

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

Name: Joseph A. Hailpern

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Occupation: Elementary School Principal

Educational Background: BA - Elementary Education (National Louis University 2003), MA School Administration and Leadership (University of California Los Angeles 2007), Doctoral Candidate in Curriculum and Social Inquiry, (National Louis University)

Volunteer or Community Activities: AYSO Youth Soccer Coach, Walker PTA, Wildkit Swim Organization Parent Volunteer

Other Experience: Former D65 Teacher, Former ETHS Swimming and Diving Coach

Do you have children? Yes No

What school(s) do (did) they attend? Walker Elementary

How long have you lived in Evanston/Skokie? 31 years

Part II – Platform

1. What motivated you to run for school board this year?

The decision to run for school board came from a few places. The first reason is that this year marks the beginning of our relationship with D65 as our children began at Walker school. With two in school (first and third grade at Walker) and two not yet in D65, our tenure in the district is just beginning. As an educator I know full well the role of the board as a governing/policy body for the organization. I'm motivated to participate in that capacity for all D65 families and help the district achieve the goals of the strategic plan.

In addition to participating as a proud father of four children, I have lived within the district for over 30 years. I am committed to repaying the district and community that served me so well as a young child and student. The opportunity to serve and give back to the school district and community where I began my teaching career and started my professional life in education is one that does not present itself often.

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.)

As a long time educator I bring several qualities to the board that would be of value. Through my role as a parent, my professional work in education and as a doctoral student focused on policy I am fully immersed in the educational landscape. I deeply understand where it's been and where it's going. My first hand experience helps me to understand the important and vital role that each person plays within that process. In my next paragraph, I'll discuss the importance of maintaining healthy interrelationships between those components so as to maintain a balanced system.

I understand the relationship between the board and the district's administration. I have extensive experience implementing a school budget and a keen awareness of the complexities of the district budget process. In professional practice, I have worked with many school boards, some at a high level and some less effective. I have learned lessons from those experiences that I bring with me. I am also a listener and consensus builder. I do not shy away from a tough conversation, be it about race, finances, or anything else. I seek to understand the perspectives and needs of the community that I serve. I do that as a professional and look forward to doing that in the community within which I live.

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

- Equity and Access for all D65 students, particularly those marginalized by our school system
- Fiscal responsibility and sustainability to support the long term functioning of the district at a high level
- Climate and Culture - How boards operate in terms of discussion, policy adoption and negotiations plays a role in how teachers feel they are supported.

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 has a responsibility to be exceptional stewards for the community tax dollars and protectors of educational systems and programs for students. The board has a responsibility to take into account the various stakeholder groups, like parents and teachers, in decision making.

As a community member I feel it is fair to assess the effectiveness of the board by the way it maintains consistency for student programs through solid financial planning. In addition, the D65 board is charged with making strides to eliminate racism and long standing barriers that impede the access and success of students of color in our district. I think it is fair for the community to evaluate the board and its members on their contributions to those ends.

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?

D65's strengths as a district are in the people. The children of this community come from all walks of life, but each bring their own lived experiences, curiosities and greater wonders that make them ready to learn in our schools. These children are sent to school each day by parents who show daily that they have trust in the schools as they send their children out the door. In addition, the teachers and administrators that staff our dear schools are dedicated to designing learning experiences that are not day to day lessons, but rather strategically built 180 day mosaics of inspired moments.

We can build upon this strength by ensuring that students have the opportunities to grow through a myriad of learning experiences over the years. We must ensure opportunities for learning, be they the top of the class or struggling. When schools are built with on ramps for learning leveraging the skills and innovation of the staff, they are best able to handle a diverse set of student needs academically, socially and emotionally.

The weakness that stands out most is the decline or stagnation of academic growth of our students of color. These student growth statistics on a broad level show that there is clearly a problem that needs an aggressive solution. There are many things happening in our schools and I would be interested to learn more about what programs, strategies, and trainings are most effective or not. When schools are engaging families, inspiring students, and building amazing relationships, students do better.

Discipline data is just one more metric that shows that students of color are disproportionately being disciplined in school. An engaging and regulating environment is engaging and regulating for students thereby lessening the need for behavioral interventions.

To align with the strength statement above, I would be interested to learn more about how we identify where students are on a learning continuum so that stronger, more cohesive planning can be done to build an on ramp toward the identified learning objective desired.

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

The role of the school board is often paralleled to that of a puppeteer where the board holds the strings, but is never on the stage. The board engages in policy discussions and adoption, provides fiscal oversight and seeks understanding on behalf of the community to craft the mission and strategic plan of the district. The board then is responsible for the oversight of the implementation of that long-term plan.

The board also has a single employee, the superintendent. The superintendent and the administration are charged with enacting the strategic plan and bringing the mission to life in schools each day. While the strategic plan and mission are often written as ideals,

the board must have a strategy to ensure that proactive steps are taken to meet the needs of the community via this plan.

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.
Safe Haven - Just last month the board took action to declare D65 a safe haven school district. This is a perfect example of board action that takes courage, thoughtfulness and provides a strong statement for the values of our district and community. In a political era like the one we are in, decisions on major topics like documented status, gender identity, among others require a board to provide guidance so that school site leaders know which direction the moral compass of the district is pointing.

Operating Referendum - This spring voters will need to cast their vote for an operating referendum. The decision to put this on the ballot was huge. In the current climate in the state, this is a necessary stop gap to maintain programs and services without huge changes. I agree with the decision to put this on the ballot. My question, as I've stated in forums, is whether or not this referendum is asking for enough so that we do not need to go back to the community again within the next five years.

Part III – Student Achievement and Assessment

8. If elected, describe how you will contribute toward enhancing student achievement. How should the district address achievement disparities by race, ethnicity, or other demographic differences?

Student achievement is at the heart of decision making for schools. I support a strategic plan that is centered on appropriate student growth outcomes for all learners, with high and appropriate expectations. Using growth models instead of achievement targets, helps to focus the discussion on student achievement around realities of student current performance and on realistic goals for students in the future. With high expectations, should also come appropriate levels of support for learners. If the board makes fiscally prudent decisions, funds will be available for providing the appropriate level of support for all students, allowing us to close existing achievement gaps for learners, including learners from groups that have historically been marginalized by our organization.

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

Standardized testing has a place in helping to assess the overall health of the organization and offer insights as to how the organization compares to the broader state. In addition, using standardized tools to assess individuals for the purpose of case study evaluations, developing intervention support plans, and monitoring progress against identified goals can be quite useful.

There are limitations on using standardized tests to assess individuals, be they students, teachers, or administrators. As a district, our best resources are our teachers and we need to rely on their expertise and relationships with the students to help make strong academic strides. This begins with strong relationships and classroom engagement, not tests.

Standardized assessments should be used on a limited basis to validate our assumptions about the health of the district, but not necessarily supersede the opinions, evidence, and experiences shared by that of our instructional teams.

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?

Cradle to Career and other community partnerships are important for the school district in helping cast a web of support and identify resources locally with a shared goal for our children. These partnerships are made between organizations to share resources and identify synergies that support the development of our children more effectively and efficiently.

As a board member I would seek to ensure that our community, and particularly those that rely on these services are strategically informed of the resources around them. The district should (and does) maintain being seen as a part of the broader social support within the community who maintains active and healthy relationships with organizations like those that partner in Evanston Cradle to Career.

Beyond the many important community partnerships, schools and the amazing instructional teams must be the lifeblood bridging where students are when they enter our doors to where they need to be over daily, weekly and yearly targets. Our teachers, when at their best, are engaging students in the learning and staging for learning to extend beyond the walls of the school. This is best done through ongoing, systematic communication with families, through school events, and direct dialogue with students about themselves as learners. To do all of the above, as a board member, I would proudly support the diverse district staff in their many creative ways of engaging parents and students as partners in learning.

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

Synchronization between the two boards is vital when it comes to ensuring that students are moving from one positive school experience to the next. As one of my priorities is focusing on the area of equity and access to education, I consider partnership around the study of institutional racism within our schools and how it impacts students from pre-k through grade 12 vital.

I also think understanding how the school experience in D65 stages for a successful transition, experience and outcomes in high school for all students is critical.

Part V - Budget

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

Fiscal oversight on a school board begins with asking questions and understanding processes and procedures. I would seek to understand how awards for services are made, major expenses are decided, and what due diligence is ongoing from the business office to ensure that current practices stay best and prices stay competitive.

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

My priority is always to protect the classroom and classroom related supports in a budget cut. As a school administrator I understand and have lived through this to varying degrees in different communities. My stance has long been that administrative job descriptions and roles can be reconfigured to support schools. While adding more to the plates of administrators adds an administrative burden, this is far less impacting than something such as increasing class size. I feel classroom and program changes should be protected at all costs. Furthermore, high cost purchased service contracts can be revisited to ensure that tax dollars are spent wisely and quotes stay competitive.

A caveat to the above is that there is much to learn as a board member. There are rationales and discussions that go into decision-making that could make more sense that are not discussed here. As I learn more, my position and any changes to it would remain transparent so that heading into voting for or against a referendum, parents know the results in both directions.