

deaeyc Early Childhood Education Candidate Questionnaire

Answers Submitted By: Madinah Wilson-Anton

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?

The needs of young children and their families are extremely important to me, which is why we introduced our

Plan

[for Working Families](#). I have included some relevant aspects

of the plan below.

The early years of a child's life are crucial for their healthy development. I support expanding 1) paid family and medical leave to all workers so that parents have more time with their newborns, 2) universal child-care so that parents are able to work to support their families, and policies that reduce the costs of parenting such as 3) providing families with "baby boxes."

The average family spends 10% of their income on private child care which strains families. At the same time more than 50% of child care workers in Delaware qualify for public assistance due to unlivable wages. Our childcare workers and teachers deserve dignified wages, and happier teachers and staff make for healthier and happier children. We need a better system. I propose expanding the Purchase of Care program to include more families, and to move to a sliding scale of assistance. To help parents, the process should be streamlined to make it easier to apply regardless of income. Additionally, payment should be reformed to make the program easier for childcare providers; that means ensuring consistent payment and raising the payment to match the increased costs of running a childcare facility. The standards for eligible child care providers should be re-visited to make sure that all facilities have the chance to compete, regardless of size.

I also propose creating a public child care system to ensure all families, regardless of income, have a place to leave their kids when they go to work. This would be a long-term process, as Delaware would be a leader in the public child care realm, but it would create a long-term assurance that all families have a child care option.

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?

Early head start programs attempt to close these gaps by addressing the needs of the whole family. The main goals are kindergarten readiness, connecting families to resources, family health and family education. The education achievement gap can be addressed through state programs that provide similar programming. I plan to work with early childhood educators to learn more about how the state legislature can support this effort.

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 must prioritize funding programs that address these issues, with a specific focus on young children from low-income households. When we are eventually able to return to in-person activities we'll also need special focus on our youngest students who are not accustomed to in-person learning.

The pandemic has had a negative effect on the social-emotional well-being of children of all ages and their families. It likely has had an effect on the healthy attachment to caregivers of children 0-3. Healthy attachment is a predictor of academic success and healthy relationships across the lifespan. Our families will need more support in this area and the state must prioritize supporting programs that address this.

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

In order to attract quality educators we need to be offering quality working conditions and supports. If elected, I intend to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood educators, and work towards a society that truly values the work of ECEs. ECEs are often working under stressful conditions that include low pay, low opportunity for advancement, and limited opportunities for professional development, even though they are required to achieve CEUs to keep their certification. The morale of this workforce is sometimes low and many face economic hardship (i.e. can't afford childcare for their own, rely on public assistance). Additionally, in some cases they are asked to manage classrooms with limited supports for children with special needs and

behavioral challenges. We need to address these valid concerns in order to attract and retain quality educators in this field.

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

Coming into office during an economic and public health crisis, I anticipate the state will be looking at a budget shortfall. My priority will be to advocate for increased taxes on those who can afford them so that important programs the most vulnerable in our communities rely on are not cut. Other top priorities are: 1) changing our education funding system to a more equitable one, 2) repealing the youth and training wage, 3) adding protections for tenants to the Landlord Tenant Code, and 4) passing a green amendment to ensure all Delawareans have a constitutional right to clean air, water, and environment.

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

Healthy communities have healthy, vibrant economies. It's important that we take a holistic approach, companies and businesses thrive in communities where there is educational equity and opportunity. Instead of handing tax dollars away to corporations in exchange for broken promises, we must truly invest in our communities. For many families, and this number will only increase over time, they can only work if they have access to quality childcare, which is why it's extremely important that we reform and expand the Purchase of Care program. We also need to invest in our public schools, quality housing, and infrastructure in order to attract quality businesses.