



2016 Candidate Responses to PFT Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Thomas P. Murt
Party Affiliation: Republican
Running For: State Representative (152)

RESPONSES TO PFT EDUCATION PLATFORM:

(1 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree and Commit):

#1: A restoration agenda should be a top priority for Philadelphia education. Candidate response: **5**

Comments: Philadelphia schools due to a lack of adequate funding, must unfairly cope with a lack of school nurses, a lack of school counselors, a lack of textbooks, a lack of school librarians, and a lack of functioning school libraries, as well as larger class sizes and a deteriorating physical plant to name a few challenges. A well-planned and financed restoration agenda could address these problems in a meaningful way. The students of Philadelphia deserve this and need this effort in order to successfully face the challenges of the 21st Century in higher education and in the workplace.

#2: Advocating for a fair contract for our educators. Candidate response: **5**

Comments: Educators in Philadelphia deserve a fair and reasonable contract. Educators who are allowed to be 'frozen' on a pay scale may possibly present a situation that may be unconstitutional in my opinion. Many of Philadelphia's educators are actively working towards additional certifications and advanced graduate degrees and deserve to advance on the pay scale. 'Freezing' educators on a pay scale is also not fair to students nor building administrators.

#3: Advocating for more charter school accountability and a moratorium on new charter schools while the financial crisis goes unresolved. Candidate response: **5**

Comments: Since Charter Schools are public schools, and receive funding from the public, their accountability should be as transparent as accountability for all other public schools.

#4: Pushing back against privatization of our workers. Candidate response: **5**

Comments: Outsourcing substitute teachers and/or school nurses is NOT the answer to this problem and experience has shown this to true. Adequate resources being dedicated to this aspect of the school district's mission is part of the answer, as well as strong leadership at the district level.

#5: Dissolution of the SRC. Candidate response: **5**

Comments: It is time to take this action. A discussion should begin amongst stakeholders as to how the City of Philadelphia, the PFT, and local decision-makers should assume responsibility for the School District of Philadelphia.

#6: Partnering with the State Legislature to implement a weighted funding formula Candidate response: **5**

Comments: "These key attributes (poverty, Special Education, English as a Second Language training, etc.) are key drivers of the costs to educate our students in every district, not just in Philadelphia. The Costing Out Study has manifested this fact. Harrisburg must take into consideration these factors when discerning funding for all schools in Pennsylvania. I have already supported this!"

#7: Working to find additional, recurring revenue that will help sustain our schools. Candidate response: **5**

Comments: The answer to this challenge lies in identifying recurring revenue enhancers. These would include taxing the extraction of natural gas in Pennsylvania, assessing a fee to enter a casino in Pennsylvania, an assessment on certain types of insurance policies, and similar other revenue generating measures.

#8: Committing to working in partnership with the community to develop and implement 25 unionized community schools. Candidate response: **"5**

Comments: With the proper planning, staffing, and funding, this goal could become a reality. This could result in the development and establishment of 25 new effective schools with state-of-the-art technology, trained and certified teachers, and modern physical plant.

#9: Highlighting the negative impact high-stakes testing has on students. Candidate response: **5**

Comments: High-stakes testing has not proven to be an effective assessment tool in any collective sense. This is especially true in the case of inner-city schools.



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

How has your past career experience prepared you for working in the office you are seeking?

I am a certified and experienced public school teacher (Business, Computers, Information Technology). I have taught and coached (wrestling) in public school and know about the challenges that exist in this vocation. I have a B.S. from Penn State, an M.A. from LaSalle University, and additionally, I am currently a doctoral candidate at Temple University in Educational Administration (Ed.D.). My teaching certification is from Gwynedd-Mercy University.

Are you a proponent of school vouchers, school choice, or charter school expansion?

If support or funding for non-public schools is going to be policy, then it is best done through tuition tax credits, NOT vouchers which will siphon critically-needed funding from Philadelphia's public schools. Public schools in Philadelphia badly need and deserve additional funding. We do NOT need to expand Charter Schools, but instead, need to enhance, improve, and update, the existing schools in the School District of Philadelphia.

Would you work to rescind Act 46? Why or why not?

I was was not in the legislature when Act 46 was enacted. The bill in my opinion was pushed through the legislature much too fast without proper vetting and discernment! Yes, I would act to amend Act 46!

RATE THE FOLLOWING PRIORITIES FOR YOUR TERM IN OFFICE

- **Reducing class size:** *H (high priority)*
- **Increasing support personnel in schools:** *H (high priority)*
- **Settlement of a fair contract that is good for Philadelphia's educators and students:** *H (high priority)*
- **Mandating full time, unionized certified school nurses in every school:** *H (high priority)*
- **Mandating full time, unionized counselors in every school:** *M (moderate priority)*
- **Mandating wraparound services in schools:** *M (moderate priority)*
- **Attendance and graduation improvement initiatives:** *H (high priority)*



- **Access to high quality technology and high-speed Internet access in every classroom:** *H (high priority)*
- **Expansion of pre-k eligibility and opportunity:** *D (disagree with this statement)*
- **Elimination of teacher seniority:** *L (low priority)*
- **Using taxpayer money to pay tuition for private and religious schools:** *D (disagree with this statement)*
- **Modifying or reducing pensions:** *D (disagree with this statement)*

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

I represent part of Philadelphia (Northeast). Baldi M.S., Greenberg E.S., and Loesche E.S, are all in my district. I have been a loyal and steadfast advocate for the School District of Philadelphia and the PFT. I look forward to your endorsement and support.

Attendance and graduation improvement initiatives cannot really be a higher priority, until we have increased both professional and support staffing levels. The use of taxpayer monies for private schools should be limited to children with serious and/or profound disabilities where their educational needs are best served by a private school that possesses the program and/or facilities that the child needs.