

## Chicago Municipal Election 2019: Candidate Questionnaire

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

**I believe the best investment our city can make is in our young people and students. The purpose of public education is to not only provide a meaningful learning experience that will also lead to future opportunities, but to improve the overall health and vibrancy of our families and communities.**

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

**My top three priorities for improving public education are transitioning to a fully elected school board, securing a long-term funding source, including tax reform package that includes yearly TIF surpluses to fund our neighborhood schools and increasing the wrap around services, including social workers, nurses and teacher's aides..**

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

**I am committed to working with a CPS CEO who shares my vision for strong public schools, a fully-elected, representative school board and TIF reform earmarked for CPS. If elected, I will review all appointments.**

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

**The state's new formula aims to reduce the inequities in how we fund education and ensures that every child has the basic resources necessary for success. Additionally, recent changes have improved the fiscal outlook at CPS from a few years ago. But in order to fully fund education, Illinois needs to add an additional \$7 billion to its education budget. The new bill only commits to adding half of that over the course of the next 10 years. Without additional revenue, Illinois will be unable to live up its commitment to Chicago's students. To fulfill our commitment to give young people a quality education and a bright future, I support a tax reform package that includes real progressive revenue, including dedicating yearly TIF surplus specifically to public schools. Furthermore, the transition to an elected representative school board will ensure that communities have a voice in financial decisions.**

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?

**The current method of CPS rating schools is not particularly useful and overly punitive to students in poorly resourced neighborhoods. I would have the Chicago Board of Education review the procedures and standards of the current system and make recommendations if it should be modified or eliminated. I do**

**not believe standardized test scores should be used to evaluate schools. There must be a more holistic approach.**

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

**I have said that neighborhood schools are anchors of their communities. When a school is closed, students and families who depend on the school for resources, in and out of the classroom, suffer. We saw the unfortunate reality of this situation when Mayor Rahm Emanuel closed 50 schools in 2013. His decision was made even worse due to a lack of planning, so more than 10,000 students were uprooted and today, many of the closed schools still sit vacant or unsold. I do not support any additional school closures.**

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, I have been vocal in my support for a fully-elected representative school board. I would work to have this implemented as soon as possible, effective for the next municipal election. I support State Representative Robert Martwick's bill to create 20 voting districts that would elect one member each during municipal elections, and a board president elected citywide. The new board would then select CPS' chief executive, who I believe should have an education background. We must ensure that the districts are reflective of the diversity of their communities to create a board that is truly representative of its stakeholders.**

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?

**I believe the Board should be made up primarily of educators, as they are best equipped to handle the challenges and needs of Chicago's schools. Furthermore, we must identify members' existing or potential conflicts of interest that would influence decisions made by the Board. I would also work to ensure diversity across gender, age, geography and race to ensure a Board that reflects the communities it represents.**

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?

**It is inexcusable for students with special education needs to be denied the resources and services they need. While there have been actions taken to ensure this type of oversight doesn't happen again, we must do more for our special**

**education students. For many students, educational success can only be achieved with robust support both inside and outside of the classroom. Chicago Public Schools must invest in nurses, social workers, and critical support staff, such as teacher's aids, to better serve all students, especially those with physical and mental health needs.**

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

**I believe The success of public education should not be measured by the success of the best students, but rather by the overall success of all the students. Our schools should always offer opportunities for gifted students to advance, however their advancement should never result in the rest of the CPS population having to suffer through inadequate resources as a result of standardized test scores.**

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?

**Students benefit from attending schools with diverse student populations. Having neighborhoods school with a variety of quality programs will ensure no student is given different opportunities from other students, perhaps in more affluent communities, and increase integration.**

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?

**Under previous administrations, corporate privatization of our public schools expanded with negative results. While some charter schools are doing good work for our students, too many are engaging in troubling disciplinary practices and marginalizing special needs students while paying their CEOs up to 10 times their teachers. I believe we must halt charter expansion expansion and focus our efforts on improving oversight and ensuring that all our schools treat families, students and teachers with respect. I support a freeze on any new charter schools until a new school board is elected.**

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 tax credit scholarships or vouchers.. Last year, I was encouraged by the General Assembly's approval of an overhaul of the state's public education funding formula. I would continue to work with state legislators to**

**improve public education in Chicago, and across the state, rather than continue to drain funds from public schools through programs like vouchers**

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?

**Students and families should absolutely be entitled to privacy over their sensitive personal data. CPS must be transparent in communicating to students and families what software is being used, what types of information is being collected and stored, and for how long it is kept. School curriculum, programs and services should not be dependent on this data for students and families to participate.**

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 was horrified and appalled by the the many reports of CPS sexual abuse violations. We must do everything possible to ensure that children are safe at school and unafraid to learn. While CPS has created the Office of Student Protection and Title IX, there is more to be done. Because many of these cases were caused by a lack of adequate background checks in the hiring of CPS personnel, there must be a more comprehensive process implemented to ensure these lapses will not occur in the future. There should be further investigations conducted to identify where the system failed in order to prevent these situations from happening again. In terms of communication, I don't think enough was done. Given how important the safety of children is to the public's trust in CPS, I would have preferred CPS use mass media communication; television, radio, and digital mediums, to inform and reassure the public about the changes that have been made to ensure student safety. If CPS leadership can go on television and radio to tout improvements, it can go on television to be accountable and transparent about its failures as well. Both stories must be told.**

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 give our students the best possible education, we must also invest in resources for excellent teachers. In the same way we support our students in and out of the classroom, we must provide additional supports for teachers and support staff; that reduce staff burnout and high turnover. I would advocate increasing mentorship programs to attract and retain teachers to work in a high needs area. I would also support creating a focus group of teachers and support staff to gather what the specific supports and needs are and building program based on those assessments. There should also be additional efforts made to**

**make it easier for teachers to continue their education and stay up-to-date with the latest innovations and best practices. Most importantly, to recruit and retain teachers we have to focus on improving learning/working conditions. That means commensurate compensation, manageable class sizes, adequate support staff, reasonable paperwork and reporting requirements, consistent preparation and colleague collaboration time, real input with building and central administration.**