



2013 Policy Proposals

When I began my career as an educator I didn't set out to enter politics. Instead my experiences as a teacher and school founder of Beacon Academy pushed me to broaden my impact for the benefit of my students.

This year as I run for reelection it has become more personal. I now have a young son who will be starting in Cambridge public schools in just a few years. Moses will grow up attending Cambridge schools and I want to ensure that his experience in our schools will allow him to fulfill his potential. I want to continue to build a school system where excellence is expected of every child, and we prepare our children to succeed in our advanced technological and multicultural world.

My campaign is built on three Core Beliefs:

To do everything we can for **ALL** the children of Cambridge, we must develop a **BETTER UNDERSTANDING** of the challenges facing those we are at risk of leaving behind, especially our English language learners, our children requiring special education services, and many of our children of color.

1. To do this we must **BUILD** better schools in order to close the achievement gap.
2. We must be **TRANSPARENT** about our results – both good and bad – and realistically address our successes and failures.
3. We must be **PROGRESSIVE** in our policies and new programs.

In order to turn these beliefs into a reality, I propose we focus on three specific research-based goals.



1. Universal Access to Pre-K

Building better schools to close the Achievement Gap

Currently access to preschool is not guaranteed for all three and four year olds in Cambridge. Families must apply far in advance, and even then, the luck of a lottery can often determine their child's fate.

I propose that every family should have access to a quality preschool for their child.

The research is clear: children undergo critical cognitive and social development during the earliest years of their life, laying the foundation for future academic success, and building skills like motivation and perseverance. We need to make sure that every student is prepared for a successful career at CPS from the start!

Measurement of Success: Expand the opportunity for access to preschool to 100% of three and four year olds in Cambridge.

My Record: I have assumed leadership in our effort to conduct a feasibility study on the implementation of this plan. I am working with parents, City Councilors and Facilities Managers to mobilize support across a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

Supporting Research

- [National Institute for Early Education Research](#)
 - For every \$1 that we spend on early childhood education, we get \$7 back in long-term benefits (Chicago Longitudinal Study)
 - Quality early childhood education particularly benefits disadvantaged children
 - Positive Example: Michigan-based Perry Preschool Program

- [James Heckman, Nobel Prize-winning Economist](#)
 - “Investment in birth to five early education for disadvantaged children helps prevent the achievement gap, reduce the need for special education, increase the likelihood of healthier lifestyles, lower the crime rate and reduce overall social costs. In fact, every dollar invested in early childhood education produces a 10% per annum return on investment. Equitable early childhood education resources produce greater social and economic equity.”



2. Address the Achievement Gap Challenge

Transparency

Our City's school system is filled with talented leaders, instructors and children. We must, however, be willing to face the reality that too many of our students are falling short of the academic goals we set for them. By any measure, too many of our students of color demonstrate disappointing results; the MCAS reveals what many teachers and families see every day and we need to do more as a community than pay lip-service to this cultural and educational reality. If we are to make inroads, we must honestly and openly address the root causes of the Achievement Gap dilemma. In addition to expanding our commitment to differentiated instruction, we need to be willing to consider new means of elevating all of our students, particularly those with special needs, those in our English Language programs, and those whose families live near or below the poverty line.

I propose the creation of an *Achievement for All* working group that calls on the expertise and experiences of school leaders, parents, community members and outside experts.

The group will convene with the expressed goal of closing the quantifiable gaps in student achievement in our city. The group will work with the CPS administration to gather data, and emerge with a unified strategy to address the achievement gap.

Measurement of Success: By the beginning of the 2014-15 school year the *Achievement for All* working group will present their findings to the School Committee with their proposals for addressing the achievement gap.

My Record: Passion for dealing with the achievement gap is not enough. My experiences qualify me to lead open and transparent conversations that address the socio-economic and cultural realities that characterize many of the disparities in student outcomes, out of which solutions can arise. I helped found Beacon Academy as one solution to these many challenges. It is time we bring the same solution-oriented approach to Cambridge public schools.

Supporting Research

- [Beacon Academy](#)
 - Beacon Academy provides a transformational year between 8th and 9th grades to promising, motivated and hard-working students from Boston and surrounding urban areas. Inspired by a challenging curriculum and stimulating co-curricular experiences, students learn vital academic skills and develop habits of mind that empower them to change the trajectory of their lives.



3. Foreign Language in all CPS Elementary Schools

Progressive

I believe that the study of a foreign language should be consistent throughout all of our schools. Literacy in a second language will help strengthen literacy in a primary language. In so doing we also help create global citizens who are more culturally aware.

I propose a review of the World Language program to introduce curricular opportunities on our JK-5 campuses and examine the possibility of requiring a foreign language for all three years in grades 6-8.

Measurement of Success: As the Superintendent of Schools makes clear, the biggest challenge to his own desire to see more foreign language in our schools is the time factor. In the reality of a 21st Century global workplace, we must continue to keep this curricular necessity on the table and move toward an ultimate goal of 100% of elementary school students in Cambridge with access to foreign language study.

My Record: I stand with the parent activists at the King School who have been willing to tackle the challenges of charting the future of Chinese Immersion in their school. The research that was unearthed as a result of their debates, in addition to the measurable success of our Spanish Immersion school are more than suggestive of a path forward.

Supporting Research

- [Foreign Language Study and SAT Verbal Scores](#)
 - Students who study a foreign language score higher on college entrance standardized tests (SAT and ACT)
- [The Effect of Bilingualism on Toddlers' Executive Functioning](#)
 - Learning two languages has a demonstrable effect on children as young as three or four years old
 - Bilingual children have sharper executive functions than their monolingual counterparts: attention, problem solving, cognition, etc.
- [Improving Primary Language Skills](#)
 - Further studies show that the study of two languages as a child can improve skills in one's native language, and there is a strong correlation between second language abilities and academic achievement in other subjects