

Raise your Hand

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

The purpose of a public education is to prepare students for life and a career.

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

My education plan is built on bringing high-quality schools closer to home, supporting teachers and empowering parents and communities, and driving better outcomes for our kids. We need to stop using our schools and kids as political footballs. At the end of the day, our kids' success should be our top priority.

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

I am not discussing any personnel decisions during the campaign. The city has many talented leaders today and some opportunities for new ideas. I will evaluate personnel options when I become mayor and not before.

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

I am committed to bringing high-quality schools closer to home by giving neighborhoods greater control over their school options. There are 150,000 empty seats in CPS, and 60,000 open seats in Level 1 schools. Before we can tackle inadequate funding, we need to fill the open seats we already have. We need to get as many kids as possible the best educational fit and leave no seats in top schools unfilled.

Accomplishing those goals requires us to rethink neighborhood schools and catchment zones. Instead of 423 neighborhood schools, each having a unique zone, I'll create 50 or so neighborhood zones that include 8-12 different schools. I'll replace Local School Councils with Neighborhood School Councils that provide more local control and put decisions to expand, consolidate or change neighborhood schools in the hands of parents and not in a central office. Each neighborhood zone can decide the right mix of schools for them. That mix might include traditional schools, charters, magnets, language, STEM, arts, IB or vocational education.

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?

Tests are only one factor in evaluating schools. As for the rating system, we can look at which rating system is best but it's important to look at multiple indicators like attendance, teacher satisfaction and turnover, parent satisfaction and, most important, what happens to the students after they move on.

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

Neighborhood School Councils will have greater control over their school mix. If a neighborhood has under-enrolled schools in its portfolio, it could consider consolidating schools in a way that maximizes resources for the students and teachers in the neighborhood. The city cannot sidestep these serious enrollment challenges, but the decisions should be driven by the community that knows its kids best, not by a central office.

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)?

Chicago needs more community involvement in the school board, but the mayor must also be held accountable. I support a hybrid board – with the mayor appointing four seats, including the board president, and the local school councils feeding up recommendations for the other three seats, which the mayor must accept. The process to recommend community board members must include all Chicagoans including parents who are undocumented, refugees and permanent legal residents. An election administered by a board of elections would not be truly representative, because it would leave those important voices out of the process.

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've led large, complex organizations in the private and public sectors, and I understand the unique skills that make a good leader and board member. My appointees to the board must have experience leading complex organizations, a commitment to Chicago's civic life and education, and clear perspective on our school system. The board must work well together and represent all of Chicago. I will ensure that my appointees represent diverse viewpoints and backgrounds.

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?

As always, transparency is important and we should provide every opportunity for parents to share their concerns and experiences. CPS must follow the law. At the same time, the state and the federal government need to fund special education mandates. We will work with all stakeholders to boost funding for students with disabilities.

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

Options help students. Selective enrollment, magnet, language, IB and vocational education provide CPS students the best possible chance to find a school environment that matches their learning style and

goals, but students shouldn't have to travel all over city to find these options. My neighborhood zone approach will bring more quality options closer to home for all students.

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?

Chicago is a diverse city of neighborhoods and every one of those neighborhoods deserves high-quality schools. I will continue to encourage integration in our schools through programs like city-wide enrollment and magnets, but my focus will be on neighborhood investments close to students who need them.

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?

It's time to move beyond the debate of charters vs. traditional public schools and recognize that they are all public schools. Parents just want a good school, and the debate should focus on what is in the best interests of kids. Charter schools offer different learning options for families. They offer laboratories of innovation from which the traditional system can learn. There are over 150,000 open seats in CPS, and 60,000 open seats in Level 1 schools. We should be working together to give as many kids as possible the best educational fit close to home, whether it is traditional neighborhood schools, charters, magnets, or schools with a special focus, including ARTS, STEM, dual languages or IB.

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?

For some students the best school option may be private education and a scholarship. I support additional choices for students across Chicago. The law runs for five years. Let's see how it works.

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?

Data privacy is a broad and pressing issue. The national discussion on data collection is an important one that will take federal action. I understand the unique circumstances that surround children's data, and especially students' school data. Parents deserve transparency on how their children's information is used and assurance that CPS is maintaining data securely.

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?

CPS has taken a number of steps to address sexual abuse in the schools. We need to be absolutely vigilant on this issue, hold accountable all of the adults in our schools, and ensure that the implemented changes are effective in practice. Every day, hundreds of thousands of parents entrust their children to our school system, and every adult in CPS has an obligation to report suspicious activity around sexual abuse of students. If we can't keep our kids safe, nothing else we do in our schools will matter.

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.

All three of my sisters and one of my daughters were teachers. Teachers do incredibly important work and they deserve our support. We need to find the resources to pay them fairly and provide other needed services in schools that can help our students succeed and make our teachers feel there is an adequate support structure behind them. New teachers deserve feedback and mentoring; even older teachers should regularly receive feedback from their colleagues. We also need to ensure that every school has a great principal. Great leaders can make all the difference in creating an environment where teachers feel supported and are committed to staying.