



**Chapel Hill - Carrboro NAACP
2019 School Board Candidate Questionnaire**

Please type out your responses in full below; take as much space as you need to answer the question in full. We thank you in advance for your participation.

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| Full Name: | Deon Temne |
| Age/Race/Gender (with preferred pronouns): | 47 / Black / Male Preferred Pronouns: He, Him |
| Occupation/Title/Retired: | Chief Operations Officer |
| Relationship to school district/particular school(s) | Parent & Volunteer - Northside Elementary & Smith Middle |

Headshot Photograph
(published with your
questionnaire responses):



Background

Please provide an overview of your local civic leadership/organizational affiliations (please describe, in particular, your engagement with the local school system and local educational advocacy). What specific insights into our local community have you garnered from this work? In what ways has this work motivated you to campaign for school board membership? Please describe, in particular, your engagement with the local school system and local educational advocacy.

My name is Deon Temne and I am running for Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School Board. Like many other transplants, my wife and I were drawn to this community because of its small-town feel and the reputation of the school district. Since arriving, I have worked to become an active member of the community, volunteering and adding my voice to the collective discussions related to excellence and diversity in our district. I am a true believer in justice and equality for all and I am running to represent those most impacted by the achievement gap, to advocate for those who fall outside the bell curve, and to build trust with the community to foster more collaborative solutions to our greatest challenges.

My extensive volunteer and board experience have prepared me well for a position on the school board.

I currently serve as the Vice-Chair of the Equity Advisory Council, as a member of the School Improvement Team for Northside Elementary and as the membership chair for a local association for cybersecurity professionals. Since moving here in 2016 I have also served as the Special Needs Advisory Council representative for Seawell Elementary, as a Steering Committee member for the Campaign for Racial Equity in Our Schools, as a tutor & coach for Math Olympiad and as a member of the School Improvement Team for Rashkis Elementary. I was also selected as the Northside Elementary and Title 1 representative on Dr. Pamela Baldwin's Family Commission in

2018. And for more than twenty years I have been a proud life member and tutor for both the National Urban League and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.

**Racial Disparities in Academic and Disciplinary Outcomes;
Application of the REIA & Racial Equity Analysis**

1. The racial achievement gap on test scores in CHCCS is the second largest in the state and one of the largest in the U.S. (e.g., in school year 2017-2018, 83.8% of White students in grades 3-8 scored "College and Career Ready" on EOG exams, as compared to only 29.4% of Black students, and 37.3% of Latinx students)¹. In fact, according to the recent [Racial Equity Report Card](#), CHCCS, one of the wealthiest school districts in the state, ranks #47 compared to other districts in terms of the academic outcomes of our Black students.
 - a. What is your explanation for this large achievement gap and our relatively poor performance in the education of our Black students?
 - b. What proposals do you have for reducing these achievement disparities and poor academic performance outcomes?
 - c. In what ways should our school system be evaluated according to its ability to reduce these disparities?
 - d. Which group, students, teachers or administrators, is most responsible for current academic achievement outcomes in CHCCS? Why?

A number of factors are leading to our district's large achievement gap. Some of the most obvious factors are the need for more diverse teaching staff, implicit bias that causes low expectations for certain children, and the need for more culturally relevant curriculum that allows students to see themselves positively reflected. As a board member I would specifically advocate for implicit bias and restorative practice training for teachers and administrators as a way to raise expectations for all students, increased teacher support and incentives to ensure a robust pipeline of diverse talent, more two-way communication and collaboration with the communities most impacted by the gap, and expanded metrics that measure the extent to which schools are creating learning environments that foster equitable development.

My goal is to help EVERY child meet their full potential. I am running for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City School Board because I want to ensure representation for those most adversely impacted by our achievement gap. As a parent of three African American children in our district, I have wondered why our children or parents of color have not been systematically asked for their perspective on the achievement gap. Tabletop discussions are great, but the voice of a smaller community can be drowned out or muted by the dominant group. We have to be more deliberate about creating opportunities to respectfully listen as we strive to create community-driven solutions.

Our achievement gap conversations have mainly focused on metrics that help identify deficits in our children's performance. This makes it easy to blame the student and their community for the disparity. As a board member, I'd encourage us to adjust our orientation and identify metrics that help us identify and address deficits in the system. How well is a school engaging parents? What innovative strategies are being implemented to ensure progress for all students in a school? How many teachers and educators have been through implicit bias and restorative practice training? What culturally responsive teaching practices are in place? These are some of the metrics that should be considered to evaluate to what extent each of our schools are creating learning environments that foster equitable development.

¹ Id.

No one party is responsible for our gap. All teachers and administrators must embody and live out the core values of equity and inclusion. This should be visible in action daily. When a truly inclusive environment is created, students will feel valued, respected and supported in ways that allow them to perform at their best. When their presence or difference is treated as an inconvenience, and expectations for them are set low, they are more likely to opt out. This leads to disengagement and poor performance.

2. Data show that each year, students of color in CHCCS, and particularly Black students, are disproportionately subject to both short and long-term suspensions (e.g., in 2016-2017, Black students in CHCCS were 13.9 times more likely to receive a short-term suspension than White students, and 5.6 times more likely to be referred to a juvenile delinquency court)². While racial disproportionality in discipline is prevalent across the nation, [the NC relative rate index of Black student short-term suspensions compared to White students is 4.4](#), again one of the largest racial inequities in the state.
 - a. What is your explanation for the large disproportionate discipline rate in our district?
 - b. What proposals do you have for reducing these disparities?

Some might suspect the disproportionate discipline rates mean children of color are acting out more than white children, but recent research conducted by NC State suggests teachers view behavior differently based on the race of the student. As a board member, I would encourage us to focus on restorative practices and bias training to address inequitable discipline rates. Implicit bias training is an investment in our teachers and administrators that can help them be more aware of their blindspots. Training in restorative practices can also help give teachers tools and strategies to use in the classroom, rather than relying on suspensions as a first response.

My second priority would be a focus on attracting and retaining highly qualified diverse teachers. Research shows that students of color, especially boys, often perform better on standardized tests, have improved attendance, and are suspended less frequently when they have at least one same-race or same-gender teacher. As a board member I would advocate for efforts that allow us to chase excellence through diversity by targeting our recruitment to identify more diverse qualified candidates, providing early career support for teachers who enter the field from non-traditional paths, and providing leadership development to ensure opportunities for those who seek administrative roles beyond the classroom.

3. The [Racial Equity Impact Assessment](#) was recommended as a tool to guide the district's decision-making about current policy and new initiatives. What are your views about the usefulness of this tool for our district? What aspects of the tool do you think are most important?

The Racial Equity Impact Assessment could be a useful guide for the district as it evaluates current and new initiatives. Steps 7 and 10, which call for clearly articulated success factors and desired outcomes, are incredibly important. Our district has to decide how much emphasis it wants to put on equity and what it's willing to prioritize to achieve a different outcome. In talking with parents in our district, it is apparent that some view our education system as a zero sum game. Many parents are fine with equity and inclusion, as long as it doesn't impact the program their student is in. When this mindset is allowed to permeate, decisions can become skewed in favor of the dominant voice. A standardized tool like the Racial Equity Impact Assessment pushes decision makers to proactively and consistently seek input from, and empathize with, those who may be negatively impacted. One potential shortcoming of the tool is the idea that it is to be used once a

² <http://www.southerncoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2018-RERC-Chapel-Hill-Carborro.pdf>

proposal is under consideration. I would propose more community engagement and partnership from the outset to ensure those potentially impacted are a part of creating a solution that is culturally-relevant and -appropriate.

4. Have you attended Racial Equity Institute (REI) training or any other racial equity trainings in the past three years? (Note: This training is not the same as diversity or cultural competence training.) If so, what have been your key “lessons learned” about how to approach racial inequities in our school system?

I attended REI training in 2018. The training help bolster my understanding of systemic racism and its impact on institutions such as our school district. The concept of gatekeepers was particularly relevant. The school board is an important and powerful gatekeeper as it sits outside of the community, setting policies and controlling resources. Board members like all gatekeepers need accountability to ensure they are guarding against systemic racism.

Academic Tracking and Special Programs for Academically/Intellectually Gifted

1. Please provide your assessment of the LEAP program, as conceived and as currently implemented.
2. What is your opinion about other initiatives that sort and divide children into academically and intellectually gifted in elementary and middle school and into “Honors” vs. “Standard” in high school?

One of my campaign priorities is advocating for programs that support those outside of the bell curve--including gifted and exceptional students. Specifically I'd push to broaden strategies and pipelines for gifted identification so demographics in our gifted and AP classes mirror demographics in the district. And I am particularly interested in supporting the advancement of girls and students of color who are typically underrepresented in our most rigorous academic programs like LEAP. Because admission to LEAP is almost completely based upon standardized test scores, the program currently captures those who are naturally good at taking tests or those who have been exposed early and often to testing. I believe this approach to gifted identification is too narrow and leads to an underidentification of children of color in elementary and middle school. And by high school, students who have not had the benefit of participating in the AIG pipeline are not prepared to take on AP courses at the same rates.

The current method of dividing children based on test performance creates a segregated school system:one for mostly affluent students with lots of support outside the classroom and one for everyone else. I believe it is important to set high expectations for all students, to differentiate teaching to ensure every student is pushed to achieve their full potential, and to recognize that giftedness goes beyond just test scores and also includes motivation/work-ethic and creativity.

Faculty/Staff Diversity & Equity

1. Please provide your assessment of the current state of CHCCS faculty and staff diversity. Do you think faculty and staff diversity is important? Please discuss why, or why not. If you see room for improvement in faculty and staff diversity, what specific proposals do you have to address the issue?
2. List possible faculty/staff equity-related policies or best practices that could be introduced and implemented in CHCCS to improve outcomes?

Teachers are our unsung heroes, especially in North Carolina. Our state leads the nation in the number of teachers who earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, yet we are 37th in teacher pay and 29th in per-pupil spending. Our district is lucky to have so many excellent teachers who care deeply about all of our children, but we need more diversity. Every workforce benefits from diversity and the school district is no different. Research shows that students of color, especially boys, often perform better on standardized tests, have improved attendance, and are suspended less frequently when they have at least one same-race or same-gender teacher. White students also benefit as they become more comfortable talking about issues of race, bias and inclusion. As a board member I would advocate for efforts that allow us to chase excellence through diversity. To recruit more diverse teachers I would encourage us to consider the following:

Targeted Recruitment: partner with local universities, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to recruit and coordinate student teacher placements. We should also ensure diverse representation on hiring committees.

Early Career Support: provide incentives and support for new teachers who may enter the field from non-traditional paths. This could be in the form of additional funding for training, mentoring from veteran teachers or housing stipends in exchange for a prescribed number of years of service.

Leadership Development: ensure culturally sensitive principal preparedness training for all new hires through placements in schools with highly diverse student and staff populations. We should also offer ongoing professional development and implicit bias training to administrators to ensure they are best prepared to support diverse teachers and students

Dual Language Programs

1. Please provide your assessment of our school system's dual language programs.
 - a. How do the District's dual language programs help to *improve* inequities in academic achievement?
 - b. How do dual language programs *contribute* to inequities in academic achievement?
 - c. How can dual language programs, in their current state and resource allocation, help to close the achievement gap?
 - d. If unsuccessful in meeting metrics for closing the achievement gap, should resources allocated toward dual language programs be diverted to other programs with greater potential and a demonstrated track record in addressing inequities in achievement? Why or why not?

I support dual language education because it offers our students the opportunity to learn languages at an early age, preparing them for college and the diverse world in which we live. The program helps improve inequity because it allows our students to be bilingual as well as develop a cross cultural attitude. Students in dual language programs also tend to have higher academic

performance compared to students in non-dual language programs. That said, dual language programs should not be used as a means to segregate or create exclusivity among any particular population. This contributes to inequities and is a move in the opposite direction of diversity, a core tenet and goal of the district. The CHCCS dual language program has been in place for years (in fact the Mandarin program was one of the first of its kind in the US). It has proven to be beneficial to those who participate in it, but it is not a program that will likely have a significant impact on the achievement gap. If possible, we should continue to offer dual language while also allocating additional resources toward efforts likely to have a more direct impact, such as diversifying our teaching staff, equity training to address disproportionate discipline rates, and more in class support for teachers to allow for differentiated teaching to raise the bar for all students.

School Safety

1. Please provide your assessment of our current school safety plan, and its implementation.
 - a. What are your biggest concerns regarding school safety?
 - b. Describe the role of School Resource Officers in our elementary through high schools.
 - c. Do you believe that School Resource Officers should be armed? Why or why not? If yes, please describe the type of weapon.
 - d. What concrete changes in school safety policy would you like to see?

School safety is top of mind for all parents of school-aged children, including me. As a cybersecurity and physical security expert, I want to bring expertise to our district to ensure we are identifying our vulnerabilities and addressing them as quickly as possible. My biggest concern is that like many other small towns, there may be a complacency that allow us to believe a tragedy can't happen here. The continuous news stories of random shootings have demonstrated that tragedy can strike anywhere. Armed resource officers are an important line of defense in the event of an active shooting and in those instances a firearm would be required. However it is important that we also recognize that some students and parents are less comfortable with a police presence in our schools given their lived experience.

One safety area that I'd like to focus on is bullying. I have heard from concerned parents that bullying is an issue and in some cases administrators feel ill-prepared to address it. I want to ensure every student is safe and when persistent bullying occurs, administrators and parents are clear about the steps to be followed to remedy the situation. Stricter policies in this area may need to be articulated.

Community Engagement

1. What changes would you suggest in how the school system communicates with parents and other community stakeholders?
 - a. Please provide your assessment of current levels of transparency and the integrity of process in CHCCS decision-making. In what ways should transparency and accountability to the community be improved?
 - b. In what ways can the school board better promote student engagement in school system governance? What are you doing to engage students and student voice in your campaign?
 - c. How would you characterize our school system's readiness to ensure a full and accurate count in the upcoming census?

Community engagement is one of my campaign priorities. In 2015-16 our district launched a comprehensive equity plan to address the achievement gap. But despite our investment and good intentions disparities persist. I believe more genuine partnership with the most adversely impacted members of the community is needed to better identify opportunities for improvement within our system. Too many decisions are made based on the opinions or input of the loudest voices. I find that the most vocal parents are often advocating for equity, as long as it doesn't impact the program their child is participating in.

We have incredibly capable and smart citizens already on our board. But the challenges we face can only be addressed head on when new voices and perspectives are welcomed into the dialogue. I intend to foster trust by listening and working together to find race-based solutions to our districts most pressing race-based challenges. I also believe we've missed an opportunity to ask students what they need to thrive. It is imperative that we adjust our focus to identify opportunities to create learning environments that foster equitable development. As a candidate I have already begun speaking with students from across the spectrum to understand what they need to meet their potential. If elected, I would encourage the board to formally host forums for students and their parents to ensure there is trust, transparency and continual engagement.

The addition of the citizenship question in the upcoming census may negatively impact response rates. It is important that all members of our community feel protected, regardless of citizenship status. In our state, one in six children are US-born citizens who live with immigrant parents. The school system must help parents understand the importance of participation in the census and the potential impact on funding for programs like Title 1, Free and Reduced Lunch, and Head Start.

Budgeting

1. What should be the priorities for the CHCCS's 2020-2021 budget?
 - a. In what ways would they differ from 2019-2020 budget priorities?
 - b. How would you re-prioritize current programs?
 - c. What other changes would you like to see in the budgeting process?

It is disappointing that the Orange County Board of County Commissioners only funded part of the CHCCS's 2019-20 continuation and expansion budget. However, I am pleased to see there was a 4% increase overall, with a focus on increasing per pupil spending, deferred maintenance funding and the hiring of nurses in every school. These areas have an immediate impact on our students and the quality of education we can offer in our district. As a board member, I would support more investment in our teachers. If we are going to recruit and retain quality teachers, they need a livable wage and classroom support that allows for differentiated and small group instruction. I'd also push for additional funding for equity training for all staff. And it is also critical that we continue to fund the capital improvement plan to ensure we are appropriately investing in our aging facilities.

In the future, the board should continue to host public hearings before approving the superintendent's proposed budget recommendations. They also should consider using a tool like the Racial Equity Impact Assessment to ensure there is clarity around potential impacts of decisions on diverse members of the community.

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