

## **Daily Herald questions for IPSD 204 board candidates**

**With growing concern around mental health and addiction, what should the district do to build mentally healthy students, support the mental health of students who have mental illnesses and help students avoid addiction?**

This is an important issue to address in our schools and requires partnership with expert resources skilled at addressing mental health and addiction. Our teachers should have training to recognize and support intervention for many reasons: mental health, drugs, bullying, stress. District counselors with knowledge of best practices, and ties to community resources, need to be available to work with students and their families. Programming and speakers should be offered to the students to provide awareness, coping skills, and sensitivity to mental health and addiction issues. Parent/community groups focused on addressing mental health and addiction should be encouraged with active participation from district resources.

Recent statistics show that our district has an average ratio of counselors to students significantly below the national average. This is concerning given the rising rates of drug and mental health issues. We need to make sure there are adequate resources in the district, in partnership with the community, to address this growing issue.

**As teachers use more and more technology in the classroom, how much should the district continue to support the eLo online learning consortium and the STEM Partnership school at Aurora University? How should spending on these technology related learning experiences be balanced with other educational and financial priorities.**

Online learning is an option that needs to be offered in our school district, but should not eliminate the experience of classroom learning. In this ever-increasing digital/virtual world, the value of in-person interaction with teachers and peers needs to be nurtured by our schools. Despite our digital environment, future career success will continue to require social and communication skills that are best developed by face to face interaction.

With respect to the STEM curriculum, I believe we need to inspire more student interest in science, technology, engineering, and math, both for college and vocational career paths. Future employment will require more technology knowledge. Our district should be looking for innovative ways to expose students to these areas and to encourage careers in these disciplines – especially for girls.

**How big of a role do you think the board of education should play in setting the curriculum for students and what ideas do you have for changes to the current curriculum?**

District curriculum experts are in place to research, assess, and recommend curriculum changes and improvements to the school board. Critical to student and district success, our curriculum needs to be regularly assessed to ensure we are providing superior preparation for the world outside of attending schools in district 204. Our students are consistently top ranked in academic performance. To continue improving achievements, the board needs to support the evolution of our curriculum while balancing fiscal responsibilities.

An increasingly connected and global market demands skills that need to be developed in our students. Our schools need to provide a well-rounded educational experience preparing all our students for their chosen career path, college or vocational, with the skill set to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am interested in growing interest in the STEM curriculum, especially to encourage girls. Technical skills are fundamental to most careers and are base requirements for today's jobs. I would like to see all students receive meaningful exposure to technical tools and skills. To compete in the future global market, the district needs to continuously evolve our curriculum to teach students with innovative techniques to foster entrepreneurial skills, problem solving, teamwork, leadership, and citizenship. Addressing the achievement gap with underperforming groups is also an area that needs continued attention.

**What budget issues will your district have to confront and what measures do you support to address them: If you believe cuts are necessary, what programs and expenses should be reduced or eliminated? On the income side, do you support any tax or fee increases?**

The continued budget stalemate in Springfield provides significant budget issues in district 204. In the best of times, the state contribution to our budget was variable. With the lack of a state budget, we are facing uncertainty of this key budget component. The current school board has done an admirable job defining plans and a budget to adjust for this continued uncertainty. Our district needs to be vigilant in monitoring and pursuing our district's interests in Springfield.

I am not in favor of a tax increase as the first move to address budget shortfalls. I have significant experience dealing with constantly decreasing budgets with continuing performance expectations in my career. I managed a \$250M budget and a \$1B purchasing program at AT&T/Nokia that were continuously squeezed for higher performance. Before any tax increase is considered, we need to look for ways to save on existing expenditures and minimize any classroom impact. Eliminating programs in the arts and physical education should not be the default target for cuts. A balanced educational experience is essential. Efforts to seek additional grants should be pursued to provide potential new sources of funding. Collaboration with the community and businesses should be investigated to supplement shortfalls. We must be focused on obtaining the maximum benefits from the school district's financial resources, as well as, monitoring and auditing spending programs to keep them efficient and effective.

**What role can and should school choice play in your district? If Congress or the state approves a voucher system or other means giving students broader choices among public and private schools, how will that affect your district? What is the appropriate response for the board of education of a public-school system?**

Providing a high-quality education for all students should be the objective of our schools. We are fortunate to have a strong tax base in Naperville that allows for quality funding of our schools resulting in superior performance educational opportunities available to all. Naperville's public schools and their excellent reputation make this a desirable community and provides support for property values. Moving to a school privatization strategy brings many concerns about the ability to provide a quality experience to all students. If Congress or the state approves moving to a voucher system, students will be able to pursue attending schools of their choice. High performing schools will attract the most student interest and will be able to be selective about who is admitted. Our public schools will need to compete at the highest level to provide superior opportunities for learning and excellence in student academic performance to attract students.

**What other issues, if any, are important to you as a candidate for this office?**

A cohesive school board is an essential element for the success of a school district. To gain a variety of perspectives, I believe in having a diverse school board with a strong skill set provided by the members. We need people who have different perspectives, but who can work together as a team to make the right decisions for our students and community. We have all seen the recent disaster with a very dysfunctional board at the College of DuPage. I bring a proven track record, through my career accomplishments and volunteer activities, of integrity and success working with others to achieve superior results.

## **Naperville Area Chamber Political Action Committee candidate forum**

**You are running for office, if elected what do you think is the greatest public policy challenge you will face and how will you work to be a leader on the issue?**

The two major policy issues I see facing the school district this year are proposed budget changes for school funding in Springfield and the possible movement to privatizing education.

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continued uncertainty. Our district needs to be vigilant in monitoring and pursuing our district's interests in Springfield. I am not in favor of a tax increase as the first move to address budget shortfalls. I have significant experience dealing with constantly decreasing budgets with continuing expectations for higher performance in my career. Before any tax increase is considered, we need to look for ways to save on existing expenditures and minimize classroom impact. Eliminating programs in the arts and physical education should not be the default target for cuts. A balanced educational experience is essential. Efforts to seek additional grants should be pursued to provide potential new sources of funding. Collaboration with the community and businesses should be investigated to supplement shortfalls. We must be focused on obtaining the maximum benefits from the school district's financial resources, as well as, monitoring and auditing spending programs to keep them efficient and effective while being actively engaged in Springfield.

With the issue of privatization, I believe providing a high-quality education for all students must be the objective of our schools. We are fortunate to have a strong tax base in our community that allows for quality funding of our schools resulting in superior performance educational opportunities available to all. District 204's public schools and their excellent reputation make this a desirable community and provides support for property values. Moving to a school privatization strategy brings many concerns about the ability to provide a quality experience to all students. If Congress or the state approves moving to a voucher system, students will be able to pursue attending schools of their choice. High performing schools will attract the most student interest and will be able to be selective about who is admitted. Our public schools will need to compete at the highest level to provide superior opportunities for learning and excellence in student academic performance to attract students.

## **Naperville Area Homeowners Confederation candidate forum**

**There appears to be a developing problem with school capacity. Some schools have shrinking student counts while others are growing to capacity or above. Parents are concerned about class size. What solutions would you propose and, if boundary realignment is part of your solution, where would you recommend changing boundaries and when?**

No one wants their kids to be in crowded class rooms or schools. My family moved to the South side of Naperville when the building boom started. Because of the tremendous growth, my daughter could not attend kindergarten in her elementary school – they were bused to Neuqua Valley. What looked like an awful situation turned out to be a great adventure for her. Both my son and daughter attended Neuqua Valley when the school peaked in population. I

understand the desire to have students in smaller classroom sizes and in less crowded schools. I lived through it with my children and it was less than ideal.

Today, the North side has schools beyond capacity with extra space in the south side of the district. Before making boundary changes, careful study is needed. The dynamics of our population and community development plans must be evaluated to make the right decision for both short and long term. We need to understand if the situation we are currently experiencing is a momentary blip or a long-term trend. We need to take a look at the big picture. With that said, I am concerned, in general, about class sizes in the district. With an average class size of around 27, we are significantly above the state average and the average of our peer districts. There are no easy answers here and the reality is this district has been operating on a very tight budget and reducing class sizes will come with a price.

**Do you support all elements of the district's four goals? What specific experience and skill do you bring to the table to help achieve them? If you don't agree with any of them, please explain why and what you would try to do to change the goal.**

- 1) Help each student achieve academically**
- 2) Hire and retain a high quality, effective teaching staff**
- 3) Manage resources efficiently and effectively**
- 4) Be student and community focused**

I support the goals of the district. Academic results, quality teaching staff, balanced budget, and focus on students and community are all important goals.

I am passionate about the value of a good education and creating an environment that inspires curiosity and learning. I am a life-long learner – challenging myself to learn something new each day. I want to see that inspiration in our students. I bring extensive experience assessing and hiring people. I know the importance of retaining the best talent and what it takes to keep that talent in a competitive and challenging environment. Our teachers and staff are critical to the success of our students and therefore our district.

In my introduction, I discussed my former roles managing very large budgets and a billion dollar purchasing program. My company has been in a cost reduction mode for over 20 years. My roles were under constant pressure for cost reductions while being compelled to achieve higher results. Through my experience, I bring the understanding of fiscal responsibility and skills to look for creative ways to achieve the desired outcome.

Finally, I have been a long time active volunteer in the community. With the Sister Cities leadership, we created a new direction focused on our schools and building global awareness and citizenship – which will be critical in our increasingly connected world. I enjoy giving my time and energy to making a difference.