

deaeyc Early Childhood Education Candidate Questionnaire

Answers Submitted By: John Carney Jr.

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?

My view is that we provide children with a good foundation in order to reach kindergarten ready to learn. A child's brain development is most significant between birth and age 3. Those are very important years in a child's development that will influence how they perform in elementary school all the way through high school. As seen throughout my first term, I have worked to provide these resources through Executive Order 5 in reestablishing the Family Services Cabinet council in order to give teachers and families a voice in this vital period of a child's life. By continuing to give children a good foundation through our STARS rated programs and seeking early intervention with at-risk parents, I believe we can do more in preparing our children for the challenges of tomorrow.

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?

My view is that children should be at their reading level by 3rd grade, I believe by providing investments in public education like our Opportunity Funding Initiative will allow students throughout Delaware to reach that goal. Through this funding we were able to expand preschool classes and teachers in schools from Harlan in Wilmington to North Laurel Early Learning Academy. In my second term, I want to further expand access to early education, so every child can enter kindergarten ready and be prepared to succeed.

I think we can build stronger connections between early learning and K-12 schools and provide more resources that provide children with the opportunity to close the education achievement gap at this early age. My administration has partnered with programs like the Dolly Parton Imagination Library through the Delaware Division of Libraries. This fantastic program allows parents to enroll their children and receive one new book every month from birth to age 5. Since the beginning of this partnership over 16,000 books have been received by more than 3,800 children. We look forward to building upon such programs and successes to provide all Delawareans such opportunities if I have the opportunity to be your governor for another term.

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 COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented time for our young children. One in every five students suffer from a mental health disorder. Before the pandemic, we were trying to address mental health in our schools through the Opportunity Funding Initiative by providing \$15 million in mental health support. One of my other priorities has been to make Delaware a trauma informed state. Last year, I was proud to sign the Take Care Delaware program into law which will increase mindful and effective observation of our students that are experiencing trauma, so we can support our children and be aware of what they are going through. Getting through this pandemic is going to be challenging, but it is my goal to ensure that our young children have the resources they need.

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

Both of my parents served as educators. I know that educators face many challenges especially during this pandemic. Prior to COVID, I have worked to reform the Department of Education as more of a support agency for teachers with less of a focus on administrative posts. My administration also created the High-Needs Educator Student Loan Payment Program that provides increased opportunities for educators by providing up to \$10,000 in student-loan relief in certain subject areas and in high needs schools. I would look to build off these programs in order to keep quality teachers in Delaware as well as attract more for years to come.

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

My top priority would be managing the COVID-19 pandemic and making sure that Delawareans are kept safe throughout the state. As we keep the virus under control, we will look to continue to strengthen our public schools for all Delaware children. We'll build on the largest infrastructure program in Delaware history, fixing roads and bridges and creating good jobs up and down our state. We'll continue fighting to clean up our waterways and protect Delaware's beautiful natural environment. And we'll do it responsibly — protecting taxpayer dollars and making sure we have a sustainable budget that invests in our future. These are my priorities in the first 100 days and beyond if I am elected to serve another term as your governor.

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

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, I will work to improve the economy of this state through infrastructure projects that will continue to increase jobs in communities that will allow school districts to continue to grow. In August, I signed an Executive Order that created the Rapid Workforce Training and Redeployment Training Initiative to assist unemployed and underemployed Delawareans and their families. Delawareans have made sacrifices during this pandemic, but they still need to pay their bills and this program aims to do just that: train our residents for in-demand occupations so they can get back to work in a safe manner. We also look forward to expanding internet access especially during this time of virtual learning.