



## *Philadelphia Home and School Council*

Families supporting Philadelphia schools since 1897

### **The Philadelphia Home and School Council Stance 2020**

The Philadelphia Home and School Council calls for the Philadelphia School District and the City of Philadelphia to fulfill the following list of necessary demands to ensure that all the children of Philadelphia are truly the benefactors of a safe, equal, and equitable quality education.

Our demands begin with these 5 Key Areas:

#### **1. Provide meaningful parent, family, and community-led engagement**

- a. A Parent Organization Policy that creates policies and procedures for Parent Organizations to support schools. It should outline expectations and terms for an association, and create a path for certification to meet state tax exemption. It should set up a process that values organizations such as:

- The Philadelphia Home and School Council (PHSC)
- Home and School Associations (HSA)
- Parent and Teacher Organizations (PTO)
- Parent and Teachers Associations (PTA)
- and Friends Of Neighborhood groups (FONE)

particularly beyond financial gain and supports our continued efforts of advocacy for families.

These policies and procedures **MUST BE** created and established by these core groups of parents that includes PHSC and other stakeholders to ensure that the best interest and voice of the entire school community of volunteers is heard.

- b. Stakeholders are given the right to elect our Board of Education (BOE):  
Philadelphians elect positions from the Mayor to the Registrar of Wills; we have the right to elect the people who decide our children's quality of education. The Mayor and City Council must immediately outline an action plan for how they will make the process for electing the BOE public and transparent and advocate for the stakeholders in Philadelphia at the state level to change our current state law so that the BOE can be elected by the people
- c. Provide adequate interpretation and translation services to parents with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), ensuring stakeholders have meaningful participation in their child's education. Not omit, alienate, or deter parents.
- d. The School District of Philadelphia (SDP) must move in a vision of care as it pertains to parents and caregivers who have a past criminal record. These individuals should still be allowed to participate in their child's education, in schools, outside of parents and caregivers with verified child abuse records. Steps for "what happens when you do not pass a criminal background" should be put on your website along with organizations that can help support that parent or caregiver.

- e. Respect the parent as the advocate for their child/children. This also means respecting the parent that is employed by the School District of Philadelphia. Parents and Caregivers should not be threatened with removal or expulsion from a school when speaking up for the rights of their child. Nor should they be threatened with the loss of employment.

## **2. Healthy and safe schools**

- a. All school buildings should meet EPA, OSHA, and local building codes; This means that they should be 100% free of asbestos and lead, which includes lead free drinking water, properly functioning clean bathrooms; replaced equipment should be sustainable and not a bandaid to cover up years of mismanagement and neglect.
- b. Asbestos and Lead Remediation must be done during the times where students and staff are out of the building for extended periods. Remediation must also include a plan to shift entire schools to healthier buildings, additional contingency plans for delays or problems found during construction, and a clearly defined process for communication to the community including real time data on progress.
- c. EPA inspection reports should be publicly available to all parents and taxpayers of the community. These documents must be on hand in the schools office, in a binder that is accessible to be read any time of the day. Parents and caregivers must be given the right to copy any documents and can share them with the public without any recourse of action against them.
- d. Buildings must be continuously kept hygienic, maintained, and modern to inspire students and serve as community investments by taxpayers;
- e. Safety approaches and policies must be rooted in serving children, not criminalizing students and their families, with the inclusion of Police Free schools and with all practices designed to avoid implied criminality. Have the Office of School Safety replace school police with community members trained in de-escalation, restorative justice, and other skills that support healthy schools and communities.
- f. Tax-payer funded recess yards must be open for community use after hours, support for students getting home from school that is community-led and SDP supported, and buildings that are welcoming and inviting to all.
- g. Nutritious food in every school that is sustainable, healthy, and culturally sensitive that mirrors the health and wellness curriculum but also is available to students even if they are late or suspended from school. Staff should be properly trained, have an understanding that some students are facing lack of food, and know how to address signs of malnutrition.

## **3. Equitable schools, fully funded district**

- a. Programming that supports children outside of assessments and testing.
- b. Fully equipped Art classes, Accessible School Libraries, Music Classes, Playgrounds, Home Economics, and Equitable SDP Investment.
- c. Establish Civil Education with a Social Justice lens to ensure that children can engage in society in a critical manner. This curriculum should include but not limited to; Fundamentals of

Government, Ownership as Citizens, Proactive and Knowledgeable Voting, and Limitations of Government.

- d. Fair catchments that minimize segregation and redlining.
- e. Fair funding from the state and within the district, causing all schools to be equitable.
- f. Hiring Black and POC Educators; The District should hire and retain teachers at a ethnic ratio proportionate to the student body & school community they serve. The district should hire and retain 50 new ethnic Educators each year. The district must continue to collect and share racial demographics for teachers with the public via their website, which is an initiative that was approved in September 2019 by the Philadelphia Board of Education.
- g. The SDP **MUST** provide quality culturally-sensitive and anti-racist training for all School District Of Philadelphia staff and teachers led by organizations in Philadelphia. We are not asking for outside contractors to come in as we have Melanated Educators Collective and WE Racial Justice Organizing Committee already doing the work. These educators should reach out to the Parent Group for support and to learn the culture of the school from a parents perspective.
- h. **The SDP must create an Emergency Response Preparedness Plan that addresses the needs of all Philadelphia students and their families.** This includes a Continuity of Operations (COOP) Planning for teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals. Ensuring the continuity of teaching and learning during prolonged absences, dismissals, and closures.
- i. Tax dollars to schools - **No More Abatements!**
- j. **The School District of Philadelphia must demand payment in full from the PPA.**
- k. A complete Forensic Audit of the School District of Philadelphia **MUST** be conducted by an outside "Philadelphia" non partner of the SDP every 4 years before the renewal of a Superintendent contract or the hiring of a new Superintendent.

#### **4. Quality curriculum and whole child learning environment**

- a. Magnet-quality education accessible for every student that qualifies - universal access to AP (Advance Placement) and advanced courses.
- b. Universal standards for Art, Music, and Foreign Language set by SDP to remove inequality and challenge and inspire every student. This includes partnerships in every school with organizations such as The Mural Arts program, RockReach, PAFA, and the Urban Art Gallery.
- c. Competitive, Curriculum-forward public schools -curriculum, electives, and clubs cataloged accurately on every school website so students, parents, and community members value every neighborhood school as an education investment by the SDP.
- d. Smaller class sizes to foster learning.
- e. Recess policy that mandates minimum time and follows CDC guidelines; it should be before lunch, at minimum 30 minutes.

- f. Create a Homeless and Foster Care Family department in the School District of Philadelphia to ensure that no child would be without services.
- g. Proactively provide high quality and equitable Special Education services to the students and their families in Philadelphia:
  - A. **Principal Leadership** - Principals must act as full members of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team, taking an active role in the IEP process and showing leadership alongside special education teachers and leaders in their schools.
  - B. **Develop Truly Individualized, HighQuality IEPs** - High quality, individualized IEPs help ensure that each child's individual needs are met and that children are provided the services and quality of education they need and deserve. Case loads, class sizes, and preparation time must be adjusted such that educators are able to put time, thought, and care into each IEP goal and into the plan for reaching those goals. SDP should ensure that goals, services, plans are truly individualized and in full compliance with all facets of special education law, rather than copy and pasted between IEPs. IEPs should address the whole child and promote positive self-worth and self-advocacy skills.
  - C. **Use and Fully Fund a Variety of Resources and Tools to Meet Individual Needs** - In order to reach their individualized IEP goals and reach their full potential, students with disabilities need access to a wider variety of curricular options and materials that could include online or blended learning intervention programs, unscripted specialized curricula, supplementary curricula, additional materials and resources, and more. SDP must move away from one-size-fits-all scripted curricular programs and behaviorist techniques and must work to customize and extend learning. Occupational and/or physical therapy must be accessible to all families in need.
  - D. **Provide Effective Communications with Parents and Caregivers** - All communication options (i.e. Zoom, Doxy, etc) should be available for a meeting to ensure all parties are involved. The IEP Team needs to include the TSS/One on One (but not limited to) in the IEP Meetings and Evaluations. As well as them (TSS and/or 1:1) having open communication with the parents in reference to the special education student. Parents must be made aware that they are entitled to have an advocate with them in their IEP meetings and support or should they need someone to explain the IEP verbiage

## 5) Trauma Responsive Supports

- a. Comprehensive, continual professional development that provides **ALL** educators and school employees with the tools needed to provide trauma-responsive instruction for **ALL** students.
- b. Schools are provided with resources, including but not limited to ongoing training and staff, to implement restorative practices with fidelity to reduce the trauma caused by schools, teachers, administrators through exclusionary discipline policies and practices that lack a social-emotional and trauma lens.
- c. Implementation of research-based social and emotional education, that reflects the culture of the neighborhood and is provided for all elementary-age students.
- d. All schools have at least one school psychologist, one parent/student advocate, one social worker, and one counselor per 150 students enrolled at the school with clearly defined duties and ongoing professional development.

- e. The district must partner with, and fully fund, deployment teams of licensed trauma responsive staff that can provide support to students and the surrounding community after instances of violence.

**Credits and Contributors:**

**Philadelphia Home and School Council Executive Board 2020**

**Shakeda Gaines** - President

**Katrina Clark** - Vice President

**Cierra Freeman** - Vice President

**Staysea Lee Hutchings-McCutcheon** - Treasurer

**Novilette Jones** - Secretary

**Amanda Casper**- Past Vice President (PHSC), Historian

**Zoe Rooney** - Teacher and Parent

**Anna Perng** - Parent and Special Needs Advocate

**Elaine Kline-Freeman** - Parent and Sharswood HSA Treasurer

**Tamara Anderson** - WE Racial Justice Organizing Committee, Melanated Educators

\*\*Special Needs Outline Information\*\*

<https://www.rethinked.com/blog/blog/2019/03/06/7-tips-for-equity-in-special-education/>