs. That will help us weather any challenges ahead. To the extent significant budget cuts are needed, I would start at the central office in an effort to mitigate any impacts at school sites and classrooms.
D'Jaris “DJ” James	Did not respond

 **Question 8: Who was your favorite teacher growing up and why?**

District 1

Katie Howard	My favorite teacher was Mrs. Spikler in 2nd Grade at Morningside. I was struggling with math and she took the time to work with me, and firmly, yet lovingly, pushed me to stretch myself, dig deep and work harder. She was kind and intentional with all her students and was also well-organized (which I especially appreciate today!). I recall doing projects in her class and a lot of hands-on learning, like making a bean planter. Her actions and teaching are something that certainly made a lasting impression with me, not only instructionally, but also on how to be a good, kind human being and the importance of serving others, particularly children. She is one of the many APS teachers I had who certainly made a difference in my life and the lives of many.
Wykeisha Howe	My favorite teacher was my kindergarten teacher Mrs. Wyatt. She was a very nurturing and loving teacher. On my first day of school my mom drop me off and I remember crying and Mrs. Wyatt took my hand and gave me a little sucker and kept me by her side until I felt comfortable with the whole class. At that moment I felt safe, happy, and ready to learn. This helped guide me as a mother. I now know what to look for in my children's teachers.

District 2

Aretta Baldon (incumbent)	My favorite teacher growing up was Mrs. Jackson. She taught 7th grade science and was my first African American STEM teacher. She showed me that people who looked like me could be brilliant, successful and in the front of the class. She demonstrated that science was fun, intriguing and had all (well most) of the answers. She made me work hard and challenged me to be a better student and citizen.
Keisha Carey	I am a graduate of Atlanta Public Schools, therefore, I attended all grades, K-12 in APS. Through the years, I had many favorite teachers growing up. What I can say is that all of my teachers shared the same vision for myself and other students which was, "You can achieve anything that you put your mind to."
Bethsheba "Queen Sheba" Rem	My mother. My mother was my official pre-school teacher – in the classroom, for me and my older and younger brothers. She is why it's solidified for me that that reaching children at a young age and connecting with their interests is the priority. My mother made learning interesting, for all children – introducing us to colors, shapes and numbers that later translated into maps, legends, design and accounting. My mother would help organize a teacher's strike whenever they weren't being paid enough, she participated in PTA and found time, at home, to create flashcards for math problems and the capitals of each state. When we were, older and no longer in her classroom – she came to ours. She knew our teachers, when our homework was due, when big projects were coming up and when the next field-trip was. My mother was thoroughly engaged in our learning process and held the teachers and school board accountable for their jobs; because she was doing hers. My mother made my clothes and dresses before we could afford to buy them; she taught me how to sew, read a pattern and measure twice to cut once. Jeanne (Geni) Rem was teaching me to be an engaged leader, a social activist and an empathic parent and professor. This is how I know the trifecta of the parent-student-teacher relationship for life-long student success is priority.

 **Question 8: Who was your favorite teacher growing up and why?**

District 3	
Michelle Olympiadis (incumbent)	There were so many! I'll go with Ellen Breuck, who was my math teacher twice in high school. She was a former nun, who had a strong personality and believed that all students could succeed in Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry AND Calculus. She used to have flashcards with mathematical formulas, like quadratic equations, and would go around the room making us solve them. If you got it right in a short amount of time, she moved to the next student. If you got it wrong or took too long, she moved to the next student. We certainly do things much differently now, however, she used to tell us often, "You can put your math book under your pillow at night and see if you learn by osmosis, or you can pay attention, engage, do your homework and come to tutorial." She gave us all the tools we needed to be successful, herself, her talents, and her time! May her memory be eternal.

At-Large Seat 7	
Patricia "Granny P" Crayton	Did not respond
Tamara Jones	My favorite teacher growing up was Jeanne Whatley when I was in elementary school in Cartersville, GA. Her brother was the late astronaut Ed White. She truly believed in children's imagination and spark as the motivation for learning and let us explore so many of our own curiosities including Greek mythology and wove it into her lessons. She guided us in dialogue and deep questions that I remember to this day. She was a gifted and talented teacher. I believe ALL children deserve the benefit of these learning methods, and rather than cutting gifted services I advocate for the cluster (and hopefully the district) to enable ALL teachers to receive their gifted endorsement.
Royce Carter Mann	One of my favorite teachers is Ms. Salvesen, my AP Government and Politics teacher. She always makes class fun and engaging, and she has an incredible ability to get even the most uninterested students to participate in political discussions. My other favorite teacher is Dr. Fletcher, my 11th grade literature teacher. She's one of those educators who really pushes her students, not because she wants to make it difficult for them, but because she sees something special in every kid who walks into her classroom.
Stephen Spring	Mr. Finch, 11th grade Calculus teacher back in 1980. He provided a caring environment and the environmental conditions to explore and grow as learners. In that class, I finally learned that education can feel less like compliance and more like pure joyful learning. Mr. Finch called each of our homes - in a class of 20 - every week on Friday evening to ask us when we were planning to do AP Calc homework over the weekend. On Monday, we all got to share what we worked on and helped each other with problems and content that we struggled with. I passed the exam with a 5 and went on to become a mathematics teacher and a mathematics education research specialist. Thank you, Mr. Finch.
Kaneshia "KaCey" Venning	This is easy. My mother. She taught in a Title I school for over 35 years and showed me that great teachers involve parents, caregivers and the whole community to ensure a student's success. I would also like to include Mrs. Roller. She was my third-grade teacher. She was an older white woman who took the time to connect with me. She shared that we share the same initials using her maiden name and would find lots of ways to show how we were more alike than different. I trusted her and that made the difference!

 **Question 8: Who was your favorite teacher growing up and why?**

At-Large Seat 8

Cynthia Briscoe Brown (incumbent)	Kemie Nix taught me in both kindergarten and 6th grade. Her passion was literature, and she taught reading and language arts in both grades so enthusiastically her students couldn't help but share her excitement over the written word. She taught small children to love the way words sounded, and looked, and felt in our mouths. She also taught us the beginnings of critical thinking, assessing whether the words rang true. When she moved to teaching tweens, she got to know each student and suggested books to widen our horizons and stretch our hearts and minds. Mrs. Nix guided discussions of reading in newspapers and magazines as well as books so we understood "just because it's written down doesn't make it true." After she retired she started a nonprofit to provide high-quality literature to children in Atlanta and in Kenya, allowing thousands more children to revel in great literature.
Keedar Whittle	Mrs. Jones, my 4th grade teacher at Collier Heights Elementary. She made us dream about who we wanted to be. She was firm but compassionate, like a big sister or auntie, and she believed in everyone. On the first day, Miss Jones asked us what we wanted to be when we grew up. She took pictures of us, then posted them with banners that gave our answers. Those pictures stayed on the wall all year to remind us. Tiffany Hightower said she was going to be a doctor, and now she's a doctor. My cousin, Terrence Dortch, wanted to be a funeral home director, and now he owns his own funeral home. I didn't become an open-heart surgeon, but Mrs. Jones helped me see that school was about preparing myself for the life I wanted to live. She gave me focus that has taken me far. Thank you, Mrs. Jones.

At-Large Seat 9

Jason B. Allen	My favorite teacher growing up is my 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Edwards. She is actually still teaching to this day. Mrs. Edwards encouraged me to get involved in student government which has led to my continued leadership in school and communities ever since. Every student in my community knows Mrs. Edwards. She's engaged with our families and is still to this day helping bridge the gap between home and school.
Jason Esteves (incumbent)	Ms. Malloy--my kindergarten teacher at South Columbus Elementary in Columbus, Georgia. Not only did she teach me how to read and speak English (Spanish is my first language), she stayed in touch and motivated me throughout my life. She even attended my law school graduation! Teachers like Ms. Malloy positively impact the trajectory of students each and every day. It is incumbent on my colleagues and I to pass policies (and budgets) that cultivate and support them, and ensure we retain them for the benefit of our students.
D'Jaris "DJ" James	Did not respond

