



Illinois Gubernatorial Primary 2018: Candidate Questionnaire

Raise Your Hand Action advocates for education policies that protect and support high-quality, well-resourced public education for all children in Chicago and throughout the state. We hope to provide our network of engaged parents and other public school supporters with detailed information about the policy stances on public education of each candidate for governor so that they can make an informed choice in the voting booth in March.

If you are participating in the questionnaire, please return your responses to these 14 questions to us by Thursday January 25th, 5pm: act@raiseyourhandaction.org

1. What do you see as the purpose of public education?

Public education, from Pre-K all the way through our public universities, ensures all students get the quality education they deserve and serves as an engine of economic growth for the state. We must invest in our neighborhood public schools, public colleges and universities to create the next generation of qualified leaders. We must do better when it comes to ensuring all students have access to quality learning environments, and that will be a top priority for me as governor.

2. List three priorities you'd have as Governor in terms of improving public education in the state of Illinois.

For Illinois to grow its globally competitive workforce, we need a world-class public education system. Bruce Rauner is failing to prepare the next generation of Illinois workers for the jobs of tomorrow. As governor, my priority will be ensuring that all kids in Illinois get the quality public education they deserve, from birth through college.

I've spent decades advocating for greater access to high quality early childhood education starting at birth. Early in my campaign, I released a five-point plan for early childhood education that would make sure every child benefits from participation in kindergarten, put the state on a path towards universal preschool for 3 and 4 year olds, increase access to the Child Care Assistance Program, expand birth-to-three services, and attract teachers to fill high need positions and invest in our education infrastructure. Research shows that investments in high-quality early learning opportunities, starting at birth and through age five, increases children's school readiness, raises high school graduation rates, boosts labor participation, and improves health outcomes.

Historically, Illinois has been the worst state in the nation when it comes to state funding for k-12 education, accounting for just 26 percent of the total funding schools receive.

School funding formula reform was a step in the right direction, but Bruce Rauner stuck a backdoor school voucher program onto the legislation that takes money away from our public schools. We must repeal the private school tax credits and invest more money in our public schools at the state level. We can do that with a progressive income tax. Those who can afford to pay more should do so in order to get our students the education they deserve.

In high schools, we need to bring back vocational training, including software coding programs. Once our young people graduate high school, it is important that we invest in their continued success by properly funding higher education. Illinois' universities and community colleges are hubs of economic growth, workforce training, and innovation. I will work hard to make sure they get the investments they need by empowering community colleges, expanding youth apprenticeship programs, and supporting university-based incubators and start-ups. We also need to focus on affordability. Students who choose to go to college should be able to graduate without being strapped with debt for the rest of their lives. And those who choose not to go to college should have access to quality vocational training so they can graduate and build careers.

Most importantly, we need a governor who listens. Working families, students, and education professionals deserve a voice in their government and a seat at the table in the work ahead. As governor, I will put education front and center and partner with our families and teachers to provide a strong educational environment for every Illinoisan.

3. Explain your plans to deal with funding inequity in Illinois?

After passing school funding reform legislation last year, the state took an essential step towards addressing the educational inequity that has plagued the state for too long. With new funding being directed to the students and schools that need it most, it is imperative that the state makes annual progress towards meeting 'adequacy' targets identified by stakeholders last year. I support a progressive income tax so that Illinois can continue expanding its investment in public education across the board.

4. Should all students have to take standardized tests annually? What is your philosophy about how students should be evaluated academically?

A web of standardized tests is administered by our public schools and are required or mandated by the federal government, the state of Illinois, and local school districts. These tests are used to determine what schools and students are low-performing, but can be scored in arbitrary ways that negatively impact children and communities. Overtesting takes away from success in the classroom and diminishes a teacher's ability to teach. A new law enacted in 2016 increases transparency in school testing and gives parents information about what tests are being given, and what the results will be used for. That's an important tool for parents who are making decisions about their children's education.

5. What other ways would you suggest teachers be evaluated? What do you see as the problem of evaluating teachers by standardized tests?

Illinois must do a better job of honoring and supporting teachers throughout the state. The governor's 736-day budget crisis created an unprecedented amount of uncertainty for schools and made a career in education look unappealing to prospective teachers, which is a contributing factor to the teacher shortage plaguing areas across the state.

When it comes to teacher evaluation, we have to make sure that the state is using the right metrics to measure teachers' performance and ensure that the process offers meaningful feedback to teachers to help them improve their craft and increase student achievement. As we move forward, it is vital that teachers have a voice in state policy decisions concerning the Performance Evaluation Reform Act. We also have to ensure that the state is equipping teachers with the tools and resources that they need to be successful. When I'm governor, Illinois will pass annual budgets, invest in education, and incentivize people to enter the teaching profession.

6. Should Illinois continue using the PARCC test? Why or why not?

Assessments should be used to help students and as a tool for teachers to understand what and how their students are learning. In the wake of NCLB, assessments were used to narrowly define student achievement and punitively judge teachers and schools. As a result, classroom time was often diverted to test preparation rather than student-focused instruction. ESSA provided an opportunity to modify Illinois' accountability structure. Unfortunately, the state's current ESSA plan maintains the NCLB focus on testing, shaming and blaming.

There is still opportunity to get testing right. Illinois' contract with the Pearson testing company to administer the PARCC test expires in 2018. Moving forward, the state needs to ensure that its assessments are valid and reliable, aligned with Illinois' learning standards, and rooted in improving student outcomes. I believe that implementation of our ESSA accountability system should support schools, respect educators, value teacher-administrator-parent collaboration, and limit the length and frequency of standardized testing. And I believe that the state should seek out an alternative assessment that better suits the state's needs and that the voice of parents and teachers be included as that process moves forward.

7. The difference in test scores between students of color and white students was the smallest when US public schools were the most integrated. Schools are now more segregated than they were at the time of Brown v. Board of Education. The Chicago metro area is one of the country's most segregated in both housing and schools. What is the state government's responsibility to repair a century of government-sponsored residential and school segregation in our state? How will you promote integration in

housing and schools in Illinois?

The state has a responsibility to ensure every child in Illinois receives a quality education regardless of their zip code, the color of their skin, or their family income. For more than 20 years, I've worked both here in Illinois and across the country to expand access to quality early childhood education so every child has a chance to succeed and reach their potential.

I believe that when the state persistently underfunds schools, fails to create jobs in the communities where they're needed most, and disinvests in community-based programs, families get stuck in cycles of generational poverty.

The best economic resources we have in our state are our people, but Illinois is nearly last in the nation in state funding for public education. Bruce Rauner is failing to prepare the next generation of Illinoisans for the jobs of tomorrow. As governor, my priority will be ensuring that all kids in Illinois get the quality public education they deserve, from birth through their career.

That starts with early childhood education. I released a five-point plan for early childhood education that would make sure every child benefits from participation in kindergarten, puts the state on a path towards universal preschool for three and four year olds, increases access to the Child Care Assistance Program, expands birth-to-three services, attracts teachers to fill high need positions, and invests in our education infrastructure.

We also need to increase state investments in public education across the board so that we move away from relying upon local property taxes and move toward the constitutional requirement of having the majority of our education funding come from the state. We can get there with a progressive income tax. It's time for a tax system where those who can afford it pay more, our middle class and those striving to get into the middle class get relief, and our kids get the education they deserve. I want to bring back vocational training to our high schools. Young men and women who decide not to go to college should be able to graduate high school and build careers without a college degree. Those who want to go to college should be able to do that without getting strapped with debt for the rest of their lives. During Rauner's massive disinvestment from higher education, tens of thousands of college students, our best future economic resources, left the state.

We face some enormous challenges in Illinois. Bruce Rauner's 736-day budget crisis, followed by last summer's school funding crisis, have done real damage to our economy, our safety net, and the public education system. Rauner didn't create all of Illinois' problems, but he certainly has made them worse. I've spent my life fighting to get results for the people of this state, and I'm ready to meet the challenges we face and move our state forward. I am confident that we can get our state back on track with a bold vision

for a future we can be proud of.

- 8. Would you support legislation mandating an elected representative school board for Chicago? If so, when should an elected representative board be put into place?**

I support an elected school board in Chicago as soon as legislation can be enacted. Just like suburban and rural school districts throughout Illinois, Chicago should have an inclusive and representative school board that includes multiple stakeholders and neighborhood representatives. An elected school board is an important way to get to that.

- 9. Do you support legislation to weaken the IL state charter commission? Why or why not?**

I support the elimination of the Illinois State Charter School Commission.

- 10. What role do public charter schools play in the education landscape in Illinois?**

I believe a quality public education system that improves the well-being of every child and prepares them for the jobs of tomorrow is essential to our state and our future. I oppose diverting public education funds to private schools and I oppose school vouchers. I believe we need a moratorium on charter school expansion. As governor, I will work to construct a stronger birth-to-five system of early childhood education and universal preschool because every child deserves to enter kindergarten prepared for success. I will increase K-12 funding across the board. Finally, we will revive our community colleges and public universities by providing them with adequate resources and making college affordable for all Illinois students.

- 11. A voucher program was recently passed into law here. What are your thoughts about this program?**

I oppose Bruce Rauner's backdoor voucher program that was inserted into the school funding reform bill last year. As governor, I will work to repeal that measure.

- 12. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) says that each child who has a disability and needs special education and related services will receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). How will you ensure that special education students are receiving FAPE?**

I've spent decades at the forefront of local and national efforts to increase access to high-quality early learning opportunities, including early intervention. As a national activist, I provided Congressional testimony, spoke at the National Governors Association and numerous other organizations, and I supported the creation of the First Five Years

Fund, a national advocacy organization advancing high-quality early childhood education. In 2014, I helped lead President Obama's White House Summit on Early Childhood Education. This is a priority for me and as governor, I will make Illinois a national leader in early childhood education.

As governor, it will be important to me that education is inclusive of people with disabilities and I will make sure IDEA and FAPE are enforced so children and youth with disabilities can reach their full potential.

To really live up to the state's obligation to give children with disabilities the same access to a quality learning environment as those without disabilities, we must ensure we are meeting the individual needs of children with disabilities.

13. Illinois is one of 37 states without class size laws. Would you sign a law putting a cap on class size in Illinois?

Every student deserves a high-quality education. Illinois needs to equip schools with the resources necessary to achieve the optimal ratio of students to teachers in every school. The new school funding formula establishes an adequacy target for each school district by applying the cost of 27 evidence-based elements to the student demographics of the district. Imbedded in the formula among the elements are targeted resources to lower class sizes and support the cost of specialist teachers, intervention teachers, bilingual or ESL teachers, and special education teachers.

The state has a responsibility to aggressively march towards the adequacy targets identified by experts in the field and invest billions more into the state's k-12 system over time. As governor, I will prioritize funding for public education and work with lawmakers to make annual progress towards fully funding schools across the state.

14. Educational software collects large amounts of sensitive data about students. Should students in public schools be required to use programs that collect personally-identifiable data? What rights do public school families have if they do not wish to hand over sensitive student data in order to participate in school curriculum and programs?

As technology plays a greater role in student learning, the privacy rights of children and their families must be evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that school districts are compliant with state and federal laws that protect students' personally-identifiable information. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act requires schools to notify parents about their rights under the law on an annual basis. It's imperative that parents understand their rights and have a voice in the collection, protection and use of their student's data. I look forward to working with stakeholders in the education community to continue strengthening the Illinois School Student Records Act in the years to come.