

Name:



**DINNER & DIALOGUE** *at home*

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS COMMUNITY DISTRICT  
**CANDIDATES FORUM**

in collaboration with



**INFORM. ENGAGE. ACT.**

# AGENDA

OCTOBER 1, 2020

- Welcome & Context
- Speed Dating Intro
- Speed Dating with Candidates (15 minutes each)

in partnership with



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This workbook is organized so you can do your own research. Use it to make your decisions and start your own conversations. Each of these topics include sources for you to dig deeper into any of them.

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**DPSCD Dates to Remember  
2020-2021 School Year:**

**10.7.20**

COUNT DAY

**11.25.20 - 11.27.20:**

Thanksgiving Break

**12.21.20 - 01.01.21:**

Christmas Break

**01.18.21:**

MLK, Jr Holiday Break

**02.15.21 - 02.19.21:**

Presidents' Day Holiday Break

**03.29.21 - 04.01.21:**

Easter Break

**5.31.21:**

Memorial Day

**06.24.21:**

Last Day of School for Students

# EVENT CO-SPONSORS



## BRIDGE DETROIT

Founded on a belief that Detroit's 700,000 residents deserve a transparent, innovative and diversely staffed news organization, BridgeDetroit is a non-profit news and engagement organization that is laser focused on lifting up the issues that Detroiters themselves identify as important to their lives.

BridgeDetroit produces journalism and community information that is:

- Engagement-Focused Journalism, produced in a way that connects Detroiters to each other, and to decision-makers and journalists.
- High-Impact, project-based journalism that is directly tied to themes that have the highest community importance and the most opportunity for transformation.
- Direct Response Journalism is service journalism at its most individual level. It provides vital information in response to direct inquiries from Detroiters whose information gaps prevent them from fully participating in the city's civic life.

BridgeDetroit is a project of the nonpartisan, nonprofit the Center for Michigan.

[www.bridgedetroit.com](http://www.bridgedetroit.com)



## CHALKBEAT DETROIT

Chalkbeat is an award-winning non-profit news organization that provides deep, local coverage of education policy and practice in Detroit, New York, Denver, Memphis, Indianapolis, Newark and across the nation. With a focus on issues of equity, Chalkbeat aims to inform the decisions and actions that lead to better outcomes for children and families, especially those in the low-income communities where improvement can have the largest impact.

[www.chalkbeat.org/detroit](http://www.chalkbeat.org/detroit)



## CITIZENDETROIT

CitizenDetroit ensures Detroiters are informed with unbiased, fact-based information so that they can engage with one another and act to address their needs and values. Our policy research and community education programs provide individuals with opportunities to strengthen their engagement in our democracy, including the evaluation of candidate qualifications; scrutiny of political speech; and town hall forums where candidates can engage directly with community members.

[www.citizendetroit.org](http://www.citizendetroit.org)

# OUR PARTNERS



## THE DETROIT ALUMNAE CHAPTER OF DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.

The Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1913 by 22 college women on the campus of Howard University in Washington, D.C. Deltas are committed to public service with a primary focus on the Black community and to the constructive development of its more than 200,000 members. Since 1939, Detroit Deltas have built a rich legacy of dedicated service to the metropolitan Detroit community by promoting academic excellence, encouraging community and social activism, and providing solutions to community concerns. Our work is designed to ensure that the communities we serve — and the people who live in them — thrive. In the spirit of our 22 illustrious Founders, we are committed to “Building on the Legacy of Excellence” that is based on sisterhood, scholarship and service.

[www.detroitdeltas.org](http://www.detroitdeltas.org)



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DETROIT

The League of Women Voters of Detroit is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The League does not endorse candidates or political parties. It influences public policy through education and advocacy. We invite you to join us as we make democracy work in our communities.

[www.lwvdetroit.org](http://www.lwvdetroit.org)



## THE TAU ALPHA OMEGA CHAPTER OF ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INC.

On March 23, 1991, the Tau Alpha Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated was chartered in Redford, Michigan. The strength of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., is maintained through the ability of its Chapters to progress and remain abreast of what’s going on in our communities as well as in the workplace. Tau Alpha Omega is one of those chapters. By remaining a small, yet personable chapter, we have been effective at leveraging the talents and backgrounds of our Sorors, be they medical, educational, technological, business, or social. When talking with the first President of Tau Alpha Omega, Soror Victoria Scott, she exclaimed that one of her visions for the Chapter was that it would “evolve technologically and change with the times to meet the social needs of our communities.” Tau Alpha Omega has exceeded that vision.

[www.akatao.net](http://www.akatao.net)

THE GENERAL ELECTION IS  
**NOVEMBER 3RD!**

**AMPLIFY  
YOUR VOICE**  
**WITH YOUR VOTE!**

GO TO **INFORMDETROIT.ORG** SO YOU CAN STAY INFORMED.  
**KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES. THEN VOTE!**

You can find videos of the candidates introducing themselves in their own words.

For candidate videos, visit [InformDetroit.org](https://www.informdetroit.org)

To find your polling location, visit [Michigan.gov/vote](https://www.michigan.gov/vote)



# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN DPSCD?

## COVID-19 and Access to Education

DPSCD welcomed back many of its 51,000 students back on September 8th for both online and in-person learning due to the COVID-19 health pandemic.

The district will permit families to switch between these models each quarter to allow families to safely balance education with health and safety concerns. **Currently, 75% of students have opted for online learning with 25% choosing face-to-face classroom settings.**

**In-person learning looks different than previous years:** anyone entering the school must wear a mask, complete a health assessment and have their temperature checked. In the classroom, students are seated six feet apart, which is made easier by the fact that class sizes are limited to 20 students.

**Online learning follows the same structure of a regular school day, except it takes place from students' homes.**

**Students have to log on to Microsoft Teams at their designated class times with their cameras turned on.** Once logged on, they will listen to live lectures, ask questions, participate in group projects, and do other familiar education activities. They even take breaks between classes and can pick up a lunch at one of the district's grab-and-go sites. Each school building also hosts a learning center, a designated space for students to take online classes under the supervision of support staff.

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> LEARN MORE FROM OUR SOURCES LISTED ON PAGE 16

# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN DPSCD?

## Enrollment and District Success

Student enrollment is the foundation of DPSCD; educating students is the primary purpose of the district, and the number of students enrolled directly correlates to the funding available to serve that purpose.

- From 2002 to 2016, enrollment in DPSCD (then Detroit Public Schools) declined by about 67.5%. During this time period there was simultaneously a decrease in the overall population of Detroit, an increase in charter schools in the city, and Schools of Choice legislation made it easier for students to transfer to nearby districts.



In 2016, DPSCD had just over 45,000 students. By 2019, that number rose to 51,000, though this was in large part due to the disbanding of the Education Achievement Authority and the return of those schools to the Detroit district.

Increasing enrollment is vital to the success of the district, so in 2018, the board released an **Enrollment Plan** that identified four fundamental levers to grow the district:

- **Restore Detroit's public school system** – The district sought to regain the testing and quality standards that existed before emergency management
- **Recruitment** – increased marketing strategies for the district to make high schools more desirable
- **Retention** – Shepherded students from the time they entered the district all the way through high school graduation
- **Reinforce site-based capacity around enrollment** – Empowered school-based staff to become enrollment ambassadors.



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# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN DPSCD?

## Right to Education

**In 2016, Detroit Public Schools students filed a lawsuit against former Gov. Rick Snyder over conditions created while DPSCD was under state emergency management.** Students claimed dilapidated and rodent-infested buildings, a shortage of class materials and a shortage of qualified teachers contributed to an environment that deprived students of a basic education. According to a facilities assessment conducted in 2018, it will cost more than \$500 million to address widespread, poor building conditions across DPSCD school buildings.

**Yet, there has been progress. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer settled the 2016 lawsuit in May of 2020.**

**As part of the settlement, Gov. Whitmer proposed legislation that will provide “at least” \$94.4 million dollars to DPSCD for literacy programming.** In addition, the school board approved plans for major restructuring that would move students and programs to buildings in better physical condition, as well as add another high school requiring an exam for admittance. Nonetheless, while both moves have potential to improve student outcomes and successes, neither will reduce the substantial financial burden for capital improvements in the district.



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> LEARN MORE FROM OUR SOURCES LISTED ON PAGE 16



# HOW THE DISTRICT IS FUNDED

**Prior to 1994, schools were primarily funded through local property taxes** (about 70%), with some money coming from the state (about 30%). Schools in communities with higher property values earned more revenue than schools in communities with lower property values. This resulted in some stark disparities: in 1993, the amount of combined state and local funding per-pupil ranged from a low of \$3,398 to a high of \$10,294.

**Michigan voters approved Proposal A in 1994 to support school funding in a way that shrunk the gap between wealthy and low-income districts by increasing State funding.**

The resulting mechanism is called **the foundation allowance**, and it guarantees schools a certain amount of money per student to support general school operations. The foundation allowance has effectively flipped the funding mix on its head (approximately 80% state to 20% local), and it substantially increased operation revenue for low-income schools.

The rate of increase for per-pupil allowances in schools at the minimum foundation allowance is higher than the rate of increase for schools receiving the maximum allowance. The idea is that over time, the difference in allowance levels will shrink until they are the same. And that is working. **In 1994, the difference between schools receiving the minimum and maximum levels of funding was \$2,300. In the 2019-20 fiscal year, it was about \$418, though the gap is actually wider between districts receiving the minimum and some of the wealthiest school districts in the region and state.**

Over time, as the minimum moves closer to the state maximum, an increasing number of districts and pupils will be picked up by the minimum. In the 2018-19 fiscal year, 700 of a total of 835 districts (roughly 62% of the total student population) were at the minimum.

**Currently, the minimum student allowance is \$8,111 per student (this is what DPSCD receives) and the maximum is \$8,529 per student.**

**The bulk of this per student allowance typically goes to operational costs, such as administration, teachers and cafeteria services.** That leaves only a small portion for instructional materials like books and software. Districts are allowed to ask voters for an increase in taxes to raise revenues, but that is usually allocated to buildings, maintenance and debt.

**Some school finance advocates feel that funding at these levels does not do enough to support the diverse needs of students being served, such as special education, English Language Learners, and low-income students.** These advocates argue that increasing foundation allowances would allow schools to advance student achievement by making improvements such as lowering classroom sizes and allowing more time for teacher training. Others contend that the focus must be placed on how schools spend the money they already have.

➤ **LEARN MORE FROM OUR SOURCES LISTED ON PAGE 16**

# WHO DECIDES HOW THE DOLLARS ARE SPENT?

## DPSCD Superintendent

- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of district
- Manages district finances and day-to-day operations
- Implements policies adopted by the School Board
- Makes budget and policy recommendations
- Reports to the DPSCD School Board

## DPSCD School Board

- Appoints, oversees and evaluates the Superintendent
- Reviews and approves the district budget
- Approves recommended curriculum
- Adopts all district policies regarding student discipline, academics, collective bargaining agreements, employee structure, safety, facilities and equipment
- Creates a shared vision and ensures a structure that supports it, is accountable to that vision and advocates for the shared vision and resources needed to achieve it.
- Reports to you – the citizen – and the Detroit Financial Review Commission

## Detroit Financial Review Commission (FRC)

- Reviews and approves all DPSCD collective bargaining agreements
- Reviews financial revenue estimates
- Approves or terminates the contract of the Superintendent
- Approves the CFO appointment
- The FRC (created in 2014) provides oversight of the City of Detroit and DPSCD. Reports and details of the FRC can be found on the Michigan Treasury's webpage. Here is a shortened link, <https://tinyurl.com/yct97ssq>
- Reports to the Governor



# CANDIDATE SPEED DATING - THE 5 P'S

Candidate speed dating is a great opportunity to **learn more about who you think would best represent the needs of the district**. But make sure you are not fooled by flashy speeches! **Look out for the 5 P's** to separate real qualifications from the fluff.

## What to Listen for When Hearing a Politician Talk

### 1. PLATITUDES/PANDERING



General moral statements that don't say anything new.  
Plays to people's existing biases.  
Doesn't offer specific actions the candidate will take.

### 2. PANTS ON FIRE

A false claim or statement, whether intentionally so or not.

Can sound good, but requires research or follow up to verify.



### 3. PIVOT

Briefly responds, but shifts to a different topic.  
Can be a strategy to keep the focus on the candidate's priorities...  
or can be a strategy to avoid certain topics.



## SIZING UP CANDIDATE SPEECH

### 4. PERTINENT

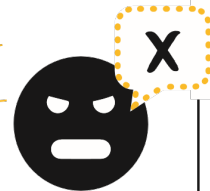


- ✓ Directly responds to the question.
- ✓ Demonstrates understanding about the role of the office.
- ✓ Demonstrates accurate knowledge about the issue.

### 5. POTSHOT

An unfounded or irrelevant criticism of an opponent's character that doesn't impact job performance (like gender or religion), when the target doesn't have a chance to defend him/herself.

~~OPPORTUNISTIC~~  
~~UNFOUNDED~~  
~~IRRELEVANT~~



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# CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

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**1.** If you are elected to the school board, what specific issue would you bring to the attention of your colleagues on the board? How would you seek to build a consensus around a strategy to address the issue?

**2.** COVID has had a dramatic effect on schools. What are priorities the district and board should consider in making decisions about in-person learning versus online learning? And what role should the board play in addressing concerns raised by parents about the effectiveness of pandemic learning?

**3.** The school board has committed to improving the way the district police officers interact with students. How would you address concerns over policing in a district that is predominately comprised of Black students and students of color?

**4.** For many years, DPSCD lagged behind in teacher salaries in respect of other local school districts. Now, the district is offering a higher starting salary for teachers who are new to the district. What policies would you support as a board member to increase retention of educators?

**5.** In order to promote social distanced learning in DPSCD schools, the district has established 20 pupil maximums for classrooms. Educators and families have called for similar actions for years, noting that it improves educational outcomes. As a school board member, how would you work to maintain smaller class sizes in the district?

**6.** As a school board member, how would you ensure that the district's curriculum reflects the diverse needs and backgrounds of the student population?

**7.** The School Board is responsible for the vision, policies, and budget oversight for the district, while the Superintendent is responsible for implementation and day-to-day execution of operations. What would you do as a school board member to support and empower the Superintendent to run day-to-day operations effectively?

**8.** A 2018 district analysis put a \$500 million price tag on bringing all district schools up to modern standards. As a school board member, what strategy would you support for improving the condition of deteriorated DPSCD buildings?

# 2020 DPSCD SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES



**Richard Carl Clement**

- No information provided



**Sherry J. Gay-Gagnogo**

- State of Michigan Legislator: Detroit Caucus Chair, Vice Chair of Financial Services, Families, Children & Seniors
- K-8 Certified Science Teacher: Detroit Edison Public School Academy, Detroit Public Schools, David Ellis West



**Bessie Lee Harris**

- I have humbly served 32 yrs in DPS, as a Spec. Ed. Teacher, Spec. Ed. Resource Teacher Principal and Principal.
- My focus: All Children, Staff Equity and Moral, Parental Involvement



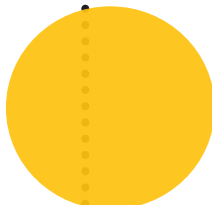
**Elena M. Herrada**

- No face-to-face school until it's safe
- No more charters in Detroit. Public or private are the same.
- At-large voting disenfranchises the Latino community. The current School Board should move against it and request District voting.



**Zsa Zsa Chantel Hubbard**

- Detroit Public School Alumni
- Management & Leadership
- Community Advocate
- Mentor for over 20 years
- Media Mogul/Entrepreneur



**Jermain Jones**

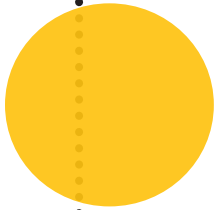
- No information provided



**LaMar Lemmons**

- No information provided

# 2020 DPSCD SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES



**Terrance Lemmons**

- No information provided



**Sonya S. Mays**

- Current elected DPSCD Board Member and Treasurer (for the last four years).
- Founding CEO of Develop Detroit
- Board Member, Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan (BGCSM) and the Alumni Board of Governors for Michigan Ross School of Business



**Ida Short**

- No information provided



**Chico Frank Sorrell**

- No information provided



**Misha Stallworth**

- Current member DPSCD School Board, Secretary
- MSW, Community Organizing and Interpersonal Practice University of Michigan; BA, Research Psychology University of Chicago
- Member: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., National Association of Black Social Workers, City Year Detroit Associate Board



**Iris A. Taylor**

- Current elected DPSCD Board Member and President
- Forty year career as a healthcare executive, retiring as President of DMC Detroit Receiving Hospital
- Extensive community service: former Board President of NSO and Detroit Central City Board member of multiple other organizations



**John Telford**

- Literacy
- Student Safety
- Trades Education



# GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION

- Be respectful.
- Participate. Be open, honest, and forthcoming.
- Don't dominate the discussion. Invite other points of view.
- Listen and try to understand various perspectives.
- Stay on topic and limit side conversations.
- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
- Be mindful of time!

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# SOURCES

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## COVID-19 and Access to Education

1. <https://www.bridgedetroit.com/temperature-checks-hand-sanitizer-and-airplane-arms-greet-detroit-students-on-the-first-day-of-school/>
2. <https://detroit.chalkbeat.org/2020/9/2/21419095/detroit-first-day-of-school>
3. <https://detroit.chalkbeat.org/2020/9/15/21438855/after-week-one-attendance-down-in-the-detroit-school-district-as-78-of-students-show-up-for-class>

## Enrollment and District Success

4. <https://detroit.chalkbeat.org/2019/10/21/21109044/vitti-says-enrollment-is-up-in-the-detroit-school-district>
5. <https://www.mischooldata.org/DistrictSchoolProfiles2/StudentInformation/StudentCounts/StudentCount.aspx>
6. <https://www.boarddocs.com/mi/detroit/Board.nsf/files/AYU9R809431F/%-24file/Enrollment%20Plan%20-DPSCD%202018%20FINAL.pdf>

## Right to Education

7. <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/education/2020/02/13/detroit-school-board-approves-major-overhaul-schools/4748335002/>
8. <https://wdet.org/posts/2020/05/14/89610-whitmer-settles-detroit-students-right-to-read-suit/>

## How the District is Funded

9. <https://wdet.org/posts/2018/04/23/86691-how-are-michigans-public-schools-funded/>
10. [https://www.senate.michigan.gov/sfa/departments/datacharts/dck12\\_schoolfundingbasics.pdf](https://www.senate.michigan.gov/sfa/departments/datacharts/dck12_schoolfundingbasics.pdf)
11. [https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/Alpha/Fiscal Brief Basics of the Foundation Allowance FY19 Update Nov2018.pdf](https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/Alpha/Fiscal%20Brief%20Basics%20of%20the%20Foundation%20Allowance%20FY19%20Update%20Nov2018.pdf)
12. <https://mea.org/fy-2020-school-aid-budget-highlights/>

# MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR YOU!

## VOTE BY MAIL

- All registered voters in Michigan have the right to vote by mail.
- Request your mail-in ballot with an online or printable application.
- Fill out the application completely.
- Submit the request to your local election office. You should request your ballot as far in advance of the election as possible. **Your mail-in ballot application must be post marked by November 2, 2020.**
- You can also submit your ballot in secure drop-off boxes, which will be located at all early-voting/satellite voting locations. **Find the locations at [detroitmi.gov/elections](https://detroitmi.gov/elections)**
- When your ballot arrives, read it carefully and follow the instructions to complete and return it. **Your Clerk's office must receive your ballot by 8 p.m. on Tuesday, November 3, 2020.**

## VOTE IN PERSON

- You can vote in person on Election Day at an assigned polling place near where you live. **Call your clerk before you go, as some locations may change because of COVID-19.**
- **Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.** You have the right to vote if you are in line by 8 p.m.

## EARLY VOTING

- Michigan voters can vote before Election Day through a process called absentee in-person voting.
- Locations, dates and hours for early voting in Detroit can be found at the **Department of Elections webpage at [detroitmi.gov/elections](https://detroitmi.gov/elections) or by calling 313-876-0190.**

**STAY INFORMED. KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES.  
VOTE NOVEMBER 3RD!**

For more information about candidates and ballot issues, visit [InformDetroit.org](https://InformDetroit.org)  
To find your polling location, visit [Michigan.gov/vote](https://Michigan.gov/vote)

# STAY CONNECTED WITH US!



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