

204 Candidate Questionnaire

Name: Mark Rising

For how long have you lived in our school district?

I have lived in Indian Prairie School District since 1997 before the birth of our first child as we wanted to raise our family in D204. Married with two daughters and have been elected since 2011 to the Indian Prairie School District Board of Education.

What is your vested interest behind your desire to serve as a school board member?

My only interest for the past 12 years has been to give back to our community that I love so much and represent everyone to the best of my ability. In addition, it has been to ensure (from top to bottom) we are one of the best school districts in Illinois (currently #2 Best K-12 District in IL) and in the US (currently #36 Best K-12 School District in US).

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

- The Board identifies and clarifies the district's mission and goals. We have done that by creating yearly district and board goals. Most recently the Board created a Strategic Plan (with full community involvement) as a road map for the future of D204.
- The Board monitors the performance of the goals and strategic plan to ensure we are on the right track and to adjust as necessary.
- The Board evaluates the superintendent and collectively delegates to him the direction of the district based on those goals.
- Lastly, (and equally important) each board member connects with the community by being involved in the schools and community and listening to all stakeholders.

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

The role of an individual school board member is to be a representative of the community as a whole and collectively listen and represent everyone. That entails the

community that elects us, parents, taxpayers, and everyone that makes up the school district (administrators, teachers, staff) to ensure we are doing what is best for all students on a daily basis. In addition, it requires an individual to not have an agenda, be a good listener, be thoughtful, be sincere/truthful, be well-informed, brings ideas to the table, effectively communicate, can problem solve, and collaborates well with others.

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

The Board as a whole creates the parameters and direction to be negotiated on behalf of the district. Those parameters should remain consistent throughout the negotiation process. If an issue arises that is outside of the parameters, the Board adjusts their parameters that are agreed upon collectively by all seven board members. An individual board member's opinions are always valued and should be factored into those parameters. All board members should be unified before entering into negotiations and remain unified throughout the process.

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

Because our district is only 84% adequately funded it is a yearly challenge to maximize our financial resources to ensure we are educating our students in the most successful and effective way possible. Our community should be extremely proud of the results our district produces with our limited resources. Over my twelve-year tenure on school board, we have found areas for reductions, implemented financial efficiencies, or phased in new or additional expenditures (ex: building improvements, A/C & class sizes). For 15+ years D204 has spent less per pupil (than the State avg) because of our limited State public school funding, and our limited and capped local financial resources. This will continue to be a challenge for the next four years to keep pace with our surrounding districts in how we can best educate our students.

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?

I seek counsel with everyone. From my first day on school board, I held a standard for myself to be in our schools and community at least 3 days/evenings per week and often

times more. I consistently talk with students, parents, staff, teachers, business owners, taxpayers who don't have children, and all other elected officials. I listen and ask questions so that I am best representing our whole community. It is my goal to make everyone's opinions feel heard and that I represent everyone equally.

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

I fully support it, since I was part of the process and involved (along with many others in our community) in creating the District 204 Equity Belief Statement. The Equity Belief Statement must be intentional in everything we do as a District. Its goal is to recognize that not everyone is the same in their journey or in what they need to feel supported, successful academically, welcomed, respected, and made to feel safe. We are a diverse school district and we need to educate all students to the best of our abilities. Many times, this means meeting individual students where they are on their academic journey and remove any biases or practices that could negatively affect any student. We should always do our best to meet students' individual needs so they can be successful and feel supported.

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?

Equity work should never take away from other students. Equity work means that everyone is welcomed, supported academically, and feels valued. Intentional academic equity work identifies that some students need more support without taking away from other students. This can be done while still supporting our high and middle achieving students.

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?

One of the things I am most proud of in 204 is that we have created a culture (unlike any school district that I know) to make everyone feel welcomed, supported, listened to, and safe. That's not to say we get it right 100% of the time and we always have work to do. This message needs to be communicated constantly to all students and staff. All students and staff need to feel that they are valued and listened to by everyone (at all

levels) in D204 and it needs to start with the Board of Education and Superintendent. Everyone needs to feel every day that they are valued, welcomed, and safe.

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

As a board member, I am not involved in the day-to-day management of the district. The day-to-day management of the district is NOT the role of a board member. In addition to many other things, the board creates the mission, vision, goals, and policy of the district. Those items are the direction and focus of the day-to-day operations, management, and job of educating our students each day. The board's role is governance, NOT the day-to-day operations of our schools. The mission, vision, and goals represent our community as determined by the board and implemented by the superintendent. The superintendent then reports back to the board and community on the progress of our mission, vision, and goals.