

1/10/2019 RYH Action Mayoral Questionnaire - Google Docs  
Chicago Municipal Election 2019: Candidate Questionnaire

1. What do you think the purpose of public education is?

I believe that the purpose of public schools is to provide every child a quality education no matter their race or zip code. I was a public school kid and remember how my school served as a community anchor and a source of pride for my neighborhood. As mayor, I will work with impacted communities to ensure there are safe, Level 1/1+ elementary and high schools in every neighborhood, expand high school apprenticeship programs to create pathways to good jobs, create early childhood education zones and provide each school with basic educational support positions like nurses, social workers and librarians. I will also follow the lead of other school districts and help create policies and practices that undo the systems and structures that created and perpetuate inequities of opportunity and academic achievement. Only once we have given our schools the resources they need will we achieve our purpose of providing quality education to every child in our school system.

2. List your top three priorities for improving public education in Chicago.

My top priority is creating a fully elected, independent school board. So many of the issues facing Chicago schools, students and parents come back to the fact that families and community leaders are so often left out of the conversation and decision-making process. In order to achieve the level of equity our students deserve, must give families a voice.

Secondly, we must ensure that there are Level 1/1+ schools in every neighborhood. To do this, CPS must empower communities to create pathways for improving their schools so they become schools of first choice, not ones of last resort. Starting in neighborhoods with the historically lowest performing schools, and using what happened at National Teachers Academy as a model, CPS will empower the surrounding communities to help shape their schools. CPS, working in conjunction with educational non-profits, academics, and community and social service organizations, will develop targets and timelines for improving schools, and CPS will give communities reasonable time, space and support necessary to develop plans of action, and to hit their targets.

Finally, we must create career opportunities for all of our CPS graduates. CPS should modify its high school portfolio to include more schools with career-and-technical education ("CTE") programs. Working in partnership with local businesses, trade unions and non-profits, these schools will offer coursework relevant to skills needed in a specific vocation, like healthcare, manufacturing, construction or technology, as well as a range of internship opportunities in that field, increasing the likelihood that students are on a path to the middle-class, regardless of one's post-secondary choice.

3. Currently, the mayor appoints the CPS CEO. Would you replace Janice Jackson as CEO of CPS?

It is not appropriate to answer this question. There is much work to be done at CPS, and Dr. Jackson and her staff should be focused on improving public schools and educational outcomes, ensuring that children have necessary educational supports, like nurses, social workers and librarians, and keeping our children safe, instead of worrying about their jobs. I have a strong sense and vision of what I am looking for in, and expect from, the head of CPS, and if I am elected I will sit down with Dr. Jackson to discuss my vision and expectations for change.

4. Explain your plans to deal with school funding inequity and inadequacy in Chicago.

I support the Evidence Based Funding model because it stands to close the inequity surrounding school funding, has resulted in additional state funding for CPS and has helped narrow the school district's funding gap. I do not support the school voucher program and will support efforts to repeal it.

As mayor, I will follow the lead of other school districts around the country and help create policies and practices that undo the systems and structures that created and perpetuate inequities of opportunity and academic achievement. The first step is to create and adopt an equity policy statement that will act as a north star for CPS staff and students alike. In order to implement the policy, I will convene a district-wide equity council composed of educators who have had equity training and will be charged with ensuring the district complies with the equity policy moving forward.

In addition, CPS will conduct a Racial Equity Impact Assessment ("REIA") of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans and budgetary decisions. The REIA is a systematic examination of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. REIAs are used to minimize unanticipated adverse consequences in a variety of contexts and can be a vital tool for preventing institutional racism and for identifying new options to remedy long-standing inequities.

5. CPS recently released a report on facilities that uses their school ratings to label schools and regions as having "quality" seats. Illinois now also has a school rating system. Why should CPS have its own rating system? Is the current method of rating schools useful? Would you ask the Chicago Board of Education to modify or get rid of the CPS rating policy? What role should standardized test scores have in evaluating schools?

No child should have to leave his or her neighborhood to attend a Level 1 or Level 1+ school. Yet tens of thousands of CPS students, particularly African-Americans and Latinos, do just that because their neighborhood schools are underperforming or closed. District wide, 41% of African-American students and 71% of Latino students attend a

Level 1 or Level 1+ school, compared to 91% of white students. This is not good for students, who either are forced to commute long distances to attend a quality school or who, due to family or personal circumstances, have no option but to attend underperforming neighborhood schools. Nor is this good for neighborhoods, where schools should serve as community anchors.

6. Under what circumstances and via what process should or could a public school be closed, if ever?

It is clear that the 50 school closures followed by the closure of the high schools in Englewood and the decision to close National Teachers Academy have done tremendous harm to the communities affected, in part because the parents, students, teachers, staff and other stakeholders were treated as if they did not matter. These decisions were troubling because: (1) they were not transparent; (2) CPS and elected officials did not meaningfully engage stakeholders; (3) the decisions primarily impacted black and brown communities; and (4) the decisions have and/or will affect student academic achievement. One of my goals as mayor is to stop the exodus of African-Americans and Latinos from the city, which will stabilize our schools, tax base and neighborhoods; however, if Chicago's population continues to decline and schools are severely under-enrolled, I will facilitate a transparent, inclusive planning process to devise community based solutions to save schools. Serious declines in population should be the only reason for a school closure. We must work to keep Chicagoans in Chicago by making equity our focus both in government and in education.

7. Should Chicago have a fully elected representative school board? If so, when should an elected representative board be put into place? What policies or structures are needed to ensure that an elected board is truly representative across geography, race, class, and stakeholder constituencies (parents, teachers, etc)?

Yes. My mother was an elected school board member, so I understand the importance of giving parents and stakeholders a real voice in how our children are educated. That is why I support a fully independent, elected school board as soon as possible. I am currently evaluating proposals for electing a school board, including whether candidates should first be required to serve on a Local School Council.

8. Until an elected school board is put in place, the next mayor will be responsible for appointing the Board of Education and the CEO of Chicago Public Schools. What criteria will you use to evaluate potential board members?

Creating a fully-elected school board will require a change in state law, so I will draft and help introduce legislation in Springfield to give Chicagoans the right to elect an independent school board. Until this legislation becomes law, I will appoint individuals to serve on the school board based on their merit and backgrounds, not on their loyalty to the mayor. This will include CPS parents, academics and individuals from the non-profit

world with deep backgrounds in education. These individuals will be selected as part of a transparent process that includes public input.

9. Recently, the Illinois State Board of Education conducted an investigation of CPS special ed programs and found CPS wrongly cut and denied services to special education students in several areas. ISBE has placed a monitor in charge of CPS special ed department for three years and formed a Special Education Parent Advisory Council. What more, if anything, should CPS be required to do to ensure that special education students are getting all of the services they need?

Following the 2016 behind-closed-doors overhaul of the diverse learners program, many students and families remain unsatisfied with CPS. The state has only allocated one monitor and two staff people to oversee the entire special education program, which serves more than 50,000 students at the cost of nearly \$1 billion. Communication about any reforms in special education has been poor. Reports of missed deadlines and under-provision of services continue.

CPS needs to create a clear and accessible means for parents and students to raise concerns about access to special education services, and ensure that students and families are aware of this resource. By doing these things, we can begin to restore confidence in the diverse learners program and give students the resources they need to succeed.

10. Does the system of selective enrollment schools where student admissions are based on standardized test scores help or harm CPS students? Why?

I am not opposed to standardized testing as long as it doesn't become the proverbial tail that wags the dog. For me, that means creating a learning environment that is broader than "teaching for the test." I oppose evaluating teacher performance based on standardized test results.

11. Chicago's school facility decisions over the last eight years have in many cases exacerbated segregation by race in CPS rather than lessened it. What policies and programs would you carry out to increase integration in CPS?

In addition racial inequities in funding and instruction, we must work to end residential segregation in Chicago. Rising housing costs drive people from their neighborhoods and the city, remove children from their schools, and exacerbate Chicago's segregation problem. According to the city's inspector general, of the units created under the ARO from 2000 through 2015, none were built in nearly two dozen community areas on Chicago's North, Northwest, and Southwest sides. Addressing housing segregation will help to mitigate segregation and inequities across Chicago Public Schools.

12. Research shows that charter schools: have no better education outcomes than regular public schools; drain resources from neighborhood public schools and do not support the professionalization of teachers. In what way would these research findings inform your decisions about the existence of charter schools in Chicago?

I support a freeze on new charter schools. We must focus on getting level 1/1+ schools in every neighborhood first, and we must hold existing charter schools accountable for educating our children just as we do Chicago Public Schools.

13. Illinois' recently created a neo-voucher program, the Invest In Kids Scholarship Tax Credit Program. It is set to sunset in 2023. Do you support tax credit scholarships or vouchers? If not, as mayor, how would you use your power and influence in Springfield to mitigate the harm that this program that drains funds from public schools to private schools causes to the public school system?

I am against any program that takes money away from Chicago Public Schools. When CPS is underfunded, the working and middle class tax base faces the largest burden. This pushes people out of the city, exacerbating the problem. We must freeze all charter school expansion, and ensure that CPS receives the public funding we ask of our taxpayers.

14. Educational software collects ever larger amounts of personally-identifiable data about students and families. What rights do families have if they do not wish to hand over sensitive personal data in order to participate in school curriculum, programs and services?

As I believe with policing and technology used for public safety, transparency and accountability are the tools we have to build public trust. If the city or our schools are collecting and recording personal data, we have an obligation to educate the public about what we are doing, and to be fully transparent about how any data is used.

All of the data and research we do to improve our schools must be fully open, accessible, and transparent. As I have said in my [education plan](#), we must conduct transparent and deep analysis of programs, schools and budgets, making a commitment to data and empirical analysis, and creating a culture of trying solutions and evaluating them to systematically improve outcomes. This will take time, but it is necessary.

15. In the aftermath of CPS sexual abuse violations, a CPS Office of Student Protection and Title IX was created to respond to allegations of sex abuse and bullying in schools. Are you satisfied with this solution? Are you satisfied with CPS communication to the public about changes they have implemented to improve sexual abuse and bullying response? Should the Mayor's Office or City Council hold further investigations into this scandal?

Failures in the sex abuse crisis underscore the need for wholesale changes at CPS, and that starts with an elected school board. The mayor and his hand-picked school board, with its revolving door of CEOs, have failed our kids again and again, from refusing to address root causes of this sexual abuse crisis to neglecting special education and janitorial services. If we had an elected, representative school board, Chicagoans could hold schools and administrators accountable in moments like these.

Additionally, to further ensure that students feel safe at school, we must facilitate trauma screenings, provide trauma-informed instruction for students who have experienced trauma, and create a culture in schools that cares about students and their emotional and intellectual needs. Leaders and administrators in CPS must provide resources and training to teachers to meet those needs. A wealth of community organizations are already doing some of this work. To meet the needs of all students across Chicago, CPS must collaborate with community-based social service providers.

16. Give three examples of the policies, resources or best practices you would implement as mayor to retain excellent teachers and attract new ones to CPS.

To ensure Chicago public school students have access to high-quality teaching every day, every year, we will incentivize master teachers to teach in schools that need them most, diversify our teacher corps so more students of color have access to teachers of color, and work with CPS, CTU, City Colleges and area universities to enhance teacher career pipelines and pathways.

CPS must do more to get highly effective teachers to teach in underperforming schools. Offering teachers additional pay can help, but increased pay, on its own, is not enough.<sup>23</sup> Rather, CPS needs to ensure that underperforming schools have strong, effective leaders, collaborative teachers and the resources needed for schools to succeed. Strong leaders better understand how to allocate opportunities and resources within schools, how to promote collaboration between teachers, and how to help new teachers develop into highly effective ones. Combined, these things can help to attract highly effective teachers to underperforming schools.