



"Supporting those who support our schools!"

423.485.9535

423.485.9512

hcfcpe@gmail.com

<http://www.hceaeducators.org>

2021 MAYORAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

(PLEASE TYPE YOUR RESPONSES IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.)

4655 Shallowford Road
Chattanooga, TN 37411

Wade		Hinton	
wade@wadehinton.com			
wade@wadehinton.com			
City State ZIP			
Chattanooga		TN	
Cellphone Number Home Telephone Number Work Telephone Number			
423	593	0056	

Campaign Manager Telephone Email address

Questions:

1. Please provide personal biographical data including information on your family, community involvement, work history, and your qualifications for office.

I grew up on Chattanooga's Westside, the only son in a family of women. We didn't have much growing up—I received free lunch my entire time in public schools—but that never stopped my mom from making sure we served others, be it delivering goods to the elders or doing laundry for others in the neighborhood. These acts of service were so entrenched in my life by my mother, that I didn't even recognize them as service.

As much as I felt at home in the Westside, I didn't think there was a place for me here in Chattanooga. And I wasn't alone. Even with the remarkable transformation taking place in Chattanooga, many of us didn't feel like we were a part of the story. In the boardrooms and executive suites where decisions were being made about our great city's future, there were few people who looked like me. The leadership of our city did not reflect the great diversity of its citizens.

I knew that if real change was going to happen, the change had to start with me—that same kid from the Westside whose mom instilled the value of service in him years earlier. So after becoming the first in my family to graduate from college (Emory University) and going on to law school at the University of Memphis, I came back home to Chattanooga. I came home to work for the change that I believed in. I came home to work for the community and the neighbors that I loved.

Throughout my career - in both the public and private sectors - I have been dedicated to creating a more inclusive community by amplifying the voices of those who haven't been heard and creating more seats at the

table. Working for the County under Mayor Claude Ramsey and then as General Counsel for VW, I helped negotiate the agreements that brought thousands of jobs to our community. As City Attorney under Mayor Andy Berke, I wrote legislation that enabled Tennessee cities to invest more in affordable housing and I worked to improve hiring practices and restore voting rights so that those who have past convictions can be given a second chance. I established Board Connector to help increase the diversity of nonprofit boards across the community and as the head of Diversity and Inclusion for UNUM, I helped create a culture that welcomed diverse talent as an asset and advantage for the company.

I am running for mayor today, because I believe Chattanooga must meet this moment. We are a year into a global pandemic that has created a health and economic crisis and led to unprecedented suffering in our community. It has also revealed inequities that have always existed in Chattanooga -- with Black and Brown residents bearing disproportionate impacts. How we recover from this crisis will stay with us for years to come. I believe that with the right leadership, we have an opportunity not just to recover by doing what we've always done, but to rebuild a stronger, more equitable community and economy that works for everyone. I have created a COVID-19 Recovery Plan that outlines my priorities and how I will lead from day one.

I am running for Mayor to continue to serve the communities that believed in me and uplifted me years ago. I am running for my daughter, Genevieve (4), and the love of my life, Jana. I am running to serve every resident of every neighborhood, to give all a seat at the table. I am running for Mayor to make Chattanooga a city for everyone.

2. Please describe your experience/relationship with public schools.

I am a proud product of Chattanooga public schools. I announced my candidacy at my former elementary school, James A. Henry on the Westside, because of the impact it had on my life. I attended middle and high school at Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences and count several teachers there among my lifelong mentors. Public school provided so many transformative experiences for me - it was where I began playing upright bass, a passion that I continue to come back to today. It was where I began to truly understand that I could go to college and even on to law school.

3. Describe your platform's impact on the future of public education in Chattanooga.

As much as I appreciate all of the incredible support that I had, I am also troubled by the fact that my story is not the norm. My story should not be the exception, it should be the rule and expectation for every child in Chattanooga. Public education is the cornerstone of opportunity in this community and great schools and educational equity helps us all. As I work to lead an equitable recovery from COVID-19 and create a more inclusive community, my priorities will reflect a greater investment in workforce and educational opportunities for all Chattanoogaans.

4. What is the role of the city in public education and how do you see its resources positively impacting students in our area?

As a graduate of and longtime advocate for our public schools, I understand the critical role that schools play in supporting children and building a thriving and inclusive economy. I will ensure that the City is a critical partner with Hamilton County Schools and invests in students by:

- Working closely with HCS leaders and educators to improve the quality of afterschool and summer programming that the City provides for low-income students during the 80% of the time that they are

out-of-school. This would provide every student with access to high-quality programs that align with HCS goals and support the continued learning and development of students.

- Exploring free transit to high school students that need to access Future Ready Institutes and work-based learning opportunities across the city.
- Expanding work-based learning and apprenticeship opportunities for HCS students within the City government, so that they can earn money while they pursue careers in public service and civil trades.
- Prioritizing collaboration with HCS on special capital projects, so that the City is leveraging resources to support great schools for all students whenever possible.
- Engaging educators to help ensure Chattanooga has the supports and amenities that allow us to attract and retain great teaching talent
- Increasing access to high-quality early learning programs, through vouchers and program expansion, so that more children are entering Kindergarten ready for success.

Please email your response by **January 25 at 6:00 PM** to president@hceaeducators.org

Spencer Charles Bowers
Communications Director
(731) 441.8267
spencer@wadehinton.com
www.wadehinton.com



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