

Robert Jackson – KidsPAC Questionnaire Response 2014

1) What is your position of the city being obligated to pay rent for charter, or give them public school space for free?

When I walked 150 miles to Albany to build support for my Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit to fix a broken New York State school funding formula that cheated our children, I did it on behalf of all our students, so that our public resources are used to provide all students access to high quality programs and prepare every child to earn their own way in life. With this policy, Albany is once again inflicting an inequitable and unjust policy on our school children with its budget mandates that support charter school growth at the expense of public schools. This regulation has led to the decision to locate a Success Academy charter school at the former Mother Cabrini High School. This action was taken with no public discussion and over the pressing needs and long-standing overcrowding of Washington Heights, Inwood and Hamilton Heights (District 6) students. It is not fair or just to have a tale of two publicly funded school systems, where neighborhood parents and students needs are ignored for years and who live with overcrowded and underfunded schools, while charter schools are guaranteed new space and are fully supported in expanding at great expense to the taxpayer.

For years, families in this community, District 6 CEC members, and education advocates have worked tirelessly and unsuccessfully to relieve overcrowding and poor classroom conditions and to create much needed public school space in the district. Space is – and has been – urgently needed to serve the community.

2) What is your position on the common core standards?

While I'm generally in support of common core standards, New York's implementation has been terrible. Before the test go into effect, we must first get teachers the curriculum and materials they need to help their students succeed.

3) What do you think about the current testing regime?

We must move away from the current emphasis high stakes testing and replace it with more individualized assessment from a variety of sources. These tests raise anxiety among students and force teachers to narrow their curricula and teach to the test. Too much time is allocated for test prep which cuts back on time for in-depth projects and creative thinking. Rather than use these flawed tests for teacher evaluations and school progress reports, tests should be used as a learning tool for teachers to help them better understand their students.

4) What is your position about the teacher evaluation system?

I support the recent legislative agreement saying teachers rated ineffective based on state Common Core tests this year or next will not face negative consequences. Teacher evaluation should be geared to improving teaching and student outcomes, not based on student test scores alone. We must move away from all these high stakes testing. The best evaluators are fellow teachers who participate in a collaborative process of reviewing student work, improving lessons

and fine-tuning instruction. The measures of teacher success are well-educated students. We must have a more broad-based measure of teacher effectiveness.

5) What are your views on campaign funding?

Big money has corrupted our government and we must fundamentally change the way we run campaigns. Only by taking the money out can we start to win back the confidence and involvement of the people. My five point plan includes: Establishing a public financing program modeled on the successful New York City program; Setting sensible limits on contributions and closing corporate subsidiary and LLC loopholes; Restricting fundraising during the legislative session and instituting fixed limits on those doing business with the government; Increasing reporting, transparency and enforcement; and Prohibiting the use of campaign funds for personal or legal expenses.

6) What is your position on CFE and equitable funding?

As an original plaintiff in CFE lawsuit, I am absolutely in favor of this. Improving education isn't only about money, but money is an important factor. It takes money to reduce class size, hire more teachers and make sure that our children have the supplies and resources they need. It's our obligation to provide every student the opportunity to a sound, basic education. For that reason, I initiated the CFE suit and sued the state once again last year to prevent it from withholding \$250 million in the school evaluation conflict so our school children don't continue to suffer because adults can't agree. And we are back in court on September 10th fighting for equitable funding. I will go to Albany to make sure NYC gets the rest of the promised CFE money.

7) What is your position on raising the cap on charter schools?

While I believe every parent should choose what is best for their child and am happy for any child that gets a good education, we need to provide the opportunity for a quality education for all 1.1 million children in the NYC public school system, not just the thousands who may attend a charter school now or in the future. That means not favoring charter schools over traditional public schools and preventing charters from having a negative impact on other schools. Contrary to what proponents argue, there's little evidence that "competition" from charters has led to improved performance in surrounding public schools and co-locations often are problematic and create a profound imbalance for students under the same roof. When I walked 150 miles to Albany, I did it on *behalf of all* our students, so that our public resources are used to provide the best education for all. Charter schools alone do not address that need.