

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: attorney (non-practicing)
Educational Background: B.A. from Northwestern University and J.D. from Chicago-Kent
Volunteer or Community Activities: Unity Preschool board member (2008-10, 2012-13, 2015-present); Evanston Cradle to Career, co-chair parent/caregiver empowerment solution design team (2015-present); Everybody Reads Fluency Tutor (2010-present); Math is FUNdamental tutor (2015-present); Orrington PTA co-president (2011-2013)
Other Experience: _____

Do you have children? Yes No
What school(s) do (did) they attend? Haven and Orrington
How long have you lived in Evanston/Skokie? 15 years

Part II - Platform

1. What motivated you to run for school board this year?
Four years ago, I decided to run because I believe strongly that the district needed to focus on racial equity and the achievement gap. We have made some progress, with the adoption of a racial equity statement this year being an important first step. But it is just a first step, and for our racial equity agenda to succeed, we need leaders who are committed to seeing it the work through, even when it is difficult and uncomfortable. I am running for reelection so that I can continue to advocate for racial equity. I also believe the experience and knowledge I've gained in my first term will be valuable in helping to steer the district through the uncertain financial waters that we are facing, as well as in resetting the board in its understanding of its governing role.
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.)
My almost 4 years of school board service has been an invaluable learning experience and has poised me to continue to be a strong advocate for our schools. Prior to joining the board, I practiced law, primarily in the areas of advertising/promotion and Internet

privacy. My legal training and practice taught me how to analyze complex problems and think through viable solutions, balancing varied and often competing interests.

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

1) Fiscal responsibility - with the referendum question looming, as well as uncertainty about how much financial support we can expect at the state and federal level, strong and experienced leadership will be critical to guiding the district through what could be unprecedented budget deficits.

2) Racial equity - while District 65 has made some modest strides in reducing the achievement gap, there is no question that our schools are not serving all our students equally. Race, too often, is the determinative factor - in grades, test scores, discipline, etc. While we have adopted a racial equity statement and are on the path to developing an equity policy, it is a priority to me that the board and administration use an equity lens in all decision making and that we maintain a sense of urgency in addressing the needs of our marginalized populations, particularly our black and brown students.

3) Board governance role - over the last several years, I believe that there has been an increasing blurring of the lines between board governance and administrative responsibilities. I believe the board needs to reset its understanding of its governance role.

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?

The school board's responsibility to community members, whether they are parents with kids in our schools or not, is to use an evidence-based, student-centered approach to ensuring that the district provides a high-quality education to its students in a fiscally responsible manner. Board members should be available and responsive to community members so that we can ensure that community values are reflected in our school system.

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?

District 65 is a high-performing district that is increasingly focusing on the social and emotional well-being of children as well as on their academic success. I believe we need to continue our work to build school climates that foster positive relationships and student achievement.

District 65 needs to work harder and with more urgency to address issues of racial equity and the achievement gap. The school climate work we are doing is essential and is moving us in the right direction, but we need to challenge ourselves to uncover and remove systemic barriers that further marginalize our black and brown students. We need to reach out to traditionally underrepresented populations and ensure that their voices and concerns are being heard.

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

The school board has one employee - the superintendent. The school board's role is to set policy and priorities for the district and to hold the administration accountable, via the superintendent, for executing on those policies and priorities.

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.
- 1) I voted to approve placing a referendum question on the ballot. Given the magnitude of the deficits we are looking at, and knowing how budget cuts of that size could transform our schools, I believe it is appropriate to educate the community on what the options are and ask for their guidance on the future of their schools.
- 2) Early in the school year, the majority of the board voted against the recommendation of the superintendent on an administrative hire. I voted to support the superintendent's recommendation. I follow the recommendation of the Illinois Association of School Boards that school boards should take a prescribed and limited role in personnel and, thus, I believe this was an example of board overreach.

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?
- I will continue to support evidence-based, student-centered recommendations from our educators. I will push for all decisions to be made through an equity lens and will work to ensure that resources are allocated where the need is greatest. I will continue to support strategic plan outcome goals that require us to see not just a reduction in the achievement gap but also growth for students at both the top and bottom quartiles. I will continue to push for the development of a robust equity policy that will help us identify and remove the barriers to achievement by marginalized groups.
9. What role should standardized testing have in assessing students, teachers, and instructional methods?
- The primary purpose of any testing should always be to evaluate student learning, so that teachers can understand what a student knows and whether additional or alternative instructional strategies are necessary to help a student learn. While a valid standardized test can be a factor in understanding student achievement, I believe we should be challenging ourselves to find other measures (particularly social and emotional measures) to assess how we are preparing our students to succeed in and contribute to our global community.

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?
- Family and community engagement is an important goal in our strategic plan. I have been deeply involved in Evanston Cradle to Career and believe that its vision for collective impact is strong and achievable over time. I also serve as a board representative to the Evanston Community Schools Initiative Leadership Council. I believe that the community school model can be a powerful tool in engaging students and families and connecting community resources to the school community.

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

Beginning before I joined the board and continuing through the last 4 years, the school districts have made collaboration an important focus. The transition between middle school and high school is an important area of collaboration, as is continuing to collaborate on school calendars to simplify the schedules of families with children in both districts. As we face significant budget deficits, collaborating on cost-saving measures will be increasingly important.

Part V - Budget

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

I will push for budget decisions to be made using an equity lens and will work to ensure that our resources are allocated where there is the greatest need.

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

We always like to say that we will keep budget cuts as far from the classroom as possible, but the reality is that, with the deficits we are facing, if we do not receive additional revenue, the size of the cuts we will need to make will be felt in the classroom. I believe that the board should analyze budget cuts using an equity lens and that our priority should be to ensure, as much as possible, that cuts do not disproportionately affect our striving learners and traditionally marginalized students.