

Board of Education Candidate Survey

2021 Birmingham Municipal Election

Greater Birmingham Ministries invites you to complete this candidate survey. Your responses will inform our non-partisan 2021 Birmingham Municipal Election Guide, which will reach over 20,000 Birmingham residents. Please return your completed candidate survey to electionguide@gbm.org by July 2.

Name: Derrick L. Billups

District: District 4

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1. Please provide a 2-3 sentence biography.

I am a graduate of Woodlawn High School and resident of the Woodlawn community. I possess an undergraduate degree from the University of Alabama Tuscaloosa and graduate degrees from Samford University and the University of Alabama Birmingham. I have nearly 20 years of professional work experience as an educator serving in various roles within public schools and a former director of education and workforce development for a local nonprofit. During that time, I have also successfully established, managed, and strengthened partnerships with a conglomerate of community stakeholders in the interest of providing K-12 programming and college and career opportunities to youth and adult learners.

2. Please name any endorsements you have received.

No formal endorsements to name at this time.

3. What do you see as the board's roles and responsibilities?

I see the board's roles and responsibilities as assisting the superintendent in establishing a clear vision for the school district while working collaboratively and collegially to implement plans that will strategically address the educational and existential needs of students. The board's role is to help the school system demonstrate fiscal responsibility, providing direct oversight of budgetary concerns and expenditures in addition to establishing and/or adopting policies and procedures that will guide institutional practices.

4. What are the biggest issues for students and families in your district and how would you address those issues in your role as a Board Member?

There are three outstanding issues confronting students and families in my district as indicated in local, state, and federal data. These issues include education disparities, housing inadequacies, and community health & wellness concerns. As a Board Member, I will work in tandem with the superintendent and other board members to address matters directly related to the educational needs of our students. Indirectly, I will endeavor to encourage greater conversation and collaboration between government entities, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and area colleges and universities to develop a comprehensive plan to address all three issues.

5. What role, if any, does the Birmingham Board of Education and Birmingham City Schools play in community and public safety?

I believe the Board of Education and Birmingham City Schools play pivotal roles in addressing community and public safety concerns. The primary role of these two entities is to work together in developing a school system that adequately addresses and effectively equips students with the cognitive capability and intellectual acuity to function as productive citizens of society. As a result of fulfilling this role, current students will become the foundation of a future citizenry that is not only confident and competent in their abilities, but reasonable and responsible in their activities relative to the community at large.

I believe the Birmingham Board of Education should partner with the Birmingham Police Department to protect schools - students, teachers, and administrators - by eliminating any criminal activity in and around the schools and communities. I further believe that

partnerships with various public safety agencies should be established including BFRS, BPD, Jeff. Co. Sheriff, FBI, etc. to provide programming that educates students concerning matters relative to drug elimination, employment pathways, fire safety, and a host of other topics confronting our communities.

6. As a Board Member, will you advocate for policies that protect queer and transgender youth? If so, how?

As a Board Member, I will advocate for policies that protect all youth, including those individuals identifying with the GLBTQ community. I will listen to familial concerns and review national and local reports/trends regarding various issues confronting students and propose policies that will reinforce the human dignity of all persons.

I will also advocate for the creation of a Chief Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Officer for BCS to report to the Superintendent as a senior cabinet-level position. I will work with the Superintendent to assure the position has an adequate budget and resource materials to promote district wide programming and training for students, teachers, and staff.

7. What is your position on charter schools?

Charter schools serve as an alternative to traditional public, private, and/or parochial school experiences. They provide another option for families seeking to identify and secure favorable educational outcomes for their children.

8. There is a national conversation on teaching Critical Race Theory in public schools to make public education more equitable. Do you believe the BCS curriculum should be changed to be more equitable? If so, how?

I believe the BCS curriculum should routinely endeavor to present students with the most credible information possible concerning a given subject matter. This curriculum should be well informed, research based, and culturally relevant, presenting the positions of diverging thought while contextualizing both historical and contemporary constructs. It should also be age appropriate, engaging, and intellectually stimulating to intended audiences.