Q & A with some of the Candidates running for Atlanta Public School (APS) Board of Education (BOE), District 3 & At-Large\*

by Annsley Klehr, Lake Claire Neighbors Education Chair

***Q: Who are these BOE District 3 and (as noted) at-large candidates?***

**Adzua Agyapon** i**s an educator, teacher leader, and former elected official, with experience and insight into the students in Atlanta Public Schools.** Adzua is currently the kindergarten grade level chair at KIPP STRIVE Primary, where she coaches and leads a team of 8 teachers. Born in NYC and lived in public housing, she **worked hard, and eventually attended and graduated from Yale University. She wants to ensure that all students receive a quality education, affording them the breadth of opportunities that she had.**

**Lewis Cartee** has served in multiple community leadership roles in the past 11 years within East Atlanta, the larger NPU, and the Jackson Cluster. He is currently fulfilling his second stint as President of the East Atlanta Community Association (EACA) while also chairing the Education Committee. His previous roles in the organization have included terms as Vice President, Communications Chair, and Parents Network Chair. Along with presiding over NPU-W’s Education Committee as well as the Burgess-Peterson Academy Governance Team, he has had many opportunities to listen to the concerns of neighbors. As a committed community member and APS parent currently involved in the Charter System governance platform, his roles have already given him the opportunity to participate in the larger discussion around equity and academic success for all children with the goal of producing a thoughtful approach to the challenges that face our communities.

**Rashida M. Winfrey** is an APS parent, APS graduate, and APS Leader.  An Atlanta native, she attended Inman Middle School (where her daughter goes now), and graduated from North Fulton High School.  After graduation, she studied finance at the UGA, earning a BS and an MBA in Finance, and is currently completing post-graduate coursework in Finance at the University of Chicago.  After 20 years of banking, she owned and operated a financial management company called Mosaic Advisors, and then went on to head up Southeast M&A/Private Equity Forum. She serves on the board of directors for the Atlanta Center for Puppetry Arts and has served on non-profits such as Grady Hospital, Park Pride, and Cool Girls–serving girls in 8 Title I schools in Fulton and DeKalb counties.  She is also a 2014 graduate of Leadership Atlanta.

**Michelle Olympiadis** is a first generation American from an immigrant family that emigrated from Greece to Atlanta in 1956.  She has lived in Morningside since 1995 and has been a parent in APS since 2007.  She has three children, all of whom attend schools in the Grady Cluster: Grady High School, Inman Middle School, and Morningside Elementary. She has been involved in APS since her oldest was in Kindergarten. She recently completed her term as president of the Morningside Elementary School PTA, and is also an appointee of the Georgia Department of Education’s Student Success Stakeholder Committee, as well as the Grady High School Cluster Advisory.

**John Wright (at-large seat 7),** a native Atlantan**,** is a graduate of Graduate of MLK Jr. Middle School and Benjamin E. Mays High School. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and credits the fine caliber of teachers and staff at Mays High School for preparing him to lead a fruitful and productive life. John is one of the founding families of Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School and a parent of a 12th & 9th grader at Maynard Jackson High School, where he helped establish the school's Athletic Boosters in 2014 and serve on its board. In his professional life he works for AECOM, and currently manages the $618M E-SPLOST program for the DeKalb County School District. He is running for office to make sure every child in Atlanta has that same opportunity.

**Antoine Trammell MD, MPH** is from Nashville, Tennessee and moved to Georgia for medical training at Mercer University, where he was an Internal Medicine chief resident and completed a research fellowship studying cardiac arrest outcomes. After completing the research fellowship, he accepted a faculty position in the school of medicine at Emory University where he currently practices academic medicine. Antoine also has background in public health and focus in outcomes research that includes the role of policy-making, education, and environmental factors. Professionally, he serves Atlanta every day as a physician, advocate, and researcher. Throughout his career, he has been an advocate for health and education that includes engaging policy-makers on national and local levels. Antoine has also worked with the American Heart Association to improve CPR education in Georgia schools. A significant portion of medical practice involves education and examination rooms become classrooms. Antoine is a husband and proud parent of three (ages one, seven, and 12). His older children attend Atlanta Public Schools in the Grady Cluster. When not engaging his professional passions, Antoine enjoys time with his family, playing music, and exploring Atlanta’s unique culinary diversity with his wife.

**Kandis Wood Jackson (at-large seat 7)** is a native Atlantan committed to achieving educational equity for all students in the Atlanta Public Schools (APS). At a young age, a strong family, excellent teachers, and influential mentors instilled in her a love of learning and a deep appreciation for education. She is a graduate of Duke University and Harvard Law School and a former APS teacher. She and her husband, Adam, live in Midtown, along with their dog Duke.

**Cynthia Briscoe Brown (at-large seat 8)** was elected to her first term in the at-large seat 8 on the Atlanta Board of Education in 2013 and is currently serving. She is agraduate of Davidson College and Vanderbilt Law School, who uses her 31 years' experience as an attorney to help Atlanta’s students, teachers, and families.  Cynthia serves or has served on the Boards of Atlanta BeltLine, Inc, WABE/WPBA, the Atlanta Partnership for Arts in Learning, the Committee for Teaching About the United Nations/Atlanta, the Alliance Francaise d’Atlanta, and the PTAs at all her children’s schools, creating partnerships and opportunities for students and teachers across the city to improve their skills and enrich their lives.  As a volunteer with Young Audiences of Atlanta, Cynthia helped develop the smART stART program, using arts experiences to improve reading skills in low-income APS kindergarten students. During the three terms she served as co-President of North Atlanta Parents for Public Schools (NAPPS), Cynthia emphasized positive community engagement, reaching out to cluster organizations and community groups across the city to identify common goals and provide a consistent voice for children throughout Atlanta.  Cynthia and her husband, James F. (Jim) Brown, Jr., are both Atlanta natives and practicing attorneys.  They are active in music and service ministries at First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta.  They have two children, both of whom attended APS schools K-12.

**Charlie (Charles) Stadtlander (at-large seat 8)** is an Atlanta business owner and former metro-Atlanta public school teacher. After graduating from the University of Missouri in 2006, Charlie moved to Atlanta to teach in the public school system. During his teaching career, Charlie taught 3rd Grade, as well as 9th & 10th Grade English Literature. While serving as a public school teacher, Charlie also attended Georgia State University where he earned a Master's Degree in Public Administration. Charlie is proud to have served in numerous educational leadership roles including: Bullying Awareness Coordinator, Faculty Sponsor of H.O.P.E. (Hispanic Organization Promoting Education), and Debate Team Coach. After completing his 5th year of teaching, Charlie went back to school full-time and obtained a Doctorate in Jurisprudence in Health Law and Policy from Loyola University New Orleans. Charlie continued his studies by completing post-doctoral studies and obtaining a graduate certification in Health Law and Policy at Loyola University Chicago. Charlie has been a committed and passionate advocate for equality and accountability in public education.

**Nathaniel (Nate) Borrell Dyer** **(at-large seat 7)** has advocated, mentored, and taught children as if they were his own. His passion is children, which he attributes to his mother’s tireless dedication as a teacher for 33 years. Professionally, Nate has worked in Corporate America as a Senior Art Director for Bank of America; as an entrepreneur, with organizations such as The Carter Center, National CASA and the African-American Outreach Initiative; as a community activist, creating a youth organization called KIDS FIRST!, which provides free
breakfasts, lunches, and enrichment during the summer months for children up to age 18. Through this initiative, Nate has been able to employ and manage a team 25 teens and adults. He also teaches art and creative writing to children of all ages. He considers himself a fine artist, musician, and poet.

 ***Q: Why have they chosen to run?***

**Adzua Agyapon** recognizes that District 3 contains a diverse mix of schools with an even more diverse set of challenges ranging from school closures and under enrollment to annexations and overcrowding. She believes that she is whom our district needs as an experienced educator and leader who knows firsthand how policies made in the boardroom affect our children in the classroom

**Lewis Cartee** believes we need to create greater collaboration between the City of Atlanta and APS, focusing on quality of life and creating safe and productive learning environments. Cartee supports strengthening our early learning programs to improve school readiness while offering robust opportunities for vocational training for high school students. He thinks we need to continue to elevate the voice of leadership in our schools while also striving to work toward insisting on increased transparency through program audits. Lastly, he envisions a school district that through this transparency increases trust and effective two-way communication that ultimately produces a school district that is approachable, accessible, and equitable for all in order to create an Atlanta that truly is one city for all students.

**Rashida M. Winfrey** would like to bridge the gaps of education by having Parent Power, giving equal weight to all voices; create more Fiscal Responsibility and Transparency on the board due to her finance background; helping to better Student Outcomes by equitably educating and graduating world-class citizens. Rashida is passionate about bringing financial literacy to students, so much so that she has initiated financial programs throughout Atlanta including programs at the Andrew & Walter Young Family YMCA, Word of Faith Cathedral, Atlanta Metropolitan College, and the City of Atlanta.  Earlier this year she established “Take A Child to the Bank Day,” a program that connects students, local governments, and banks for financial education in Atlanta.

**Michelle Olympiadis** loves being a parent and being involved in her children’s lives and schools.  When her oldest child with special needs entered Kindergarten, the Special Education Lead Teacher at the time told her in her first IEP, “Your son is not smart enough to attend Morningside. Morningside is a school for high achievers, and we do not have the supports needed for him.” As she began learning about the challenges facing not only her son and the school system, she found her passion and her voice for advocacy. She advocated for systemic changes needed to create a sustainable district able to meet each child developmentally where he or she is, regardless of background, to reach the child’s highest potential. With all of her positions in education, she has developed a broad network of strong relationships with APS and school administrators.  These relationships, coupled with her extensive knowledge of the complex policies and regulations governing APS schools at all levels, have enabled her to work effectively to achieve the best outcome for students.

**John Wright** believes the most important function of a school board is to work collaboratively and govern in a manner that puts the needs of students first. He wants the Atlanta community to know that he can be trusted with this precious responsibility.  John listens to parents, teachers, administrators, and stakeholders. He will also be a candid voice of truth.  Together, he will celebrate with all those involved in APS large and small goals. He believes that the number one job of APS is to make certain every family in Atlanta, wherever they live or how much money they have, has a right to have a school they can send their children to without doubt or reservation.  His campaign is about creating an honest and open dialogue about our public schools.

**Antoine Trammell** is committed to maintaining our city’s bright and prosperous future with our children’s education. Antoine firmly believes that quality education for our children yields academic excellence and cultural competency that is necessary for a diverse community to continue thriving and have a secure future. Antoine is invested in the well-being of Atlanta. Running for the board of education presents an opportunity to serve our city by impacting an earlier stage of education. As a physician and candidate for the board of education, Antoine knows the societal impacts of inadequate policy. He brings a passion for people and experience with data evaluation, policy formulation, and outcomes assessment to the benefit our children.

**Kandis Wood Jackson’s** education background helps her to understand the value of a quality education. Her experiences in the classroom as both a student and a teacher form her belief that various social, political, and economic factors can often undermine the community-wide goal of providing quality public education to every student. This is unacceptable to Kandis, because she believes equal access to quality education is a fundamental human right. She is running for the Atlanta School Board because she is ready to leverage her passion, experience, skills, and unique background to give every student equal access to high-quality education – no matter their neighborhood.

**Cynthia Briscoe Brown** “All children are gifted. They just open their presents in different ways.” She believes it is the job of the educators--parent, teacher, volunteer, coach, or other caring adult--to equip every child with the tools he or she needs to open his or her presents. Focusing on the needs and gifts of each child means the community must be equitable with all its resources. She believes societal ills that hinder children from learning and thriving must be addressed by building a school system and community, which embrace and celebrate diversity of every kind. Children must be taught to think critically, communicate effectively, and contribute responsibly to their community. In the past four years, as a BOE representative, along with her colleagues, she has returned APS’ focus to our children; redirected tens of millions of dollars into our classrooms; emphasized flexibility, autonomy, and local control of schools; and restored the reputation of APS as a system which works for kids. She wants everyone to come together as a community to move APS forward to provide every child, every day, with everything he or she needs to be successful in school and in life.

**Charlie Stadtlander** believes we have a moral obligation to provide a world-class Atlanta education system, while ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. Only then, will we be able to provide the high quality of education and welcoming learning environment that all students deserve: Rising property taxes, which continue to fund failing schools is an unsustainable model; The Atlanta Public Schools' budget is bloated. Too much money is being diverted from students and teachers in order to fund high paying Central Office staff; Students must be in a safe and welcoming environment for learning to take place. Bullying against racial minorities, LGBT persons, the economically disadvantaged, or any other group must be dealt with swiftly; Results and financial accountability are the keys to success in any organization. He will bring a fair and decisive approach to holding those in leadership positions accountable for the quality and cost of the education our children receive; A high quality education system is paramount in combating poverty, attracting new businesses, reducing crime, and improving the quality of life for society as a whole. He feels that we must stand up and demand that APS provide the highest quality of education possible, while spending taxpayer dollars wisely; and finally students and parents across APS have unique and tough challenges. As a teacher, Charlie learned that recognizing and empathizing with these individual circumstances was key to overcoming obstacles in the classroom and at home.

**Nathaniel (Nate) Borrell Dyer** understands that the position is not about himself, but how he can improve the lives of our children and their education. He believes in our children and all the potential they posses. He believes this to be his life’s calling, and he is committed and up to the task in providing an equitable, world-class education to all of Atlanta’s children.

**Q: What are their favorite local dives in Atlanta?**

**Adzua Agyapon’s** favorite local dive is Mezcalitos, because it’s close to home, and their pomegranate margaritas are delicious! **Lewis Cartee’s** favorite dive is Tomatillos. **Rashida M. Winfrey’s** favorite dive is Fox Brothers, as it lures her out of bed often.  She says, “The brisket is worth getting up to obey the craving EVERY time!”

**Michelle Olympiadis****’s** favorite dive, though hard to choose as an Atlantan with many, finally settled on the Best Greek Dive in the city, Nick's To Go. **John Wright’s** favorite local dives are Fat Matt's Rib Shack and The Republic. **Antoine Trammell** had many a fave spot, but the one that sticks out is Ghion Cultural Hall (Ethiopian). Antoine has shared many a meal with friends and family there, the most memorable of which was his pre-wedding dinner a few years ago. He and his wife kicked-off their wedding weekend with their friends and family from all over the world. **Kandis Wood Jackson’s** favorite local dive in Atlanta is the Nook on Piedmont Park. **Cynthia Briscoe Brown’s** local spot that she regards with great fondness is the Flying Biscuit. It was a special place that her dad used to take his grandchildren for brunch. **Charlie Stadtlander’s** favorite dive is Tomatillos in East Atlanta owned by former State Representative Margaret Kaiser. He says, “Fantastic Mexican food and great atmosphere!” **Nathaniel (Nate) Borrell Dyer** does not have a favorite dive, but he loves dancing! He says, “See you on the dance floor!”

*\*Other candidates running for School Board did not respond to Annsley's note: Jason Esteves (at large seat 9); Patricia Crayton (at large seat 7); Micah Rowland (at large seat 7); Ben Stone (at large seat 8). And remember, not all these candidates are competitors - the at-large reps are separate from our District 3 race, so in actuality we could have two reps from our area. ~Ed.*