

Alante'J. Gaines

What is the biggest issue facing JCPS right now, and how would you address it?

I believe one of the biggest challenges facing JCPS is ensuring that student needs, educational expectations, and support systems are aligned. Too many students are struggling not because they lack ability, but because we sometimes expect children to learn, behave, and respond in ways that do not fully align with their developmental needs.

Addressing this challenge requires a whole-child approach that recognizes the connection between academic achievement, mental health, family engagement, and student well-being. We must create environments where students feel seen, supported, challenged, and empowered to grow.

What specific changes would you push for at JCPS if elected?

I would advocate for a greater emphasis on child development and mental health when making educational decisions. Curriculum, classroom expectations, and disciplinary practices should be examined through a developmental lens to ensure we are meeting students where they are while helping them grow.

I would also support stronger teacher support, increased family engagement, and more hands-on learning opportunities that recognize different learning styles and strengths. My goal is to help create learning environments where students are not expected to fit a mold, but are given the tools and support they need to succeed.

What is your connection to the district?

I am the parent of JCPS students and have been actively involved in the district for several years. I currently serve on a School-Based Decision Making Council (SBDM), where I have participated in discussions involving school policies, budgeting, and school improvement efforts. I have served in this role for nearly five years.

As both a parent and a mental health professional, I have had the opportunity to see firsthand the challenges and opportunities facing students, families, educators, and schools. Those experiences have strengthened my commitment to ensuring decisions are informed by the voices and needs of those most directly impacted.

What relevant experience in education do you have?

I hold a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and a Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and I currently practice as a therapist (M.A., LPCA) working with children, adolescents, and families. My educational experience includes serving as a Learning Coach in Cincinnati charter schools for two years. In that role, I worked directly with students in a model that emphasized meeting children where they were academically and allowing them to progress at a pace that reflected their individual needs.

During my graduate training, I completed a counseling internship at a Jcps elementary school, where I provided school-based counseling services and gained firsthand experience supporting students within the educational setting. My professional and academic experiences have reinforced my belief that student success requires attention not only to academics, but also to emotional, social, and developmental well-being.

In addition, I bring nearly five years of experience serving on an SBDM, collaborating with school leaders and stakeholders on issues affecting students and schools.

What relevant business, budgeting, or financial management experience do you have?

While I do not have a degree in business or finance, However, I have gained valuable experience through my service on a School-Based Decision Making Council, where I have participated in discussions involving school budgeting, resource allocation, and school improvement planning.

My involvement with Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. has also provided leadership, organizational, strategic planning, and professional development opportunities through community service and organizational leadership.

I believe school board members do not need to be financial experts, but they do need to be diligent stewards of taxpayer dollars who ask thoughtful questions, carefully review information, and make decisions that prioritize students while maintaining public trust.

Jcps has faced major budget challenges. What would you do to improve financial oversight and rebuild trust with taxpayers?

Trust begins with transparency, communication, and accountability. Families, educators, and taxpayers deserve to understand how decisions are being made and how resources are being used to support students.

I would advocate for strong oversight, careful review of district spending, and clear communication regarding financial priorities. I also believe decision-makers should remain closely connected to the experiences of students, educators, and families so financial decisions reflect actual needs within our schools.

One of the themes of my campaign is “One Accord Across the Board” because I believe lasting solutions happen when families, educators, administrators, and community members work together with a shared commitment to student success. Rebuilding trust requires transparency, collaboration, and consistent communication.

How would you measure whether the superintendent is doing a good job?

I would evaluate the superintendent using multiple measures, including student outcomes, staff retention, financial stewardship, school climate, family engagement, and progress toward district goals.

I also believe effective leadership requires transparency, responsiveness, collaboration, and the ability to build trust among students, families, educators, and the broader community. A successful superintendent should demonstrate not only academic progress but also a commitment to listening and responding to those they serve.

What do you believe JCPS should do to improve student achievement?

Improving student achievement requires recognizing that academic success does not occur in isolation. Students learn best when they feel supported, engaged, understood, and connected.

JCPS should continue investing in strong instruction while also prioritizing mental health supports, developmentally appropriate practices, teacher support, family engagement, and hands-on learning opportunities that help students connect meaningfully with what they are learning. When we meet students where they are and provide the support they need to grow, achievement follows.

Is there anything else you want voters to know about you or your campaign?

I am running because I believe every child deserves to be seen, supported, and understood. As a mother, therapist, former Learning Coach, and long-serving SBDM member, I bring a perspective rooted in both professional experience and lived experience. I understand the importance of supporting the whole child while also supporting the educators, families, and communities that help students succeed.

My campaign is guided by a simple belief: Meet Them Where They Are and Watch Them Grow. I am committed to listening, learning, and serving with integrity while helping ensure every student has the opportunity to thrive.