

## Transcript of ChamberRVA Mayoral Debate 10.17.16

### Early Childhood Education Question to All Candidates

**Q. Too many kids in Richmond show up for kindergarten without the skills to succeed for school. As Mayor, what will be you do to help children 0-5 get the child care, nutrition and preparation they need to thrive?**

**Stoney:** I think that pre-k education is one of the most important aspects of public education in the city because that child's mind develops between the ages of 0-5 and so the more words he or she's hearing at a young age will obviously dictate their path moving forward. As the next Mayor of the city though when I hear about preschool being available to everyone in the city I hear the lack of facilities is the real problem that more and more children in the city aren't able to go to preschool. Officially though, we have to go across the street [General Assembly] to fight for additional dollars for our children. Right now we are being shortchanged by the General Assembly when it comes to the Local Composite Index and Standards of Quality. Funding from those extra dollars will allow us to actually educate more of those children who are found between the ages 0-5.

**Berry:** We need to do everything we can to help families that are dealing with stress, I mean toxic stress. You and I often get stressed. I'm stressed right now. Tomorrow we'll be fine. Right? Some of these families, single parent families in particular in poverty, deal with stress every day, all day, toxic stress. They deal with trauma. There could be somebody in their family that is evicted, could be abuse, could be the trauma associated with being incarcerated. This toxic stress leads to frustration, anger and the inability of parents, particularly a single parent who is just in survival mode, to nurture their kids and give all the help and education and preparation for school that they can give them. Some of these families don't even have a book in their house. It shows up in the classroom acting out, in behavior problems and poor performance. In order to increase their test scores, in order to make these kids successful in school, we've got to get to these parents that are dealing with toxic stress and trauma. Fortunately, we have a network here in Richmond is working on with that. It's about 60 different agencies- nonprofits and governmental agencies. We've got to support them, because reaching these kids before they get to school, and helping them to be ready for school is going to make all the difference. Because when they come to school, and they're not ready, they sometimes start behind and stay behind. It's a huge priority to me and will be a priority in my Mayorship.

**Morrissey:** In 2008 when I was in the General Assembly and Governor Kaine was the Chief Executive Officer and one of the main goals of that particular year in education was to make sure that we have pre-k in every zip code in the Commonwealth. And it wasn't that way. We were decidedly undermatched as far as numbers on the other side of the aisle. The Republicans felt that we didn't need pre-k in every school. But if we talked to the teachers and the principals they said they saw a correlation between a child who engaged and went to the pre-k and those that were successful. So, again, Michelle [Mosby], the Democrats came to me and, they said, "Joe, will you lead the fight for the House of Representatives to fight for pre-k education?" And we were successful, Michelle [Mosby]. [Mosby claps.]

Number one, every child when they go to school in the morning. Forty percent of Richmond kids are at or below the poverty line. Let's make sure every one of them has lunch and breakfast. Here's another thing, many of our children are diagnosed as challenged or ADD but all they need is vision. They need glasses. So here's another thought- every child from pre-k to third on should be tested every year for

vision. And lastly this, every child should have early onset diabetes testing. That's not being done right now, and you know why? Because we've spent \$125 million on what my friend Jon refers to as big shiny projects. Those are few things we can do.

**Mosby:** As Mayor I will work with our school board to ensure that pre-k schools, that they are designed, for they said they need to go I will work to provide the resources. On Council it was Sumner Hill I believe, we opened pre-k in Reva Trammell's district. It was to the desire of the School Board. They are the entity that choose what classes, what wraparound services, what you do for the schools. If you choose a Mayor that says what they can do for these schools, you're going to have an issue for the next four years. You [Mayors] need to know their role and provide the great resources. I will work diligently with whatever the school board tells me they need for pre-k. What schools they need pre-k in. We will work diligently to make sure they get their resources they need so that pre-k can happen.

My daughter was a student at Southampton Elementary. It was the jewel to her learning. She started pre-k there and they helped her mold her, to get what she needed. My child had an IEP. The things she had in pre-k prepared her, prepared me as a parent and some need to make sure that we get what we need. But that is the job of the Mayor to provide those resources. I will provide the resources that the schools need.

**Baliles:** I was speaking with a Community College teacher the other day, last week I think it was. And they said that they can tell students that come from Richmond Public Schools vs. other schools. And that is something that isn't developed in high school, it's not developed in the early stages. And the earlier you can start with reading and protecting children and giving them constructive things to do from an early age, even if it's just with arts & crafts, those are the critical things.

I'm also on the board of ChildSavers and one of things thing that this city, it's kind of an unknown problem in the city, is that children before they even get to the pre-k program, develop trauma because of home experiences and other issues that most of us couldn't even think about in our lives. And we have to make sure that thing like that are addressed at an early age before the child even gets to the kindergarten or pre-k level. We have to work more with the school system and the state. Because the science is overwhelming. And it's becoming more and more obvious that sometimes it takes a while to get to politician's heads and what the solution is. Start early and protect the kids all the way through.