

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

I believe public education should be a great equalizer that gives every child, no matter their zip code or the income of their parents, or the color of their skin, a chance to succeed. But too often, our schools fail low income neighborhoods, especially our black and brown communities. White babies are not born smarter than their black and brown peers, but there is an achievement gap between the groups because of decades of disinvestment. My top priority as mayor would be closing this achievement gap by 50% over the next eight years by bringing equity to our school system and beginning to tackle this long history of disenfranchisement.

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

My top priority would be bringing greater equity to our public schools. I have a goal to close the achievement gap by 50% over eight years, and every decision I make will be made with an eye towards that critical goal.

My second goal is to ensure that there is a focus on quality throughout the Chicago Public School system. From expanding access to models like AP, IB, and STEM programs to protecting the full school day to expanding access to sports and arts programs, I want to ensure that every child that grows up in Chicago gets a first-class education.

My next priority would be building up a college and career culture--with a focus on both of those elements. I would focus on college readiness by increasing access to dual credit and dual enrollment programs, which are proven to increase college graduation rates. I would also double down on vocational programs, especially those that are paired with an emphasis on careers in fields where there are workforce shortages. Building an expectation among all Chicago Public School students that they will go on to more opportunities beyond high school is really critical and will be a focus for me.

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

I believe it's irresponsible to be making personnel decisions on the campaign trail. However, when selecting a head of CPS, I will look for a candidate with deep roots in the Chicago Public School system, a person who has experience as a teacher and administrator, and someone who will best serve our schools and give every child a chance to get a quality public education. As a proud CPS parent, I have major skin in the game when it comes to guaranteeing quality public schools for all and I will fight relentlessly to make that happen.

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

I was proud to travel the state with Senator Andy Manar and Representative Will Davis to fight for a fairer school funding formula. As mayor, I'll ensure that Springfield not only follows through

on the promises it made with the implementation of that formula, but I will advocate for additional funding.

As mayor, I will earmark a portion of that additional funding for my 50NEW Initiative to double down on 50 underutilized and under-enrolled schools and turn them into true community hubs and stronger academic centers. The initiative would provide wraparound services, including after school supper and mentoring for students and job training for parents, and play a critical role in revitalizing neighborhoods that have been left out of the explosive economic growth of our city's downtown and left behind by decades of disenfranchisement.

**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?**

Having multiple measures of school quality is a good thing. It empowers parents with information to make the best decisions for their children. I believe that all school evaluation measures should encompass numerous factors, including qualitative and quantitative measures.

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

Instead of looking to the next 50 schools to close, I'll be focused on which 50 underutilized schools we should be doubling down on, turning them into true community hubs and stronger academic centers. I call it the 50NEW Initiative. 50 stands for the number of community schools we would create within existing, underutilized and under-enrolled school buildings over the next eight years. NEW stands for Neighborhood Education Works. My 50NEW Initiative would use the extra space in underutilized buildings to offer wraparound social services to students and their families. I've committed to a two-year moratorium on closing schools and one of my primary educational goals will be to increase the number of students in Chicago Public Schools by investing in the neighborhoods, tackling public safety, and doing the things that need to be done to attract more people back into Chicago's city limits.

**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)?**

I support a school board mixed with elected and appointed officials. As a proud CPS parent, I believe community members deserve a voice on their school board, but I also believe a mayor

has to have skin in the game and be held accountable for the performance of our neighborhood schools. As mayor, I will never abdicate or walk away from my responsibility and accountability to Chicago's students. There are many models for the elected school board that I will examine, including using Local School Councils to nominate members or publicly funding elections so that special interests don't get to influence the election.

**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?**

We need diversity, expertise, civic leaders, and most importantly, parents of kids in the school system. If you look at suburban districts, they all have parents on the school board, not just politicians.

**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?**

When I got to the comptroller's office, quarterly categorical payments that schools relied on to fund special education programs and transportation for students with special needs were running nearly a year behind. I tackled that problem head-on by re-prioritizing payments to ensure that the state's most vulnerable populations were being served first. As a result, I prioritized sending Chicago Public Schools \$119 million in special education funding that had been delayed for months by the prior administration.

It's clear that Chicago Public Schools made some really poor decisions when things were in bad shape financially. As mayor, I would direct CPS to work closely with the monitor to develop recommendations and a plan forward, with stakeholders including advocacy groups, educators, administrators, and parents. As mayor, I will continue to ensure that schools have the resources they need to give every student a quality education, no matter their abilities.

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

Selective enrollment schools are an important part of a larger commitment to give every student the opportunity to rise to the occasion when challenged and given the resources they need to thrive. I would look to ensure every child in our public schools has the chance to not just enroll in selective enrollment schools, but can also access IB, AP, and other high quality options in our neighborhood schools. Only when all of our students have access to these options will our schools be truly equitable.

**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?**

The truth of the matter is that increasing integration in CPS has to be the result of a comprehensive policy aimed at increasing integration throughout the city. It will never be enough to simply give CPS the order to integrate unless there is a broader citywide push to create neighborhoods throughout the city that are safe, racially diverse, mixed-income, and generally thriving.

That process begins with addressing public safety throughout the city. To create safer communities, I will fully implement the consent decree to build trust between police and communities they serve while ensuring our officers have the resources and training they need to improve our clearance rate. When there are safe communities geographically distributed throughout the city and not concentrated in one area, we can begin the process of healing the city and encouraging integration of all kinds.

The next piece has to be investment in our neighborhoods. I will help build inclusive economic growth by leveraging the success of our downtown to invest in neighborhoods suffering from decades of disenfranchisement and disinvestment. It also means investing in human capital through a lens of racial equity, from better schools throughout the city to adequate healthcare that's dispersed evenly in Chicago.

I believe by taking these steps, we can help break down the barriers we face and help close the gaps that separate our communities, both in terms of physical proximity and material life outcomes. It won't be enough to ask Chicago Public Schools to tackle the problem of segregation. We'll need city departments, community organizations, businesses, elected officials, activists, everyone that we can rally, to be on board with an agenda for desegregation. I'm from the neighborhood, I understand the challenges our neighborhoods face, and I'll be a mayor who always puts our neighborhoods first. I will be looking to partner with everyone that loves this city to bring the neighborhoods of Chicago back to life and make our city a city that works for everyone and is no longer a quilted patchwork of segregation.

**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 don't believe that charter schools or neighborhood schools are categorically good or bad and we should always focus on increasing the quality of public schools and prioritizing what's best for our children. I believe that we need to first prioritize our neighborhood schools and ensure that we have a comprehensive conversation that includes every stakeholder in our school

system to help shape the future of the district together and best serve every student in CPS regardless of where they live and the school they attend.

**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 do not support school vouchers and as mayor, I would support efforts to wind down the program.

**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?**

Handing over sensitive personal data should never be a prerequisite for access to educational services. As mayor, I'll ensure that there are strong protections for student and family privacy and that access to data is subject to approval in a very transparent manner.

**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?**

I strongly support the steps that CPS CEO Janice Jackson has taken in response to the crisis, including establishing a new "Office of Student Protections and Title IX," which will oversee investigations of student-on-student abuse and refer allegations of adult-on-student abuse to the Inspector General. I think we need to go further, by bringing intervention and crisis response services directly to the children. All school locations where abuse has occurred should have access sites for crisis response to make it easy for children to access services, and the mayor's office should provide technical assistance and funding to community organizations and health providers that can also bring crisis response services. I would also work with state legislators on a comprehensive package of legislation and reforms to ensure that this never happens again, anywhere in the state.

Organizations such as the Chicago Children's Advocacy Center provide training for Chicago Public School staff on preventing and reporting child abuse. I will leverage resources such as these throughout the City to equip staff and educators with the information they need to report incidences of child abuse and prevent other youth from experiencing the same. I'll also work to

foster more collaboration with law enforcement agencies on sharing data around child abuse so that we can more effectively track perpetrators and catch them when they try to duck the legal system.

Additionally, I will hire more social workers for Chicago Public Schools and create safe spaces where students feel they can go to ask questions about their sexual and mental health in confidence. I will build out mentoring programs and provide access to trauma awareness training for all mentors, tutors, and volunteers that work directly with students so that they can better assist youth and understand their emotional needs.

**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.**

- 1) Student loan forgiveness for nurses and teachers that enter and stay in the district for 10 years
- 2) Invest in strong mentorship programs
- 3) Create policies focused on autonomy for principals and teachers