

# WEJA School Committee Policy Questionnaire

The Worcester Education Justice Alliance (WEJA) is a group of students, parents, teachers, school staff, and community members standing together to fight for education justice in Worcester. We are a chapter of the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance (MEJA) and advocate for more educationally just policies at the state and local level.

<http://worcesteredjustice.org/>

<https://massedjustice.org/>

These questions were created to address potential and important policy issues that future school committee members may have to vote on. Therefore, just as with how you would have to vote on these types of policy issues, we ask you to share how you would vote on these issues. Please answer each question by selecting either yes or no. But we also invite you, if you so desire, to explain the reasons for your yes or no "vote" so that you may address the complexities of the issues.

Please complete this questionnaire by Sunday, October 10th at 5:00 pm. We will be reviewing and compiling your responses and sharing via our email and with the media in the weeks that follow leading up to the election.

Please provide your full name. \*

Jermoh Kamara

## Questions related to curriculum

1) Do you approve of the Worcester School Committee's vote in May 2021 to implement the comprehensive sex education curriculum, “Rights, Respect, Responsibility,” for Worcester Public Schools.

(<https://newbostonpost.com/2021/05/06/comprehensive-sex-education-curriculum-approved-by-worcester-school-committee/>)

Yes

No

## 1) Explanation of response (optional)

When I responded to this during the early stages- I would have preferred the Worcester School Committee made 2 curriculum selections, because we had the ability to do that rather than selecting one curriculum. This way, we can measure what works or not and be able to make comparisons! I also support the option for parents to opt out, which is every parent's right to do for their child/ren. Lastly, I will be invested in the impact of this curriculum on student's overall sexual health outcomes based on the evidence-based successes of this curriculum.

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2) Would you advocate to the State Legislature for the elimination of the 10th grade MCAS as a graduation requirement for high school students in Massachusetts?

Yes

No

## 2) Explanation of response (optional)

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3) Would you advocate to the State Legislature for the elimination of high stakes standardized tests, like the MCAS, to evaluate school performance (and put in place alternative ways to evaluate schools and educator performance)?

Yes

No

## 3) Explanation of response (optional)

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4) Would you work to allocate District resources away from some standardized curriculum and software purchases to provide more autonomy for schools and teachers to decide what learning tools and materials they want to include in their classrooms?

Yes

No

#### 4) Explanation of response (optional)

Is the software purchased about the standardized curriculum? Not clear. While I do agree with autonomy for teachers, there should be a framework or guideline to be used as a structure for what teachers can teach, and they can select how they wish to teach it or what to use. By doing so, every student will have the same opportunity to be learning the same thing but perhaps taught differently by each teacher's autonomy. If there is no measuring tool, there may be lots of barriers to what students are learning from one teacher to the next. The goal is to close gaps, not to create new ones. Lastly, teachers should meet to discuss what they are doing and share their ideas and best practices with other teachers. This is the model my department use at WPI and it works!! Professors have autonomy in my department but there is a consensus/ framework, etc., of what's needed to be taught. Professors come together to discuss what they are teaching and how, we all share our ideas, methods, challenges, successes, and you get to see how everyone is teaching Social Science Research for project-based learning.

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5) Would you support legislation that bans the teaching of "Critical Race Theory" in schools? (see for example: <https://districtadministration.com/critical-race-theory-tracker-banned-schools-education/>)

Yes

No

5) Explanation of response (optional)

As a first generation Liberian-American student that learned very little or nothing about the accurate history of BIPOC and history of other cultures, including my own, I support the legislation that makes it possible to educate students on history that is accurate and honest. Such education would expose students to both sides of the perspectives of history written from a USA point of view and from other accurate points of view, as it happened, and not one that is washed down or that does not portray the honest truth of what students should be learning to allow them to form their own opinion.

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6) Would you support an initiative that mandates professional development in universal design for all teachers (mainstream and special education teachers) who work with students with a special education plan? (see, for example: <https://universaldesign.org/definition>)

Yes

No

6) Explanation of response (optional)

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### Questions Related to Funding



7) Would you advocate to the State Legislature for the passage of the proposed "fair share amendment" to our state constitution, which would create a new tax on millionaires to fund public education?

Yes

No

7) Explanation of response (optional)

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8) State spending requirements enable local communities to spend more than the minimum required by the Chapter 70 Foundation formula. Most local communities do spend more than required to address the educational needs of their students; on average, local communities spend 25% or more above their required allocation. Worcester typically funds right at the minimum required by the Chapter 70 Foundation formula (give or take roughly 1%). If you were elected to school committee would you advocate for the city to spend 10% or more above the required foundation formula even if that means the city would have to secure additional revenue?

Yes

No

8) Explanation of response (optional)

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9) Do you support the calls from members in the community that the funds the city previously provided to support School Resource Officers be re-allocated to other programs in the Worcester Public Schools?

Yes

No

9) Explanation of response (optional)

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### Questions related to Staffing and Leadership

10) Would you support merit pay or bonuses for teachers who are considered highly effective in producing strong education outcomes (based on measured test score improvements) for students?

Yes

No

10) Explanation of response (optional)

I would rather support to fund the development/ training of more educators to be effective to helping more students who are falling behind academically.

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11) Would you support signing bonuses or additional pay stipends for certified bilingual teachers to attract more bilingual/bicultural teachers to our Worcester Public Schools?

Yes

No

11) Explanation of response (optional)

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12) Do you support utilizing ‘diversity bonuses’ or other similar intentional recruitment strategies in order to recruit more teachers of color to Worcester? (For example, see section 6 [bottom of page two] of this Minnesota Bill: <https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/comm/docs/7ec78b3d-0ac8-42ca-99ee-3ef9f63fcb36.pdf>)

Yes

No

12) Explanation of response (optional)

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13) Do you support the expansion (i.e. funding, outreach, inclusion of bilingual teachers) of ‘Grow Your Own’ programs that recruit teacher candidates from non-traditional populations (e.g., high school students, paraprofessionals, and after-school program staff) who are more likely to reflect local diversity and more likely to continue to teach in their communities? For more info see:

<https://ednote.ecs.org/grow-your-own-programs-for-teachers-a-look-at-programs-and-policies/> and <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleII/Chapter15a/Section19>

Yes

No

13) Explanation of response (optional)

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14) Do you support the expansion of the role of Worcester Public Schools Chief Diversity officer to extend beyond human resources and DEI regulations/compliance to include addressing inequities in other areas of schooling (i.e. school discipline, academic outcomes, profession development, etc)? (See the former job description:

<https://worcesterschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Diversity-Officer-job-description.pdf>

Yes

No

14) Explanation of response (optional)

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Questions related to student discipline and student life



15) Would you advocate for secondary schools to begin later in the morning to allow adolescents to sleep later? (see the attached literature review of 38 articles related to the topic: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4824552/>)

Yes

No

### 15) Explanation of response (optional)

I read the systematic review done on this topic but I would like to look more into this as I do not have a 'yes, or no' answer yet. I would like to know how it may impact other things for our district and students.

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16) Would you support a moratorium on suspensions and expulsions that are not directly associated with violence or drugs or issues of direct safety for the educational communities?

Yes

No

16) Explanation of response (optional)

Would I support a temporary prohibition of suspensions and expulsions that are not directly associated with violence or drugs or issues or issues of direct safety? No. We should be looking at long-term support for students and teachers, to make the classroom non-disruptive so that all students can learn, and at policies to solve this issue.

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17) Would you support a ban on all suspensions in grades pre-K through 3rd grade?

Yes

No

17 Explanation of response (optional)

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18) Do you support the City's decision to end the placement of School Resource Officers (SROs) in Worcester Public Schools?

Yes

No

### 18) Explanation of response (optional)

I support a safety plan that will tackle prevention and other alternatives to make our schools safer for all students, all teachers, staff and administration.

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19) Do you support the creation of restorative justice programs in the schools? (see this guide from Vermont: [https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-integrated-educational-frameworks-whole-school-restorative-approach-resource-guide\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-integrated-educational-frameworks-whole-school-restorative-approach-resource-guide_0_0.pdf))

Yes

No

### 19) Explanation of response (optional)

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20) Would you support an audit to examine the relationship between the Worcester Police Department and the Worcester Public Schools?

Yes

No

20) Explanation of response (optional)

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Questions related to school choice

21) Do you support the creation of additional innovation schools in Worcester that "can implement creative and inventive strategies, increase student achievement, and reduce achievement gaps while keeping school funding within districts?"

[\(https://www.doe.mass.edu/redesign/innovation/\)](https://www.doe.mass.edu/redesign/innovation/)

Yes

No

21) Explanation of response (optional)

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22) Are you in favor of expanding the number of charter schools in Worcester? (<https://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/>)

Yes

No

22) Explanation of response (optional)

While I have nothing against charter schools, and yes, I am aware of the argument. We need to expand innovative public schools and ensure kids in public schools are as competitive as kids attending charter schools. We also need all the funding for public schools.

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23) Would you support the creation of new exam school where the admission to the school would be determined by the score on a standardized exam?

(<https://www.telegram.com/article/20120425/NEWS/104259906>)

Yes

No

23) Explanation of response (optional)

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24) Do you believe that Worcester Technical High School should continue to consider grades, test scores, conduct, and attendance records in its process for admissions?

(<https://worcesterschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/WTHS-Emergency-Admissions-Policy-2021-2022-12.21.2020.pdf>)

Yes

No

#### 24) Explanation of response (optional)

Project-based portfolios based on the department (or shop) that the student wants to go into should have more weight. However, the previous public school that a prospective student leaves should give them the skills and support to create a competitive project-based portfolio that the student can put into great use when applying to WTHS. I would say that test scores from overall academic grades, not from MCAS, with special attention to the subject of interest should be considered but should not have the highest weigh for the admission process. Lastly, extra curricular activities, interviews in-person or recorded, and references from teachers or place of volunteering service should be added to WTHS's admission process.

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## Questions related to community voice and accountability

25) Will you ensure that Worcester public schools establish active site councils in every single school in order to develop the school improvement/accountability plan, develop site specific goals and review the school site budget as stipulated by state and federal law?

(<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/advisory/schoolcouncils/>)

Yes

No

25) Explanation of response (optional)

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26) Will you work to ensure that parents (and students in high schools) are part of the hiring committee for faculty and administration?

Yes

No

26) Explanation of response (optional)

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27) Will you work to make sure that all data that the school district collects and all research that is completed by outside researchers in the Worcester Public Schools is made available to the public when it is legally acceptable to do so?

Yes

No

27) Explanation of response (optional)

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28) Would you vote in favor of allowing 16 and 17 year-olds to vote in local elections (as they do in Hyattville, and Greenbelt, Maryland and in Berkeley and Oakland, California)? (<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/why-we-should-lower-voting-age>)

Yes

No

28) Explanation of response (optional)

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29) Would you support the creation of an anonymous online and phone bias incident reporting and investigating process for incidents that occur in the Worcester Public Schools?

Yes

No

29) Explanation of response (optional)

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