

Dwane Chappelle
Mayoral Nominee for Director
Department of Education and Early Learning
Confirmation Questions
2016

1. What, in your opinion, are the primary challenges facing the Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL)? What are your specific goals for DEEL over the next four years?

The primary challenges for DEEL include the following:

- a. Implementing the ambitious Seattle Preschool Program phase-in schedule adopted by the Mayor and City Council.
- b. Working with the Seattle Public Schools to address the persistent opportunity gap we see for minority students.
- c. Reauthorizing the Families and Education Levy and the Seattle Preschool Levy, which both expire in 2018.

Goals for the next four years:

- a. Meet the expansion goals for SPP in a way that maintains the quality elements vital for preparing the children for success in school.
- b. Build a diverse cadre of highly qualified early learning teachers who can work well with all our children.
- c. Provide opportunities for all high school students to engage in a challenging advanced learning environment that prepares them to be successful after graduation.
- d. Establish within the new Department a common culture and commitment to Race and Social Justice.
- e. Deliver a Levy reauthorization package that meets the voters' desire for helping children succeed while being accountable for results.

2. What is your general philosophy for working and communicating effectively with the City Council? How do you plan to ensure that Councilmembers and Council staff receive the information needed from your department to make policy and financial decisions?

I value a positive and close working relationship with Council. I will ensure DEEL communicates effectively with Council in the following ways:

- Use the channels of communication established by the Council and the Mayor to make sure appropriate protocols are followed and information provided to the Council is correct.
- Communicate regularly with the Committee Chair in this role as Chair and member of the Levy Oversight Committee.
- Make sure timely responses are available for Council inquiries.

3. In addition to other funding sources, DEEL makes significant educational investments through the Families and Education Levy and the Seattle Preschool Program Levy. Please describe your thoughts on the importance of program evaluations for assessing outcomes and guiding investment decisions.

- Investment decisions should be based on using proven, effective research-based practices when possible so that the need for evaluations is minimized.
- I support maintaining the use of a continuous quality improvement process supported by the use of data and course corrections, which is a hallmark of the Families and Education Levy.
- Rigorous program evaluations should be used when results are not being achieved and a deeper analysis is required.
- My overall goal is to transform education with clear measureable outcomes of growth provided by high quality instruction.

4. Both of the City’s education-related levies are set to expire in 2018. What do you anticipate as being the most important considerations for your department and the City in determining how, or if, to continue funding levy-supported programs?

Priority should be given to programs that:

- Have been shown to be most effective at “moving the needle” on closing the opportunity gap.
- Have the highest return on the investment made.
- Are best delivered through schools to make sure they reach the highest need students.
- Provide for early intervention or prevention.

Lower priority should be given to programs that:

- May have alternative funding sources.
- Become less necessary as the state assumes its paramount duty to provide for an ample education.
- Have little evidence of having been effective.

5. In Seattle, and across Washington State, children from low-income families and children of color generally have fewer opportunities to become appropriately prepared for the social and academic challenges of school. These economic and racial disparities persist in third-grade reading levels, fourth-grade math levels, and high school graduation rates. Do you have ideas/suggestions for how the City should address this “achievement gap” in the formation and delivery of its programs?

- Families and Education Levy-funded programs are already mostly targeted to those schools with the greatest needs and the students who need the most support.

- The partnership with SPS needs to be strengthened to take better advantage of these resources being provided by the City. The collaboration with Seattle Public Schools should focus on attacking the achievement gap by ensuring equitable access to rigorous curriculum for all students.
- Another focus should be on all students having the opportunity to master their core academic subjects where each student will meet standards in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics by the end of their transition grade.
- Most importantly, the City can help close the achievement gap by ensuring every student will receive fair and equitable treatment regarding discipline and access to rigorous instructional curriculum, such as the International Baccalaureate program.

6. Please tell us about your experience working with children and families from diverse backgrounds and experiences. How will you ensure that DEEL is engaging appropriately with families from historically underserved communities?

- Serving as the Principal of Rainier Beach High School gave me additional experience working with students, families, and other stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. At Rainier Beach High School, 95% of the student body is culturally and ethnically diverse and over 21 different languages and dialects are spoken.
- Implementing a Somali Father and Mother's night out was the most impactful and memorable event we planned. Families were given the opportunity to enjoy fellowship while learning about different aspects of how we (the school) can support families with ensuring their children will be successful and safe at school.
- To ensure DEEL is engaging with families from historically underserved communities, we are in the planning stages of hosting community meetings to listen to our families about their specific needs from the Department of

Education and Early Learning and the City. These meetings will take place at local venues where families feel comfortable (community centers, churches, etc.).

- Most importantly, our overall goal is to ensure community members and families are involved in the planning process of the Educational Summit. We are planning to create an avenue where families from underserved communities are provided with an opportunity to have voice in the decision-making process.

7. What accomplishments are you most proud of from your time as a teacher and administrator? What lessons will you be able to apply to your work at the City to make DEEL and our education system better?

- As a teacher at Thurgood Marshall Elementary School in Dallas, Texas, I am most proud to have provided an optimal learning experience to my students that were evacuated to Dallas from New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Having students attend school after being shifted 500 miles away from their home was traumatic. However, the desire and passion about learning did not hinder the ability of my students from New Orleans to focus on their education.
- As an administrator at Rainier Beach High School, my proudest moment was watching all of my seniors walk across the stage during graduation. The eagerness on their faces and listening to the enthusiasm in their families' voices as they scream for joy when each student walks across the stage has been my most prideful moment as an administrator.
- Throughout my career, especially at Rainier Beach High School, I used equity as the driver for all decisions. Continuing to utilize this philosophy within the Department of Education and Early Learning as well as within the city will enhance our education system.

8. To perform its work effectively, it is essential for DEEL to collaborate with many external stakeholders, including Seattle Public Schools. How will you work, and build relationships, with those stakeholders to further the goals of the department and the City?

- Working collaboratively with all stakeholders is key to the success of our children. I intend to provide visioning along with empathy to our stakeholders while visualizing and communicating that all situations are win/win opportunities.
- Being open, honest, and not afraid to pursue support from other constituents is also critical. I will ensure that I am proactive and taking responsibility for my actions, while maintaining a positive attitude and around my areas of growth.
- Most importantly, keeping kids, families, and communities at the center of all decisions will help share a united front to our vision of equity and excellence for all.