

**ERSB Candidate Questionnaire
Network 49 Education Committee**

Thank you for your candidacy! Please complete this questionnaire and return it by Saturday, May 11th to christinejohnson1000@gmail.com.

1. Describe your background and qualifications to be a member of the Chicago Board of Education. What has been your connection with Chicago public schools? What special skills and experiences do you bring to the position?

I am a graduate of CPS, a former Gale teacher, a former Gale LSC member, the current president of Gale Grows Kids, and an education organizer with ONE Northside. As an education organizer, I've grown parent mentor programs from three schools to currently eight schools. In these eight CPS schools I work with principals, teachers and parents who are mostly women of color to provide voluntary service in classrooms where additional support is needed. As an education organizer, I also was an integral part of Illinois' Grow Your Own, a teacher recruitment program that focused on placing teachers of color in front of students of color. With GYO, I had the honor of supporting parents, adult learners and community members as they balanced busy lives all while working towards their goal of being a teacher. In 2012, I fought alongside many others against the mass school closures, even here on the north side schools were closed. To this day, Gale School, where I was developed and taught is still here because of education organizing and power building I helped lead. My connection to CPS is generational! My time at CPS led me to raising my child in CPS! As an organizer, I believe that those most affected by the issues have the answers. I continually build power with my community and make decisions in collaboration with others. I believe decision making in relationship with others is the precedent that needs to be set after our first elections for this board, and I believe I am the candidate that can do just that.

2. What is your vision for Chicago public schools? How do you believe an elected school board can achieve that vision? What do you personally hope to achieve as a board member? Is there any driving force behind your desire to be a school board member?

CPS should prepare young people to be confident and capable in their adulthood. A school board can achieve this by ensuring mental health supports, art programming, a strong curriculum, and investing in extracurriculars to produce students that are as well-rounded as possible. As a board member, I hope to strengthen our neighborhood schools' resources and create more community supports throughout our school system. I received a quality neighborhood education and was able to explore the arts and have a rigorous and college preparatory curriculum, and my desire to run is influenced by the fact that I want those opportunities for all of my community members.

3. District 2 is quite large and diverse; it encompasses approximately 10% of the city and includes neighborhoods from Rogers Park to Uptown, Edgewater to Lincoln Square. It is also extremely diverse economically, racially, and ethnically. Do you see issues that are unique to District 2? What issues are common across the district? How will you represent the entire district?

District 2 has unique issues like language access. Schools that I work in across the district are in dire need of translation and ESL support. We are also losing affordable housing and many of

our students are unstably housed. I believe that our district and our city want quality and high impact neighborhood public schools. Common issues in the district include challenges with providing neurodivergent children curriculum and accommodations that meet their needs. and ensuring our schools have high quality early childhood programming. I would represent the district the same way I've worked as an organizer: by bringing together those impacted by education issues like students, families, teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, community stakeholders, and changemakers to get the facts and the solutions we need.

4. How do you propose to help schools in your district tap into local people, places, and institutions and strengthen community connections?

My experience working in schools has taught me that many successful principals have a cooperative outlook that welcomes partnership and teamwork within the community. Beyond encouraging all of our educators to become more familiar with neighborhood institutions, their staff and programs, I would leverage the many different relationships I have built in the district to create new relationships and partnerships where it makes sense. For example, to enrich the new existing curriculum requirement to teach Asian American history, I would connect the Chinese and Vietnamese ethnic organizations I worked with in Uptown to principals and teachers. Another way I'd strengthen connections between schools and community is to develop and foster long term partnerships like university students tutoring students and local institutions creating unique programming - in the 49th Ward, the Recyclery, a volunteer run bike cooperative offers Gale students bike riding lessons and community bike rides to see other neighborhoods. I've seen small businesses give annual financial support to schools for big events like Community Thanksgivings. There are many ways to improve school and community relationships and they all excite me.

5. CPS faces a budget deficit of \$391 million next year as Covid funding ends next September. How would you work across stakeholder groups to ensure CPS secures adequate funding? What solutions do you see for obtaining what we need for fully funded schools?

This is a very serious issue that requires a real sit down with every person invested in our schools, and our city as a whole. While we have great businesses in this city that could partner with our schools, we absolutely need more from our government to fix this problem. We need to look at other sources of revenue for our schools, and get creative to find sustainable solutions - can the use of TIFs for luxury development be tied to a percentage set aside for schools? I While I may not have the answer right now, I will remain open to new solutions and work tirelessly with my fellow board members to discover one. I do believe that the recent move to evidence based funding models is a move in the right direction. We also need to consider shifting the revenue streams for education.

6. Many neighborhood schools, particularly those that serve students of color, have suffered long-term underfunding and disinvestment. What policies would you support to fund all CPS schools regardless of neighborhood or zip code? How do you plan to support under-enrolled schools fully and equitably?

As a former teacher, I can't help being particularly disturbed by these results. I would support funding policies that increase equity and decrease the funding disparity across zip codes. I

would support funding policies that are sustainable rather than regressive. I would support funding that returns more art, music, STEM and other programs that children enjoy so much, the reasons, they want to go to school, I fully support the new funding model - it takes a very strong step towards equity and we must keep our eyes on schools that receive new resources and ensure that we invest in what works.

7. Violence is a critical issue for our students. In the last 3 months, Senn High School, for example, has experienced two shooting incidents resulting in the death of one student and the wounding of four others. As a board member what policies will you advocate to achieve safe schools? What is your position on the presence of SROs in schools?

I would support policies that address the root causes of violence rather than focusing on punitive policies that are ineffective in reducing violence. I would advocate for policies and programs that increase healthy relationship building among peers, including building conflict resolution skills and restoring and repairing relationships when harm is caused. I would also advocate for policies that add evidence base counseling, mental health supports and mentorship programs so that students have good models for healthy relationships where conflicts don't end in violence. I do not believe SROs belong in school. Our officers belong outside of our campuses, where the worst violence is happening.

8. What policies will you support to assure that our schools are healthy, clean, adequate to students' needs, and environmentally sustainable? Describe in detail.

Most of Chicago's schools are over 100 years old, so we sorely need capital improvements to create more environmentally friendly campuses. I would support policies that allow for innovative and simple solutions - the installation of solar panels on school roof tops could generate enough energy to lower our schools' carbon footprints. I would also support policies that create sustainable, researched and tested ways to lower school's energy costs, like ensuring all CPS schools have switched away from incandescent bulbs to more cost effective and energy efficient LED bulbs. With regards to healthy schools, I would support policies that add partnerships for community health, dental and vision clinics and robust health staff focused on wellness and drug and alcohol intervention programs. I would also support policies that allow for unique yet simple solutions like installing washing machines for student and parent use. Many students lack a second set of clean uniform clothes, which influences both personal hygiene and truancy. Policies that provide access to more gardens and greenhouses that help encourage sustainable, healthy eating are ones I could also support.

9. With up to 50 languages spoken in District 2, how can CPS effectively support both newcomers and those in existing ESL and bilingual or dual language programs? Do you have a vision for how to provide all students with needed language skills, respect and nurture students' home cultures, and expand all students' linguistic and cultural knowledge?

Our city is struggling with this and of course that also shows up in our schools too. Assessments could be used ensure all English learners are receiving the right level of instruction. Often English language learners need additional social and community support. I would work with partnering agencies to bolster the other skills students need to be successful in classrooms. Being incredibly intentional to include parents and families of newcomers and existing students in the various English learning classes is one way to support this group of

students. We must work harder to include their parents and families in the education process in the same way English speakers are included in their students' educations. Schools need to be more inclusive and responsive to families and provide language classes to the community at large.

10. What policy changes are needed to ensure that diverse learners receive all the services and resources they need for a full and joyful education?

When it comes to our students, we need to identify their needs earlier with screenings and diagnoses. We must respond to those needs aggressively, and we will need to recruit aggressively for staff and raise retention rates in order to meet these goals.

11. What is your position on the Sustainable Community School model? How do you see this model applied in District 2?

All of our schools could benefit from the enrichments that are included in the SCS. Often, these models include ways to support the parents and community holistically, which will only further the growth of the students. Schools are public institutions that should be easily navigated by community members and places to receive resources for those in need. Night classes, food pantries, housing resources, career skillbuilding, tutoring, academic enrichment. Arts programming would give our students more opportunities to be recognized as gifted, not just testing well, and would provide the wider population with a resource hub.

12. Equal access to a standard curriculum, with enrichment classes, should be available to all CPS students. However, many schools lack libraries with a school librarian, music and art, and well-funded sports teams. Many schools limit choices in foreign languages and advanced math and science classes. How would you address these inequalities and end this two-tiered system of education?

There are so many possibilities. We have really wonderful schools in the city and we need to determine how we can utilize them to support our underresourced schools. We need creative collaboration with business partners and nonprofits across the city so that our students do not have to be educated with austere budgets. The system must change, and an elected school board finally provides the time to do something about it.

13. To qualify for the ballot, ERSB candidates must submit a minimum of 1000 petition signatures by June 24. Typically, candidates in Chicago need to gather two to three times as many signatures to meet the required number of valid signatures. What is your plan to gather sufficient signatures by the June 24 deadline?

Myself and several volunteers have already collected dozens of pages and we are well on our way to over 1000 signatures.