

DEMOCRATS

for EDUCATION REFORM

2016 Louisiana Questionnaire
*For candidates seeking endorsement by
DFER LA PAC*

Candidate Name: David Alvarez

Office Sought: OPSB #6

Campaign/Primary Address: 1906 S Carrollton Ave

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Candidate's Twitter handle: x

Campaign or Candidate's Facebook Page: x

Are you a registered Democrat? Yes No

Please return your completed questionnaire by August 29, 2016. Please email the questionnaire to eva@dfcr.org.

About DFER

DFER-Louisiana is a political reform organization formed in 2015 that cultivates and supports leaders who champion Louisiana's public schoolchildren. DFER-LA engages with a growing constituency of active, reform-minded candidates and works with partners and allies to further Louisiana as a leader in the next evolution of the movement to give every child a great education.

Since 2015, DFER LA has been actively engaged in local and statewide elections, providing direct support to reform-minded leaders who are dedicated to improving the lives of children in New Orleans and across the state. In addition, our organization works with state legislators to create and execute common sense policies that will ensure each student has access to a world-class education.

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

Some questions below are dichotomous. Please answer "Yes" or "No" to those questions, with the option to "qualify your response."

school x impact our community? A person that has an intimate understanding of the indicators for healthy community and how to move the needle on those indicators. I do not want a person who is afraid to innovate or working in a myopic framework focused solely on test scores.

Portfolio Management

3. With the unification of schools, OPSB will be responsible for managing charter renewals, revocations and extensions. OPSB will also be responsible for planning for future demographic shifts, and authorization of unique schools/programs to meet the needs of students across the city. It is incumbent upon the school board and the district to manage the “portfolio” of schools in the district- those that are succeeding, failing and potentially facing risk.

a. If a charter school were failing, what options would you support to turn around the school? What about the district’s direct run schools? Please explain.

I would support re-assessing the metrics that are currently being used to determine failure. I would support the authorization of small schools with a wide array of designs focused on more than just test scores. If a school is failing with 400 students, close it and redistribute those students to 4 smaller schools with different climates, priorities, and academic offerings. OPSB must focus on system level solutions through policies. The “portofolio” can be more diverse.

b. Given charter school autonomy, what do you believe is the role of the district in intervening in consistently underperforming schools? Please explain.

I’m not sure what “given charter school autonomy” means for you. Similar to the superintendent, charter schools autonomy cannot serve to the detriment of the community. If a school is underperforming, thus detrimental to our community’s youth, it must answer to the citizens. If the leaders of a charter school fail, they leave town, find work in other professions, etc.... but the kids they leave behind will still need a school to learn in. Therefore, charter school autonomy outside the context of community doesn’t make sense nor shall it be the framework of my term. The district must clarify the superintendent’s priorities through clear policy regarding intervening in underperforming schools. The specifics of these policies will be developed transparently as a board and district.

In order to maintain a high level of quality schools in New Orleans, it has been suggested that the school district work to recruit additional high quality charter school operators that could potentially replace leadership or management of failing schools if needed.

Would you support the authorization of new charter schools in order to maintain and build upon the level of quality schools in New Orleans?

YES x I would, but not necessarily

NO

to people who are not from New Orleans. I would prefer authorizing charters to groups of professional educators that have lived in my city and built relationships and community with their neighbors. Those charters are better positioned to not maintain our quality of schools but to improve our quality of schools. I would prefer to create policies that facilitate the transition of our teacher core to leadership positions in our charters and, more importantly, our communities.

Equity

4. *In 2015, the current school board made significant strides to protect the rights of all students by passing policy that included: providing transportation for all students, a centralized expulsion plan and calling for every school to participate in EnrollNOLA, the unified enrollment system.*

a. Do you support this policy?

YES NO

b. In 2016, OPSB voted to support the differentiated funding plan that allows for a weighted funding formula. Such a funding formula calls for students with disabilities, those who are considered at-risk, and Language Learners to receive more funding for their education.

Do you support this policy?

YES NO

c. In your opinion, how can we ensure that services currently provided by the Recovery School District, such as EnrollNOLA, the Youth Opportunity Center, and the New Orleans Therapeutic Day Program are successfully transferred to OPSB as part of the unification process so all students continue to be served?

What do you consider a “successful” transfer? If you mean a transfer that makes no changes then I may not agree. For example, if there areas that are not transparent then I will want the unification process to ensure transparency on all aspects of these programs. It is my duty as a representative of my neighbors to see how our tax dollars are being spent on these programs. When elected I will assess these programs and determine how they will transfer to our district.

School Choice

5. *For several years, New Orleans has operated under a system of citywide family choice, allowing parents and families to choose among schools that they feel best meet the needs of their child. While many families are satisfied with their school selection, some families continue to struggle to find a school in which they are satisfied.*

a. Do you believe that families should be automatically assigned to the school closest to their home?

YES NO

b. Do you support the use of a centralized enrollment process to ensure fairness and transparency across the system?

YES NO

c. Do you believe that parents and families should have the right to choose their child’s school, regardless of geography?

YES NO

They should have the right to choose. The problem is that often times there is no choice as you allude to when you describe families that are not satisfied with their selections. Families should have the right to choose from a better menu. I know that OPSB can improve the menu.

d. Please explain your opinion on neighborhood schools.

If you replace “community” with “neighborhood” in my responses thus far you should have a good understanding of my opinion.

Community Engagement

6. When you are working to make a decision as a school board member, what methods will you employ to engage community partners and groups?

Much of my professional experience is in community-based work. I am well versed in evidence-based methods that agencies utilize to change communities. I understand that multiple sectors of a community must collaborate in order to make community-level changes. I will advocate for OPSB policies that engage business, healthcare, and other sectors in the healthy development of our students. I will work with local industry leaders on how charter schools can increase job training offerings for industries that employ large numbers of people in New Orleans. As I mentioned earlier, our schools must successfully produce good employees not prisoners.

*7. What methods will you employ when seeking input and support from your constituents?
I will utilize social media, website, emails, phone calls, and meetings.*

*Thank you for participating in DFER’s candidate questionnaire!
Please refer to Page 1 for submission instructions.*