

204 Candidate Questionnaire

Name Justin Karubas

For how long have you lived in our school district? 49 years

What is your vested interest behind your desire to serve as a school board member? It is important to have a board member that knows the history of the district. I'm an alum having gone to Clow, Hill and Waubonsie. I have two kids at Neuqua and one who graduated. They all went to Patterson and Crone. My mom and sister taught in the district. My father was one of the founding members of IPEF. I served on the board of IPEF for five years prior to joining the school board. My tenure on the school board is 10 years.

1. What are the practices of an effective school board?

School Board Members are volunteers and come from diverse backgrounds that might not include any knowledge about the inner workings of schools. The key is having each board member commit to professional development as a school board member.

Here are the principles of effective governance:

<https://www.iasb.com/conference-training-and-events/training/training-resources/foundational-principles-of-effective-governance/>

Those principles must be learned first and then adopted and lastly practiced regularly. Every year that the board has been eligible for recognition since I have been on the board, our school board has received recognition for effective governance from the Illinois Association of School Boards:

<https://www.iasb.com/IASB/media/Documents/GovernanceRecognitionWinners.pdf>

The boards that have fall apart are the ones that aren't committed to even learning what is needed and required of the office.

2. What is the role of an individual school board member?

The role is to work collaboratively with the other school board members so that the district can stay focused on its mission to inspire all students to achieve their greatest potential. From that, all things follow. While individual board members have no authority, we are part of a board that ultimately has all of the responsibility. Recognizing the limits, we play a role in the equitable and quality education of all students.

3. During contract negotiations, does the role of an individual board member change? If yes, please explain the difference.

No.

4. What are the greatest challenges you see our district facing now and during the next four years?

The aging of our district with underfunding from the state. With our extreme growth in a very short time, we hired a lot of staff and built our buildings all at the same time. Staff is retiring. Buildings need maintenance and updating. We are losing a lot of institutional knowledge. There is a need to go to referendum when our bonds for the building of Metea are paid off in the next few years.

5. As a board member you will be regularly charged with making decisions that will impact 27,400 students, 3,100 non-certified, certified, and administrative staff members and this very large community as a whole. From whom will you seek counsel to help you formulate informed opinions that will lead to you making quality decisions?

The board relies on administration heavily for doing the work of collecting information to be provided to the board with parent surveys, teacher surveys, discussions with union leadership, meetings with civic leaders and city officials, etc. However, each board member receives and solicits opinions from everyone that will volunteer to do so. One of our challenges recently is trying to ascertain if the opinions are coming from our education community or from outside it. One recent area of improvement is the board implementation of a student advisory committee to the board. It's a work in progress, but I've been very impressed by hearing directly from some of our students.

6. What is your role as a board member in supporting the [District 204 Equity Belief Statement](#)?

We have a post board meeting evaluation sheet that now includes a question about whether or not equity was considered at each board meeting. You will see in the board presentations that the board has focused administration on providing references to board policy, the strategy plan and the equity statement. You will often hear discussion about it during a board meeting.

7. How do you respond to a neighbor who tells you that a focus on education equity could take resources away from some students while overserving others?

Well, it could, but it doesn't in our district as a whole. Just like you can have too much water, one could have too much equity. Equity is tempered by the many requirements to provide a certain level of services to all students. Equity is also tempered by the requirement not to discriminate. The schools must provide an equal opportunity. With the current underfunding of the district based upon the Evidence Based Funding formula, I see equity as more removing barriers than removing resources to get each student to an equal opportunity.

8. What will you do as a board member to make sure that ALL students and staff feel welcomed, supported, and safe in our schools?

It's challenging to control how people feel. As a board member, we focus on policies, practices, and programs then monitor the progress and make adjustments as needed. And those board actions can seem very removed from feeling welcomed, supported and safe. But, it is not at all. For example, one can't prevent bullying of students and staff without first having a policy on it. That policy defines it, prohibits it, outlines the penalties for it, and requires a plan to prevent it. As a board member, we then evaluate the policy. Did bullying go down? Are more supports needed at certain buildings or populations? Are class sizes a practical solution? Bullying prevents student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate. And, this is just one example.

9. As a board member, what role do you play in the day to day management of the district?

Zero. I don't even have a key.