

Julia Danzy

I am Julia Danzy, a passionate advocate for children and families and I am honored and humbled for the opportunity to sit on this Board.

Throughout my career I worked tirelessly in the field of social services to enhance the life chances for our children and families. However, today I am even more worried for our children who seem to be forgotten and seen only as problems and not as assets. I worry about some in our community and governing bodies that seem more inclined to invest in prisons than in schools. I worry about some of our businesses who seem to be more focused on present gains than future growth and sustainability and I worry about some of our parents who seemed to have collapsed and given up on the struggle to gain a good education for their children

Many of our children are impacted by a myriad of problems; psychological and physical health issues, family issues, hunger, violence and even homelessness. How can we educate a child dealing with such trauma if we do not also address these issues? However, the School District cannot and should not be the sole bearer of these problems. Our public and community services must become full partners in this process and our School District must be open and receptive members in this partnership.

The task before us is daunting, the issues the Board, along with Dr. Hite, will face are not new rather they are deep seeded problems that cannot be resolved overnight. Nevertheless, I believe that with a truly collective effort we can make changes. Therefore, tonight I pledge to give my full commitment to strive each day to work openly and honestly with Dr. Hite, our educators, parents, community members, businesses and governing bodies to begin to make our School System the best in the State. A School System which, when children reach school age, parents don't opt to leave the City rather they opt to move into this great City.

Leticia Egea-Hinton

When I first started this process, I was not sure what to expect except a time commitment. Well they were not kidding I spent a significant amount of time listening to and learning about the inner workings of our cities public school system. I recognized rather quickly that this is not a simple or easy public service role. Each session provided me the insider perspective that I did not have. I discovered the many challenges, obstacles and learned of the many successes of the school district that should be applauded.

We must be optimistic while being realistic about the work ahead and what is needed to continue to move the school district forward. Our schools reflect the diversity of our City yet should provide a system of education that centers around quality and equality regardless of location.

My first commitment is to the children of this great City. In the Listening Sessions I heard the community at large express their interest and desire for great schools across the City of Philadelphia. It is my hope that parents, advocates, and educators will work with us as it is my role and will be my continued focus to support and listen to all those who contribute to providing our children with the best we are able to provide.

I consider it both an honor and privilege to serve on the now locally controlled Philadelphia School Board of Education. I wish to thank Mayor Kenney, the Mayor's Office of Education, the Philadelphia School District and every person who has played a role in these past few weeks in helping prepare us for this next adventure.

Mallory Fix Lopez

When I walk through my local elementary school-GW Childs Elementary- as I have done countless times over the past five years as a neighbor, educator, mother, and advocate for public education-I see artwork wall-to-wall, I see classrooms and hallways full of student work that expresses students' opinions, hopes, interests, and futures. I see dedicated teachers and staff who put their students first and strive to make school a safe, productive, and engaging environment. I see a principal open to listening and responding to her community, acknowledging that schools should be community centered. I see teamwork. I see a school where I want to send my child.

My fear is that most people like me- 30s somethings starting families – will never see what I see. 30 somethings that are privileged-like me-to look elsewhere for schooling or to move out of the city completely. They won't see what I see because the local neighborhood school often times isn't even looked at as an option.

This has to change.

I'm not immune to the great challenges our schools face. We can't pretend the major challenges of understaffing, facilities management, and less-than-stellar academic performance city wide don't exist. But... as a progressive, urban, world class city, we need to have a school system that echoes that. Walking away from public education and our neighborhood public schools isn't progressive. Walking away from public education and our neighborhood schools isn't equitable.

The challenges our district faces – that our young people face- will continue to persist if we turn our back on public education and our local neighborhood schools.

I feel the pressure. I feel the huge mountain we as a board- and as a city- face in terms of reclaiming the narrative of public education. But it's not simply a story- as the facts needs to support it. We need high-performing, resource rich, safe facilities that are equitable throughout the city.

I am on this Board because I am accepting the challenge of creating a school district that makes ALL parents and guardians say, "I want to stay in Philadelphia *for* the schools...*for* the top-quality, culturally rich opportunities I *know* my child will have." But it's not just about me, it's about all of Philadelphia being invested in all of our schools.

This won't happen overnight, and it won't happen at all if we don't make equitable education a priority.

I look forward to the opportunity to work with my fellow board members, Dr. Hite, the district, and the community at large to help continue to steer the district in the direction of becoming the top-notch system, equitable system it can- and needs to be- for the young people of Philadelphia now and in the future.

Lee Huang

It's an honor to serve, on this body, at this time, and for this purpose. And it's an honor to serve with this group and really with all of you who are present as well as everyone at home. I'm going to use the word "we" a lot, because we're all in this together and we all want the same things.

For those of us who are parents, we want our school system to work for our kids. We also want our school system to work for all kids, regardless of zip code or income level or color or creed.

For those of us who are business owners, we want our school system to produce [tomorrow's](#) workforce, innovators, and entrepreneurs. We want our school system to work for families who are currently here, and we want it to attract others who are thinking of moving here.

And for those of us who are taxpayers, we want our school system to be financially solvent and its facilities to be safe and well kept. And we want decisions related to finances and facilities to be based on a thoughtful and transparent process commensurate with the sources of funds, which is we the people, and the uses of funds, which is to educate our children.

Everybody has an important job to do to make this happen - parents, teachers, principals, advocacy groups, anchor institutions, the faith community, and the business sector - so it'll be our job as a board to listen to and engage with everybody. And then to make the tough and sometimes unpopular decisions to oversee this enterprise and to educate our children.

So pray for us, root for us, listen to us, and yell at us. We have quite a task ahead of us. But I can't think of a more important one to devote time and energy to. So together let's get to work.

Maria D. McColgan

Like my colleagues, I am deeply honored and grateful to Mayor Kenney and others who provided me this opportunity to serve the children, families and teachers of Philadelphia as a member of the Board of Education. I am also honored to serve with such a wonderful team. It has also been a pleasure to get to know my fellow board members and hear their passion and commitment to our children's education and futures. I truly look forward to serving with each and every one of you.

I want to thank Dr. Hite, Otis Hackney, Claire Landau and too many others to name from the staff of the Board of Education, the Mayor's Office of Education and the School District of Philadelphia for their leadership and hard work in the last few months of this transition. We truly appreciate the many hours of planning and orientation sessions, and in particular for organizing the city-wide School Board listening tour.

Finally, I want to thank all of you who are here tonight, and those of you who attended the Listening Tour sessions. During those sessions, we welcomed and heard all of your comments, discussion, concerns and hopes. We were impressed and excited about the enthusiasm and participation. We are especially happy to know that there are so many Philadelphians who care as much about the education of our children as we do.

Although we have a tremendous amount of work to do, I am optimistic that working together we can continue to improve our school district to one that we can all be proud of; a district that allows every student the opportunity to achieve his or her fullest potential. We know that all children have the capacity to learn, and we, as Philadelphians, have a responsibility to ensure that our schools are not only safe and healthy, but happy, innovative environments that enable every child to thrive and become active learners.

While I am confident in our ability and passion as board members, and hope, that over time your trust in us will grow, we cannot do this alone. We look forward to working with every Philadelphian who is willing to roll up their sleeves to work with us to achieve the goal of excellent, innovative education. In our listening tour sessions, we heard you loud and clear and have incorporated the thoughts and feelings shared with us into a committee structure that will allow for dialogue, community engagement, transparency and input. We want you to know that our only goal is to act in the best interest of our children to improve education in Philadelphia. We hope that we can rely on all of you in the upcoming years to help us carry out that mission.

Thank you!

Chris McGinley

I echo many of the same sentiments that have been shared by my colleagues on the board this evening. I share their hopes and aspirations for the future of the school district and the children entrusted to our care.

I begin my remarks with the words of Tennyson, "Come, my friends, 'Tis not too late to seek a better world."

I repeat, "Come, my friends 'tis not too late to seek a better world." In my years of service there have been eras of progress and eras of failure. Tonight, we stand on the cusp of making a better world for the children and young families who live and work in our city. Public education is the foundation of our democracy and here in Philadelphia, where our nation declared independence, we too must declare independence from the notion that the best years of this school district are behind us. The future is bright if we stand together as parents and educators, political leaders and advocates putting aside the divides that have slowed progress and detracted from efforts to acquire adequate and stable funding.

We, as the school board, are here as school district leaders committed to progress, committed to engaging with the community and committed to improving the education of our children and committed to equity.

To make these commitments a reality I say to the all of you, "Come my friends, 'Tis not too late to seek a better world." I share that call with our superintendent Dr. Hite and his team. I share that call to teachers in classrooms and principals in schools. I share that call with parents and I share that call with our friends and colleagues in the public charter schools.

Being a member of the Board of Education is a particular honor for me because I have lived a lifetime of service in education and my family has a four-generation commitment to the success of the schools and the school district. In my long association with the school district I have seen prior boards of education who were powerful advocates for children with seemingly tireless amounts of energy for engaging with the public. I know that this board is capable of doing the same and that this board is up to the task of governing the school district and advocating for all children. I know from my experiences and from my work as a professor that urban school districts with progressive boards and stable district leadership make the most progress. So, I look to the future with optimism, tempered by my experience and dependent of the collective good will of this board and this city.

I close with a further call to teachers and leaders, who hopefully are resting up for a challenging year ahead, we need you. We need your talent, your intellect and the relationships that you have formed with children and families. I thank you for your service and hope that we are worthy stewards for you in helping to create the conditions of your success.

I close, relying on the wisdom of Tennyson once again.

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Angela McIver

I came to Philadelphia when Constance Clayton was Superintendent and did my student teaching at Barratt Middle School in South Philly. I still remember the names of the students who were so patient with me as I honed my skills. I've been an educator from the "outside" helping students and parents navigate high school and college admissions. I am also a parent dedicated to helping my children navigate their k-12 public education. However, I never imagined I would be given an opportunity to be part of the vision and direction of the SDP.

I would like to share how wonderful it has been getting to know our new school board, the Superintendent and the Mayor's Office of Education. I am impressed with the intentionality of the selection of members and the depth and breadth of knowledge each member brings to the table. I am also incredibly impressed with the level of autonomy provided to the Board by our Mayor Jim Kenney. The board is beholden to the children of the City of Philadelphia.

I recognize the weight of our charge. As the governing body of the School District, we must be unafraid to see our mistakes, acknowledge our challenges and address our deficiencies. Transparency is our duty. It is also our responsibility to approach our task from the lens of the most vulnerable members of our community. Finding ways to provide parents in every neighborhood access to a quality education and ensuring that our graduates leave The District workforce or college-ready is paramount.

But, I believe our charge as Board members and our charge as Philadelphians is far greater than this. We must unapologetically embrace democracy at a time when democracy is under attack. We must embrace protest and dissent and recognize that it *is* the highest form of patriotism. Protest and dissent is how we regained a locally controlled school board! We must encourage freedom of speech and freedom of the press to enact these principles of democracy. We have an opportunity to train future citizens and should be intentional about building critical thinkers and civic participation. Our country is at a pivotal moment in history and we *must* choose to fight for our democracy. It will take all of us to fight for this. Public education *is* democracy in action.

Wayne Walker

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mayor Jim Kenney and the Education Nominating Committee for this appointment to the new Board of Education for the City of Philadelphia.

It is an honor and privilege to work with the eight additional new members of the Board of Education, all of whom are dedicated to the success of our public school system. I also appreciate the opportunity to work with Superintendent Bill Hite and the entire district organization.

For me, service on the Board of Education has brought my education journey full circle: from pre-kindergarten to high school, all the way through college and law school, and finally to the Board of Education governing desk.

Two things I know—the power of education and the importance of people helping others. I want to help others access these two essential keys that unlock the doors of opportunity. And I will use every bit of my 30 years of non-profit and corporate governance experience to make this happen.

Since being appointed three months ago, I have had the great pleasure of going through orientation, visiting classrooms and learning about district matters and attending community listening sessions.

You have shared your priorities and concerns. You have offered ways on how our public schools system can become more effective and efficient. As students, parents, educators, taxpayers, members of the business community and all advocates of education who care deeply for and rely heavily on an educated Philadelphia, you have spoken. And we have listened.

I pledge to work with my fellow members of the Board to bring change in how we operate. Trust is an overarching theme in what you communicated. We will build trust by providing transparency, increasing accountability and actively engaging with you, our community.

I also pledge to focus on key priorities for our children: a safe environment for learning and access to a quality education.

This new chapter for Philadelphia's public education system is exciting! We, as Philadelphians, now have control over the governance of our schools. And what we do together will determine our success for tomorrow.

I am ecstatic to a part of this maiden voyage which benefits both our citizens and our city. All told and all counted, we are one. Thank you for including me in that number!

Joyce Wilkerson

No City institution is more important to civic life and the future of City residents and businesses than its public schools.

We have wonderful things going on in our schools, and while it is important to acknowledge the positive growth, we cannot ignore that public education in Philadelphia has also become more poorly funded and increasingly fragmented and inequitable. I believe the governance structure, in part, contributed to this.

Moving forward, The Board can take important steps toward eliminating the isolation. We are committed to doing this. Our first actions as a board were to listen and learn from stakeholders across the City. In these sessions, I heard the clear call for transparency in our actions, opening up to community involvement in our decision making, and always prioritizing equity.

We also need to work to assure that we are spending the resources we have prudently and equitably. One way we can do this is through continuing to take advantage of partnerships that align with the School District's vision and building our work with the City to better coordinate resources such as social and behavioral health services.

A few weeks ago I heard Governor Rendell characterize the change in governance this way: He said the dissolution of the SRC and its replacement with a Board of Education is like changing drivers when the car is running out of gas. While there are many things our Board of Education can and must do, we can't pretend that this new governance structure alone can fix the problems our schools face.

The Board alone cannot fix the school funding crisis that Philadelphia and schools across the Commonwealth face.

The Board alone cannot fix a Charter School law and funding formula that is recognized as one of the worst in the nation.

This is a shared responsibility. While I commit to continuing to listen and learn and put in place the governance reforms that we desperately need, I ask you to commit to working with us and working together to create space for a new chapter in Philadelphia public education.