

New York City Arts in Education Candidate Survey Project

Mayoral Candidates

The following questions were designed to determine candidates' positions on a number of issues related to the delivery of arts education (including music, dance, theater and visual arts) in New York City public schools. Questionnaires were delivered to all declared candidates for the Office of New York City Mayor.

Candidate: Aldolfo Carrión Jr.

1. What meaningful experiences, if any, with the arts, either in school or otherwise, did you have in your life and what did you gain from these experiences?

I grew up with music and art in all areas of my life. In church, school and at home I was involved in performing arts and visual arts. I sang in choirs, groups and as a soloist in church and school, had my own gospel and popular music band, played guitar, piano, trumpet, flugelhorn, and sousaphone. I also had the good fortune of going to a school where I learned painting, sculpture, and art history. I have passed this love of art and music to my children and believe every child is an artist with something to say to the world.

2. It is widely acknowledged that access to a well-rounded curriculum is a key component of a quality education. However, numerous studies show that over the past decade disciplines such as art, science, and social studies are getting crowded out of the school day. In New York City, for instance, only half of all elementary schools are providing the arts instruction that is outlined in state education law. What strategies do you envision for broadening the school-day curriculum?

In order to deliver a well-rounded education to NYC's public school children, we will have to extend the school day and allow for more time for the arts, laboratory time, where kids can learn through experimentation, and a richer experience-based social studies curriculum. I will work to infuse civics into every aspect of education, from K through 12. I will fight to end "teaching-to-the-test" and emphasize holistic teaching and testing.

3. How, if at all, would you restructure the current system of school governance? How might this impact the delivery of arts instruction in city schools?

I believe in Mayoral accountability. I would appoint someone from the arts and culture community to the Panel for Educational Policy, to ensure that that focus and perspective is brought to the discussion on instructional policy.

Having representation from the arts community at the policy level would bring the kind of attention and resource allocation needed to provide a comprehensive arts education to our kids. Arts will be part of the essentials for a sound education in a Carrión administration.

4. The arts are recognized as a core subject area here in New York and at the federal level. However, while many schools in New York City do provide quality arts instruction, access to this instruction is far from universal. How would you ensure equity in the delivery of arts education in the following key areas:

A. Funding: Principals consistently cite budget constraints as the chief obstacle to providing arts education at their schools. While schools receive “Supplemental Arts Funding” each year (formerly known as Project Arts), as of 2007 principals are not required to spend these funds directly on arts education. What would you do to ensure that every school in the city has the resources to provide every student with a quality education that includes the arts?

I will require that iSupplemental Arts Fundingî be used by school principals for arts education, and nothing else. I will also impose a grade for arts, in evaluating school principals and overall school performance.

Furthermore, I will enlist artists to come into the schools to provide instruction, beyond the regular school day. I believe we can find a way to enhance the educational experience and artistic development of our kids, if we support art and music classes that families can pay for at a deep discount, with matching City funds as a subsidy.

B. Qualified Instructors: Highly qualified certified arts teachers are the cornerstone of a quality arts program in schools. However, whether due to budget constraints, school size, or other factors, almost 20% of city schools have no certified arts instructor on staff. How could the city ensure that all of our public school students receive instruction from qualified instructors?

A Carrión administration will commit to a national recruitment campaign for arts instructors. The same way we will need to focus on qualified STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) instructors, we will do the same in the arts. We know that a robust arts curriculum has an impact on how kids perform in every other subject area.

C. Space: Lack of available in-school arts space is one of the top challenges principals face in implementing arts education. What policies would you implement to prevent the loss of arts spaces in public schools due to overcrowding, co-location, or other factors?

I will set a facility standard that says every school must have performance and practice/instruction space for the arts. I will not approve any new development of a school without such space commitment.

D. Partnerships: New York City has a rich array of cultural resources, including arts and cultural institutions and professional artists that play an important role in the lives and education of some of our school children. How would you ensure that all public school students and their families could enjoy meaningful engagement with these resources?

We will partner with the rich array of cultural institutions in the City. I will create the NYC Schools Cultural Connection, which will create a partnership for audience development with NYC’s public schools and their families. This can take the form of discounts, special annual memberships, gifted child artists mentorship, a NYC Artists Summer Camp, and the like.

I will enlist artists to come into the schools to provide instruction, beyond the regular school day. Additionally, we can provide local artists with NYC public school performance space as a way to promote and develop local talent.

5. The city's accountability system places a heavy emphasis on student performance on state assessments in English language arts and math. Currently, performance assessments for the arts are being piloted in city schools and while the arts can potentially factor into a high school's report card grade, the overall impact is minimal. Are there ways you would consider expanding or revising the school accountability system to incorporate the arts?

I will also impose a grade for arts, in evaluating school principals and overall school performance. Art education must be considered a basic part of the curriculum, not treated as an add-on. Art appreciation and an understanding of human history and development through artistic expression must be a fundamental building block of our education.

6. How would you engage teachers, parents, the arts and cultural community, city agencies, and other interested stakeholders to expand access to arts education both in-school and outside of the school day?

As I mentioned before, I will create the NYC Schools Cultural Connection, which will create a partnership for audience development with NYC's public schools and their families. Engaging the arts community is an exceptionally important component of opening the door to new opportunities and experiences for our children.

Additional comments?

I attended John Philip Sousa JHS in the Bronx. I still remember my beloved music teacher, and band and orchestra conductor, and friend, Mr. Pitteo. At the age of 52, I still remember that moment when I stood up to play a trumpet solo at a school concert. That moment gave me confidence and taught me what great enjoyment there is in performing well after working hard.

**View all the responses from
candidates online at nycartsed.org!**