

deaeyc Early Childhood Education Candidate Questionnaire

Answers Submitted By: Darrynn Harris

1. What are your views on the needs of young children (birth to kindergarten) and what specific steps would you take to address these needs?

As an educator and parent of two young children, I see the needs of young children every day. From birth to kindergarten our youngest Delawareans have vigorous needs in the areas of mental, socio-emotional and physical development. To meet the needs of our growing children, I would support expanding and increasing funding for birth to kindergarten programs throughout the state. I believe it is imperative for services to be community based and accessible to all, despite income levels. These services would include social workers, mental health professionals, early literacy programs and kindergarten readiness programming.

2. What are your views on the ways in which we can close the education achievement gap with a particular focus on the early years?

I believe we can close the education achievement gap in the early years with aggressive kindergarten readiness programming. I developed a love for reading at an early age as the result of my parents putting a book in my hand at a very young age. Building functional vocabulary and language skills in toddlerhood is key to closing the achievement gap earlier. Additionally, fostering basic math skills plays in tandem to vocabulary and language skills.

3. What is the role of the state/city/federal government to provide for programs that will be addressing the socio-emotional and mental health issues young children will experience in the coming weeks and months resulting from the disruption in their lives brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic?

The state/city/federal government has a duty to provide programs that will address the socio-emotional and mental health issues as a result of COVID-19 disruptions. Through funds provided to the states through the CARES Act, I would propose assembling and dispatching GO teams to childcare and early childhood centers that could offer programs and counselling services for young children. This would be a worthwhile

investment on the front end that would help mitigate the manifestation of socio-emotional or mental health issues that might emerge later in the child's development.

4. What steps would you take to attract, and retain quality educators in the early childhood education field?

I would (1) partner with our in-state institutions of higher education and Delaware high schools to attract and or recruit high quality early childhood educators; (2) incentivize working as an early childhood educator in Delaware; (3) propose revising the certification regulations to make it easier to become a certified early childhood educator.

5. As an elected official, what would be your top 4 priorities in the first 100 days in the position?

As an elected official, my top 4 priorities in the first 100 days would be to (1) work to ensure Delaware safely progresses through our COVID-19 reopening plan, (2) push for more equitable education funding across the state; (3) increase internet access in Western Sussex County and (4) begin exploring expanding affordable housing options in the Route 13 Corridor in north western Sussex.

6. How would you improve the economy of your city, our State and/or our nation?

I would hope to improve the economy of the 35th District and the State of Delaware by attracting companies to set up shop in Delaware, specifically around the Bridgeville, Greenwood, Ellendale, Georgetown and Seaford areas. Also, encouraging businesses to establish in our downtowns, creating jobs producing an economic impact. One of my goals is to lead revitalization efforts in our towns, making people want to come to Delaware and start or grown their families.