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: Pat Savage Williams
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Occupation: Special Education Coordinator/School Psychologist
Educational Background: BS degree in Psychology/ MS degree in Educational Psychology/ Educational Leadership and Administration
Volunteer or Community Activities:

- Board member Center for Life Skills (Counseling Center, Chicago)
- Board member Child Care Center of Evanston
- Girl Scout Co-leader
- Evanston Township High School Mixed Level Advisory Ad Hoc Committee Member
- Co-Facilitate Community Conversations on Race at the Evanston YWCA
- SEED (Seeking Education Equity and Diversity) Facilitator
- National SEED Facilitator (Train SEED Leaders across the country)
- Beyond Diversity Facilitator (Affiliate Pacific Educational Group)

Other Experience:

Do you have children? ☒ Yes ☐ No
What school(s) do (did) they attend? Walker. Chute, ETHS, University of Iowa and Washington University in St. Louis-both ETHS graduates (2010 & 2012)
How long have you lived in Evanston? 39 years

Part II – Platform

1. What motivated you to run for school board this year?
   I bring my perspective as an African-American parent and educator to the Board of Education. I worked as a School Psychologist in Evanston District 65 for 25 years before moving to a high school as a Special Education Coordinator. I understand how students learn and what motivates adolescents. My abilities as a listener and a problem-solver are valuable assets to the board. Teamwork is the most effective approach to address the complicated issues we face in education today. I believe that every student has the right to

an education that enhances individual strengths, improves weaknesses, and fosters confidence and self-esteem. Thus, my highest priority is to meet the needs of all students within our school community.

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 an educator for 38 years, I have worked with students from pre-school through grade 12. My 25 years as a School Psychologist in District 65 gives me unique awareness of the issues that students and families face in our community, as does my current position as School Psychologist and Special Education Coordinator at New Trier High School for the past twelve years. Given my strong understanding of the many pressures that adolescents grapple with today, particularly in our community, I believe that my professional expertise is an asset to the School Board.

3. If elected, what will be your top three priorities as a school board member?
   As your representative on the Board of Education, I will continue to advocate for making ETHS a safe school for all students, keeping class sizes small, ensuring excellence in teaching, and protecting each student's opportunity to learn and succeed. I will listen, observe, respect and support all ETHS students, staff and families while bolstering the district in providing a rigorous and relevant curriculum that will raise the performance of all students. I will also support consistent and creative methods to encourage and support students in their efforts to participate successfully in rigorous classes at ETHS.

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 believe the board should build effective partnerships with parents, district staff and the Evanston community. If re-elected to serve as a School Board member, I will continue to make decisions that are fiscally responsible while being mindful of the best possible uses of our resources.

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 restructuring for Freshman Humanities and Biology are strong steps in providing access to rigorous curriculum and opportunities for all students to earn honors credit, thus gain broader options for college admission. Continued assessment regarding the effectiveness of these changes as well as opportunities for teachers to collaborate around curricular issues is essential. The Systems of Supports is an effective and continues to evolve as we support students who enter the district struggling with reading and literacy. There is an urgent need here and the district will address this need.

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 is a governmental body. The role of the School Board should function as a body that oversees public education. The School Board represents the community, and is accountable to the public. In addition, the School Board is a means for parents and the community to influence school policies that impact the school. The School Board is the

basic governance mechanism for delivering excellence and equity in public education for all children

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.
I am excited about the work we did on the ETHS goals and the course proposals for the upcoming school year that are aligned to support goal #1.

District Goal 1: ETHS will increase each student's academic and functional trajectory to realize college/career readiness and independence. Recognizing that racism is the most devastating factor contributing to the diminished achievement of students, ETHS will strive to eliminate the predictability of academic achievement based upon race. ETHS will also strive to eliminate the predictability of academic achievement based upon family income, disabilities and status as English language learners.

One of the most important things in this proposal is the change in sophomore level classes, writing and civics which is all part of raising achievement and addressing it in the sophomore year will accelerate the work. Both civics and writing will offer all students an intensive challenge in their sophomore year.

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?
It is essential to recognize how rapidly our society has changed, thus the need for the educational preparation to change as well. Now more than ever, we need to prepare students for a global world experience. To do this, we must be intentional about teaching students to use critical thinking skills in an adaptive learning environment. Critical thinking involves the development of problem solving skills that they will be able to use in many facets of life. We want students to be effective communicators and have the ability to collaborate with others as we know that major decisions are made through team collaboration rather than independently. Thus, they need to be able to work in harmony with others who may look and be very different from themselves. Our Equity initiatives are embedded in all we do in our work with students and staff. We will continue our proactive approach to addressing the disparities and continue to provide professional development opportunities for staff and students to help better understand the complexities of these disparities in order to develop strategies to dismantle them.

9. What role should standardized testing have in assessing students, teachers, and instructional methods?
Standardized testing gives us a snapshot of a student's performance at any given moment. It is important but does not provide the complete picture of a student. Progress must be assessed through multiple methods. Assessment can improve teaching and learning, as educators have argued, but as states roll out the Common Core standards, schools and

districts should do more to support better testing practices and programs that align to the new standards.

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?
    It is important for School Board members to listen, observe, respect and support ETHS students, staff and families in order to support the district in providing a rigorous and relevant curriculum that will raise the performance of all students. I work to build effective partnerships with parents, district staff and the Evanston community. I experience other partnerships such as C2C and other community partnerships have similar goals. Since we are a school district, our focus is on high school students and adolescent development. However, we believe these partnerships help support all of our students and our community as a whole and we look forward to working closely with other stakeholders.

11. What is your vision for the partnership between District 65 and District 202? Which areas of collaboration are most important and why?
    We will continue to work with District 65 as we have in the past. We have joint meetings twice a year and we have a joint committee to plan these meetings. We also have a joint literacy goal to help us track student progress from K-12.

Part V - Budget

12. How will you influence fiscal efficiencies at the school district?
    As a School Board member, I closely monitor the financial status of the district. I will continue to make decisions that are fiscally responsible while being mindful of the best possible uses of our resources.

13. If budget cuts are necessary, which areas deserve priority and why?
    The ETHS CFO and administration has historically done a wonderful job of maintaining balanced budgets for the past ten years. It is possible that costs will shift and the threats of financial instability will impact us. However, we have maintained a triple A bond rating and we are quite proud of that. If costs are shifted, our administration and CFO will make suggestions for possible cuts in spending. I would advocate strenuously to keep those cuts as far away from the classroom as possible.