

CNC / PTA Council
2017 School Board Candidate Questionnaire
for School Districts 65 and 202
Evanston/Skokie, Illinois

Part I - Involvement

Candidate for District 65 or 202

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Occupation: Network Systems Administrator for Skokie/Morton Grove School District 69
Educational Background: University of Kansas - Major in Political Science (specialization in International Relations), Major in Philosophy (informal specialization in Continental Philosophy, the History of Philosophy, and Phenomenological Ontology)
Volunteer or Community Activities: _____

Other Experience: Cisco Certified Networking Associate in Routing and Switching (CCNA R/S) Worked in hardware for Apple, and managed the networks/technology departments for Districts 96 (Kildeer Countryside Consolidated School District), 36 (The Winnetka Public Schools), 39 (Wilmette Public Schools), and 69 (Skokie School District).

Do you have children? Yes No

What school(s) do (did) they attend? Not yet old enough to begin, but would be Lincoln

How long have you lived in Evanston/Skokie? 7 years

Part II - Platform

1. What motivated you to run for school board this year?
The next teacher's contract will be negotiated this term, and I feel that my expertise can help reign in any budgetary overruns that could cause that negotiating to be as problematic as the most recent contract. Moreover, my son will be entering the district during this term, and I want to ensure that he and every other student has the best possible education. On top of that I feel I can uniquely help guide success of the strategic plan, and feel compelled to help as much as I can.
2. What personal qualities, training or experience do you have that would be of value as a school board member? (Please answer briefly in essay form and do not attach a resume.)
I have a long history of success with technology in education at other local districts, and have seen first-hand how critical it is these days to get tech right. The consequences of either failing to do so, or even failing to ask the right questions, can be absolutely catastrophic for entire districts for years. I can directly apply my personal experience to

ensuring that the board moves wisely with regards to engaging our students in an enriched twenty-first century curriculum.

3. If elected, what will be your top three priorities as a school board member?

Technology as a concept needs to be reevaluated from the ground up. It needs to be treated seriously as an integral part of curriculum rather than a complementary aspect of the classroom. Next, I want to leverage the gains made in this newfound technological rigor to help close the student achievement gap. Engaged students with a successful curriculum benefit everyone, and can even help drive down the quantity of disciplinary incidents. Third, I want to take the long-term cost savings this will undoubtedly create and ensure a wise appropriation of them to ensure that district finances in the future will not be the stumbling block they have been lately.

4. What should the school board's responsibility be to the community? To parents? How should voters assess the effectiveness of the board and its individual members?

I personally feel that the school board's overarching principal ought to be to help as many students as much and in any way possible. As parents that is a guiding light I'm sure we all feel toward our kids, but it needs to apply at the school board level to every one of our students.

5. What are the major strengths of the school district? How can we build on them? What are its major weaknesses? How can we address them?

The sheer size and diversity of Evanston and Skokie make for a unique opportunity for our students to engage and develop alongside each other, and to have that adjacent to one of the best universities in the world makes for an incredibly exciting educational atmosphere for our students. However, we need to be mindful to keep true to that charge, and leverage these opportunities for every student. The achievement gap is a betrayal of our better nature, and it is incumbent on us to do the right thing in working to close it.

6. Describe your understanding of school board governance and the role of the board versus the roles of the superintendent and the administration.

It is important to have trust in our superintendent and administration to do their jobs and do them well. The board needs to be concerned about governance, and not the day-to-day work of the district. The big picture ought to be more important to the board than the finer strokes, and I've seen first-hand the real lasting damage that can be done when a member loses sight of this. If intervention by the board is necessary, so be it, but that is hopefully a rare occasion.

7. Select two major decisions made by the school board within the last four years about which you have a strong opinion. Explain why you agree or disagree with these decisions.

The Digital Promise is a textbook example of a well-intentioned mess regarding technology in education. What's worse is there's no one at the helm to even discover what the right questions to ask are as the program moves forward. The concept at thirty-thousand feet is sound, but the way our students actually engage with its implementation is what actually matters. That is something that needs to be taken more seriously than it currently is.

The decision to move technology expenses back into operational costs instead of paying with bonds is something that was sorely overdue, and I eagerly look forward to the completion of this task. Technology is just too important to our students' success to treat this way.

Part III – Student Achievement and Assessment

8. If elected, describe how you will contribute toward enhancing student achievement. How should the district address the needs of students in the top and bottom quartiles of the achievement spectrum? How should the district address achievement disparities by race, ethnicity, or other demographic differences?

If growing achievement for every one of our students (and working to bring parity to that success) isn't a fundamental guiding light toward the work we do as a school board then something has gone horribly wrong. With the proper hardware and software solutions in place, we can not only better track this with our students, but as well identify what's working and what isn't. One example would be to leverage a technology like (though not necessarily specifically) Cisco TelePresence in order to have collaborative classrooms between top and bottom quartile students. Identifying our best resources, and removing the barriers that keep our most in-need students from those resources, is something we can and should strive for.

9. What role should standardized testing have in assessing students, teachers, and instructional methods?

While standardized tests are not inherently bad, I think it's too easy to get carried away with them. It's possible to open the school year with MAP, just a few weeks later take PARCC, just a few weeks after that another round of MAP, then start the new calendar year with ACCESS before gearing up for the next round of MAP and PARCC. That's not helping a single student or teacher succeed in any real tangible way, and may even be counter-productive as the curricular year has to move things around to accommodate so much testing. It's important to have data on our student's growth, but we need to be able to do that at the same time that we deliver a successful curriculum. We can't let them be mutually exclusive, and it's important that we remain vigilant to ensure a successful coexistence.

Part IV – Student, School & Parental Partnerships

10. Explain your vision for student, parent and school partnerships. How do these differ from Cradle to Career and other community partnerships?

Partnerships like Cradle to Career are vital to the work that must be done to close the achievement gap and ensure a rising tide lifts all ships; however, not all partnerships are created equal. Programs like Y Reader make several assumptions in their work that require an engaged parent at home, and it is incumbent on the school to do what it can to help foment that relationship between all involved parties. Moreover, there would ideally be some level of oversight to make sure that the fundamental goals of these partnerships are not lost along the way. My vision is one where we do everything we can to help,

including advising against well-meaning but perhaps flawed implementation should it arise.

11. What is your vision for the partnership between District 65 and District 202? Which areas of collaboration are most important and why?

Both districts need to be in the close relationship they presently are, but if every feeder school to 202 is singing a different tune then that can only impair our student's success. A perfect example is the proliferation of Digital Promise iPads at the middle school level only to turn around and be handed a Chromebook at the High School. There needs to be a more explicit collaboration with the way curriculum is delivered, and that starts as so much does with a coherent vision for technology.

Part V - Budget

12. How will you influence fiscal efficiencies at the school district?

I strongly believe that a serious-minded fresh approach to technology will directly help to secure a long-term financial situation that is not just above water but thriving. Well planned, implemented, and maintained deployments last longer and cost less throughout their lifespan, and the inverse is inversely true. Almost by definition doing right in this field will translate to doing right by our ledgers.

13. If budget cuts are necessary, which areas deserve priority and why?

It's important to locate the cause of a need for any budget cut and not simply react to that need. In my experience this is a unfortunately seldom seen piece to any such situation, and I find that this simple first step can inform very well where a cut ought to happen. The answer doesn't always have to be the easiest biggest expense when we can smartly address actual problem areas if not simply bloated ones. Cuts can be made with a hatchet or a scalpel, and it serves everyone better than not to prefer the scalpel.