

Kids Voting Durham Questionnaire – Donald Hughes, Candidate for Durham School Board – District 2

- **What would be your mission statement for Durham Public Schools?**
To create a school system that puts students first, shifts power to parents and community, and supports our teachers and staff.

- **What do you think the 3 most important issues are in DPS right now? How will you address each?**

Students First

The COVID-19 pandemic has hurt our students, especially Black and Brown students. As we begin to recover from the losses of the last two years, our policies must be equitable and prioritize student achievement above politics.

Shift Power to Parents and Community

When schools, parents, families, and communities are engaged, our students achieve more. I will work to shift power to parents and the community, ensuring that they are key partners in the decisions of our school system.

Support Our Teachers and Staff

We must pay our teachers and staff more than a survival wage. \$15/hour is a start, but our teachers and staff deserve to be able to live and provide for their families in the community in which they serve. We must also provide a safe working environment for all DPS employees. And we must provide for the well-being of our teachers and staff, ensuring that they have the necessary physical and mental health resources and support.

- **How will you address bias among teachers/staff and in what is taught in the classroom & schools?**
As a member of the Durham School Board, I will advocate for anti-racist and anti-bias training to be mandatory for all teachers and staff. Additionally, I will work with the superintendent, administration, board, teachers, students, and families to identify ways in which age-appropriate and culturally-relevant curricula can be integrated into DPS.
- **Do you believe youth should have a voting seat on the Durham School Board? (answer yes or no) Why or why not? In what ways will you give students a decision-making role in DPS?**
Yes. I believe there should be a student voting member of the Durham School Board. The decisions made by the Durham School Board ultimately impact our students and they must be empowered to decide what type of education and school system they want to see. Determining the logistics of adding a student member to the Durham School Board will require research by the administration and the school system's attorney. I will commit to asking the administration to conduct a feasibility study within my first 100 days on the school board.
- **How would you make sure there is adequate mental health supports for youth in schools?**
I currently serve as the Director of Community Voice for the Foundation for Health Leadership and Innovation. In this role, I work with medical providers, mental/behavioral health experts, and community members to develop solutions that will improve the health of North Carolina's

rural communities. As a member of the Durham School Board, I will lean on my knowledge and expertise in this area to ensure that mental health supports are available for all students, at all schools. I will advocate to local and state elected officials for funding to support proven behavioral health practices and resources. Most importantly, I will share my personal mental health journey as a way to convey the importance of adequate mental health supports to my board colleagues, school staff and administrators, members of the Durham County Commission, and members of our state and federal governments.

○ **Would you eliminate or reform (SROs) in schools? Why or how?**

I would not eliminate school resource officers (SROs) in schools. However, I would ensure that SROs receive DPS-mandated/chosen anti-racist and anti-bias trainings among other trainings. Additionally, I would work with school system leaders and local law enforcement leaders to reframe the purpose and responsibilities of SROs with a focus on integrating SROs into mentorship roles instead of punitive/disciplinary roles.

○ **What has the pandemic revealed about schools' roles in providing adequate access to nutrition and digital resources for students?**

COVID-19 has shone a light on the challenges that have existed in our schools for decades. One of those challenges is adequate access to nutrition and digital resources. As a member of the Durham School Board, I will ask for a comprehensive report on the impact of COVID-19 on the school system. This report will include a special focus on the disparities that exist within the school system and recommendations for an equitable recovery.