

THE DPS CHALKBOARD
SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
FEBRUARY 2023

While oversight of the Superintendent is one of your primary roles, past boards have micromanaged our Superintendent, even having them report on every meeting attended, daily schedule, etc. How do you perceive your role of managing the most important employee of District 61?

- I believe the board should know every action the superintendent takes.
- I want to know what our superintendent does on a day-to-day basis, and report to the public for transparency.
- Strategic objectives then accountability for those objectives is all that is necessary.
- Other _____

Feel free to provide the reasoning behind your answer:

I do think there is a middleground to micro-managing and being completely hands-off. If I were micro-managed by my employer, I would look for a new job that trusted me to *do* my job. Good leaders are aware of the work their colleagues are doing, but let them do it in a way that works for them.

Nearly a third of district funding comes from the state of Illinois - based on the number of students in the district, and with a declining enrollment that revenue will likely be drastically reduced. Another large block of funding comes from the city, which also has a generally declining population. And this is occurring in a time of large inflation where costs continue to increase dramatically. When the CARES money funding cliff arrives in January of 2024, our district, along with many districts around the country, will face major funding issues. While this problem will fall squarely with the Sup and the District CFO, your job as a board member will be to make sure that we are prepared to face this issue and to make sure it's dealt with. Are you prepared to oversee this challenge, and what will you be looking for in future budget proposals?

- o This isn't the job of a Board Member – it's the job of the CFO.
 - o I'm not concerned about this. We have been fine financially, and we should continue to make it work.
 - o I'm concerned and willing to explore:
 - o School Closures
 - o Outsourcing IT, Maintenance, etc.
 - o Reducing District Administration
 - o **Other**
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Feel free to provide the reasoning behind your answer:

While this job is managed by the CFO, it is important that we work together to plan for future obstacles. One key to increasing our tax-base is by focusing on the reputation of the district. We must make DPS a destination district and that starts with our reputation.

Another huge challenge we have in our district is declining test scores. In many ways solutions to this issue should be reflected in a board member's broad philosophical vision of learning. Which of the following should be funded and/or implemented?

- o New school buildings,
- o A transition to more homogeneous learning opportunities (including small group instruction) in the elementary schools,
- o Consolidating High Schools,
- o Teaching to the test encouraged
- o Teaching to the test discouraged
- o Raise the level of expectations in our schools – across the board.
- o Other _____

Feel free to provide the reasoning behind your answer:

My general philosophical vision of learning is that it is not one-size-fits-all. If there were a single solution to fixing the problem with test scores, we would already be doing it. Will a new school improve test scores? Probably not. But would it help with recruitment and retention of teachers and families? Probably. I don't think that we have all of the answers to the problems we are currently facing, but I'm committed to sticking around to solve as many problems as we can.

We're anxious to hear our Superintendents feelings on cell phones in schools, but one could make an argument that the use of cell phones by students in the classroom (during instruction time) falls under the category of the "purpose" of our school system. At the bare minimum, a board-backed proposal would go a long way in showing the district leadership team that the community is behind a particular course of action. What are your thoughts on cell phone use in the schools and specifically, if it were to come to a vote, would you vote:

- o for some type of cell phone ban in classrooms, or
- o against banning cell phones globally?

Feel free to provide the reasoning behind your answer:

This issue is far too nuanced to vote for a global ban. Not only is there a safety concern with banning possession of cell phones across the board, but a global ban would fail to prepare our students for the real world. I think it is important that we encourage teaching students when cell phone use is appropriate and when it's not.

Should we allocate more money from the budget (at least while we have CARES money we can use) toward sending staff to job fairs, colleges, etc. to look for qualified teachers?

- o This isn't the role of a board member. The district leadership team is doing fine on this issue.
- o We need to do better. I will work with the Superintendent to increase our efforts in this area.
- o This should be a regular agenda item in the biweekly board meeting, and/or it will be included in my evaluation of the job the Superintendent is doing.

Feel free to provide the reasoning behind your answer:

Recruitment should always be a priority. The current job market is highly competitive and that means allocating resources to have a constant stream of new candidates.

Many of you have mentioned board “transparency” in your public platforms. What exactly do you mean by that? What actions are you for to provide better transparency?

I think we must get ahead of our own messages. Sometimes we focus too much time on crafting exactly the right message, that the masses have already developed their own version of the story. Open communication is key.

What other concerns do you have that rise to the level of the issues mentioned above and fall squarely into the Board’s purview. Please be specific.

This community cannot succeed unless our kids and our schools do. The success of this district has long-term impacts on every part of our economy, and it will take all of us working together to right the ship.

*Please be sure to return your responses via e-mail no later than February 28, 2023.
The email address is duanemcc23@comcast.net.*

Thank you for your participation!