

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR JCPS SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE

Candidate Name: David A. Jones, Jr.

Age: 54

Campaign Website: n/a

Campaign Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/DavidJonesForSchoolBoard>

Campaign Twitter Account: <https://twitter.com/Jones4JCPS>

Education: Grades K-6, Belknap Elementary; Grades 6-12, Kentucky Country Day; BA (magna cum laude), Yale University; JD, Yale Law School

Employment:

1994 - Present **Chrysalis Ventures, LLC**, Louisville, KY

Founder and Managing Director of private investment firm that provides risk capital and management assistance to start-up and early-stage businesses.

1993 - Present **Humana Inc.**, Louisville, KY

Chairman (2005 – 2010), Director (1993 - present), member of Executive Committee (1996 - present), and Vice Chairman (1996 - 2005) of national healthcare company.

1992 - 1993 **Hirn Reed & Harper**, Louisville, KY

Attorney. Developed a general business practice with emphasis on health care, corporate governance, venture capital and real estate acquisitions.

1988 - 1992 **U.S. Department of State, Office of the Legal Adviser**

Attorney-Adviser, Office of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (1990-92); Division of Diplomatic Law and Litigation (1988-90). Highlights included serving as legal adviser to U.S. delegation to Cambodia peace talks (treaty signed in Paris, April 1991) and negotiating accord with People's Republic of China to stop trade in prison labor products (signed August 1992).

1991 - 1993 **Georgetown University Law Center**, Washington, DC

Adjunct Professor. Taught seminar on U.S. foreign relations law entitled "Legal Constraints on the Foreign Affairs Power."

1986 - 1987 Summer Associate at **O'Melveny & Myers**, Washington, DC; **Morrison & Foerster**, San Francisco, CA; **Susman & Duffy**, New Haven, CT.

1985 **Belknap, Inc.**, Louisville, KY

Import Director. Managed \$3 million import program for hardware wholesaler. Responsibilities included import finance, identification of offshore suppliers, product line revision and new product development.

1983 - 1984 First National Bank of Boston

Banking Associate, International Division. Successfully completed Loan Officer Development Program, including intensive coursework in accounting, finance and credit analysis. Assignments in Hong Kong, Taiwan, New York and Boston offices, focusing on problem loan restructuring and trade finance.

1980 - 1982 **Hunan Medical College**, Changsha, Hunan Province, China
English Instructor under fellowship from Yale-China Association.

How long have you lived in Louisville/Jefferson County?

Louisville resident, 1960 (age 2) - 1976; lived elsewhere (including internationally), 1976 - 1992; permanent Louisville resident since 1992.

Do/did your children attend Jefferson County Public Schools?

Both my children attended JCPS. My son attended grades 1-5 at Brandeis Elementary; my daughter attended Brandeis, Meyzeek Middle and DuPont Manual High School, from which she graduated in 2010 as one of her class's valedictorians. My son graduated from Hampshire College in 2011, and my daughter is a junior at Oberlin College.

What type of volunteer work have you done within JCPS?

Every1Reads, 2009 - 2010

Occasional lecturer at DuPont Manual High School (e.g. to Bioethics class on federal healthcare reform legislation in fall 2009, and to Economics class on entrepreneurship in fall 2008).

Parent adviser and "publisher" for the *Brandeis Intermediate Inquirer*, a student-founded and -run newspaper at Brandeis Elementary (2002-03).

Also:

Business Leaders for Education, Louisville, KY

Helped organize and now chair this GLI affiliate ("BLE") that gathers leaders of largest local business and professional enterprises to support improvement of outcomes in Louisville's education system.

55,000 Degrees, Louisville, KY

Member of board of directors and signatory of the "55,000 Degrees Commitment" on behalf of BLE

Business-Higher Education Forum, Washington, DC

Member of executive committee and co-chair of College Readiness, Access and Success initiative for this national organization composed of leaders of big companies and college presidents.

Why are you running for JCPS School Board?

I want to bring a new kind of experience and leadership to the School Board. JCPS aspires to be, and I believe can be, the best urban school district in America. However, the reality today is that about half of JCPS students do not get an adequate education.

To turn things around, we must set clear goals for success, invest the resources to achieve those goals and create a culture that holds each of us accountable and responsible. And we'll give each stakeholder a voice in the fight, while we create new lines of honest, transparent communication and dialogue.

It's time to stop paying for overhead and start paying for education. If an initiative doesn't answer our goal of making every classroom in every school a place where students are learning from great teachers then it's a waste of our time, energy and tax dollars. Some schools in JCPS are terrific, but they all need to be terrific. Anything less is failure on our part.

As a former teacher from a family of teachers, I know what it takes to help teachers succeed. As a parent of children enrolled in JCPS, I experienced the confusion and worries our big system can generate — as well as its pockets of greatness. And like every parent, I knew nothing was more important than ensuring my children—and all children — received a high-quality education. As a businessperson, I know what it takes to execute a successful turnaround, and I understand the risk of doing nothing when the stakes are so high.

It's time to deliver results and stop making excuses. With thoughtful leadership and decisive action, we can deliver on the promise that every child reaches their highest potential.

What are the top three issues facing JCPS and how will you work to address them?

Improving student achievement and ensuring every school in every neighborhood delivers an extraordinary educational experience are the only priorities we should focus on at this point. Everything else will follow from there if we do our jobs properly here.

As a community, we need to understand that we cannot continue to fail. As a board and a system, we need to make sure every initiative answers back to student achievement. If it doesn't, we're wasting time, effort and tax dollars.

What do you think of the jobs that Dr. Donna Hargens has done as Superintendent?

Dr. Hargens has proven herself to be a strong leader in a district with myriad and diverse challenges. I appreciate the complexity of her job and her can-do attitude,

and I believe she deserves our support in the effort of improving student achievement for all our children.

What do you think of the current student assignment plan? Would you change it? How?

I think we need to stop fighting about where kids go to school and start focusing on delivering great education in every school.

The board has just made changes to the JCPS student assignment plan that, according to JCPS data I have reviewed, reduce transportation time and cost without reducing actual diversity in our classrooms. My hope is that both these goals will in fact be achieved. I am encouraged that JCPS just had a very smooth first day of school, and while there might be some tweaks that are necessary, we need to implement this plan before making any broad changes.

How do you define neighborhood schools and do you think JCPS should move to neighborhood schools? What advantages and disadvantages do you see with neighborhood schools?

“Neighborhood schools” has been defined by attempts in Frankfort to legislate JCPS’s student assignment plan. My understanding is that the current definition is the school that is closest to a student’s residential address.

Today, half of JCPS families choose a school that it not their neighborhood school by this definition. That tells me that our community is divided on this issue: Some families passionately want to send their child to their neighborhood school, and some families just as passionately choose a different option. My belief is that much of the passion around this issue reflects the uneven quality of our schools. My focus will be on making all schools excellent. Even if we draw and re-draw lines there will always be a boundary that someone won’t be happy about and opening up opportunities for people to choose what suits their families works better for all of us in the end.

What would you do to improve low performing schools within JCPS?

Two principles guide my thinking on school turnaround: First, every school needs a great principal who delivers results in the actual situation of the school and its students. Second, we need to identify what works, apply it broadly and stop spending time and money on things that don't work. For example, Atkinson Elementary under the leadership of Principal Dewey Hensley (now Chief Academic Officer of JCPS) achieved extraordinary results through a multidisciplinary Signature Partnership Initiative with U of L that touched many aspects of the lives of its students and the surrounding community. What we need to do is take what works from our experiences in these situations, and in our top-performing schools, and replicate that in low-performing schools. It takes times and resources, neither of which we can afford to waste on programs that don’t boost student achievement.

What would you do to increase parental involvement in JCPS?

Schools must be welcoming to families and communicate effectively with them. We have a huge district that can be frustrating and intimidating, so it's important that JCPS create open, consistent and transparent opportunities for communication. We have to reach people in ways that make sense, including social media, traditional media, paper in our kids' backpacks, and face-to-face meetings between parents and school personnel. We're all inundated with information, some of which may not be helpful. JCPS needs to start by making sure we're communicating how to navigate the system — and each school — quickly, concisely and effectively.

How would you bring back the parents who have left for other counties, private schools, or homeschooling?

In my experience, most parents who choose to pay thousands of dollars per year per child in private school tuition believe they have no viable public school alternative. JCPS must increase the number of schools that deliver great educational results. Once every school in every neighborhood is a place every child gets a first-rate education, we will have no trouble attracting many parents back to JCPS.

What issues outside of the classroom do you think impact performance most? How would you work to navigate those issues?

With such a large, diverse population, that's a difficult question to answer briefly. Some children start with language barriers if they come here from another country, others don't get the basics such as healthy food to eat or safe, sanitary living conditions. All of these issues affect student performance, and many of them are beyond the capacity of JCPS to solve. However, none of them means that children cannot learn. Every school must hold high expectations of its students, organize itself to be accessible and attractive to their families, and — especially for children with the most challenging out-of-classroom situations — make school the best experience of their day, every day.

If you look at the Signature Partnership Initiative (see above), that is one program that works at solving problems within the community, not just within the school. It's not the only answer, but it's one we know can work in addressing these needs and helping our children succeed in the classroom.

Have you read the JCPS Vision 2015 strategic plan? What are your thoughts on the plan? How would you work to change it or support it?

I have read the plan carefully and, through my work with the Business Leaders for Education and 55,000 Degrees organizations, discussed it in some detail with Superintendent Hargens and members of the current school board. I support the strategic plan, and if elected will do everything in my power to see that it is executed and achieved. The only thing I would change is the goal: Not merely to become "the best urban district in the nation," but to become a leading district in the world.

If you have/had children in JCPS what have you found most rewarding about the school system? What frustrated or challenged you the most?

Both my children attended JCPS. My family experienced pockets of greatness in the classroom and out, and I witnessed my children thriving when they learned the world didn't end in our backyard. Having friends from all over town was a wonderful experience and played an important role in helping them become the thoughtful, inclusive people they are.

There were many times, however, when communication with JCPS was very difficult. The transportation plan was in those years impenetrable, and bus schedules wreaked havoc on our work schedules. Finally, I was continually distressed about the low expectations even the magnet schools had in the area of foreign language learning, where the definition of "success" falls far, far below fluency.

What would you do to improve the image of JCPS, both inside the county and outside?

Everything we do must begin and end with student achievement. We have good stories to tell, and JCPS should be fully engaged in proactive community relations. But until we move the needle on achievement in a substantive, lasting manner, we can't really change our image. Once that starts to happen (and I'm convinced it can), every stakeholder will become a natural champion of JCPS.

What will you do to address bullying within JCPS?

Adults in JCPS must not tolerate bullying, and JCPS must offer anti-bullying instruction. Parents and frontline personnel (on buses, in cafeterias, on playgrounds and in the classroom) should have appropriate training about the many ways bullying can occur — physically, psychologically, in person or online — and how to recognize it. Our kids must feel safe at school so they can learn and achieve.

What is your opinion of the JCTA (Teachers' Union)?

JCTA serves an important role in its representation of the most important people in the lives of our students. I expect JCTA to be a thoughtful, effective partner in working with the District toward our mutual goal of improving student achievement. Teaching is one of the toughest jobs around, and our best teachers serve as a beacon in this community.

How will you work to improve dropout rates?

In July 2008 I attended JCPS' "High School Dropout Solutions Summit" at Bellarmine University. There I learned that boredom, and the sense that no one cared whether they were in school or not, were the major factors driving students to drop out. My understanding is that JCPS is implementing a comprehensive plan outlined in the aftermath of that summit — specifically redesigning high schools to reduce student boredom, and organizing all schools so that every child has a relationship with a caring adult. As a board member, I will insist that this plan be executed until the problem is solved, or changed so that it can succeed. Dropping out is a disaster for the child and our community.

Do you support Charter Schools? Why or why not?

“Charter school” is a term that describes how schools are licensed and funded, but is used in public discourse as if it describes educational philosophy and results. My understanding is that national data show that, across the wide variety of charter schools, results on average are about average compared to public schools. The lesson I glean from this is that charter schools do not now offer a credible, scalable alternative for a district the size and complexity of JCPS.

What will you do to address state budget shortfalls and their impact on JCPS?

I believe education is the most important place to dedicate our resources. This is why I, like other board members, choose to dedicate my scarcest resource — time — to this work. However, belief and dedication aren’t enough to command resources in a democracy where citizens have many competing priorities. The schools must deliver results, efficiently, to attract adequate funding.

It’s clear that the state is in a budgetary crisis and JCPS cannot rely on it for additional support. In fact it seems certain that the state will reduce its support of K-12 education in the foreseeable future. This means that we will have to find more resources locally.

The first place to look is within the system itself. We must cut costs that do not relate to student achievement, extract efficiencies wherever we can, and redeploy our resources to focus on what matters most. We have to start showing return-on-investment through improved student achievement. When we’re doing that, I think there’s not a person or organization that won’t be in support of robust funding for JCPS.

What do you think of the job JCPS does in preparing parents for choosing and enrolling their children in JCPS? What would you do to change the process?

JCPS has a lot of work to do in communicating choices and options to parents. Because we’re such a big district with so many choices, it’s critical that the administration is fully engaged with parents in all the communication channels where they receive information: social media, traditional media, community showcases and school open houses.

Parents need to get up to speed on the best choices for their children, but JCPS needs to help them understand how the system works in clear language. I know when my children were in JCPS, I experienced the frustrations that are commonly discussed, especially as they were ready to move from one school to another. Communication can be streamlined and made more transparent, consistent and easier to understand. As parents and taxpayers we need to insist that happens.

What do you think the public’s perception of the Board of Education is? What will you do to either change or strengthen that perception?

I don’t think the public has a clear perception of what the Board of Education is, does or should do. My own perception is that the board has often operated more at

the level of micro-managing and second-guessing JCPS management than as the policy board that is called for under state law.

Having served on dozens of boards throughout my career, I would like to see the board focus on:

- (1) ensuring JCPS has a clear strategy and plan for delivering an excellent education to all students
- (2) (2) evaluating the effectiveness of JCPS's execution of this strategy, and
- (3) (3) communicating clearly to JCPS' stakeholders on how the system is performing, and (4) demanding change where JCPS falls short of plan.

I don't want the board to be engulfed in tactical, day-to-day operational issues. It needs to insist that a sensible turnaround plan is in place, support the administration and teachers in the difficult work of delivering on this monumental task, and hold those who draw paychecks accountable for successful execution.

Do you believe that all JCPS Board of Education sessions, including the evaluation of the superintendent, should be open to the press and public? If not, what issues should be discussed in closed session and why?

I believe the board should operate with clarity and transparency to its constituents: the voters of Louisville. However, I do not believe all aspects of board work should be conducted in public. The most obvious example of the need for closed sessions is in individual performance review.

The purpose of performance review is to improve performance, and subjecting any individual — in the public or private sector — to a public performance review is counter-productive to the intent. You can't improve performance through posturing, politics and public humiliation. Effective review must occur in an atmosphere of candor and trust, and that's not truly possible without a closed session.

With that said, I also think JCPS's annual performance as a system should be reviewed in public — clearly, understandably, and without the jargon and confusion that has made it hard for all of us to understand the system's performance in the past.

Some Kentucky state legislators are saying that evolution should not be taught in classrooms. What is your stance on teaching evolution in the classroom? Do you feel that Intelligent Design should be taught in the classroom as a valid alternative to evolution? Why or why not?

I favor teaching science in science class, and will do everything in my power as a board member to avoid spending one second refighting 19th-century religious battles. The theory of evolution as established science, subject like all science to revision and refutation by new hypotheses that better explain observed data. "Intelligent Design" is not a credible scientific hypothesis, but rather a sectarian religious belief. Public schools must teach science, to a high level of excellence.

How will you make yourself accessible to the community as a board member?

I will work to understand community concerns and ideas about JCPS through both traditional means and social media. My belief is that new communication tools offer the potential to improve the responsiveness of public officials, including school board members, to their constituents. However, this will be my first elective office and I am certain I will have a lot to learn in this area.

PERSONAL STATEMENT. Please share any additional comments you'd like to share.

Our community's economic future, and more broadly our nation's prosperity and security, depend on how well we educate our children in the public school system. We have run out of time for excuses. It's time to get to work on making the tough decisions so our community and region are viable for generations to come.

I look forward to serving the community as an effective, thoughtful leader in this capacity and ask for the support of voters in District 2.