

Lisa Hirsh
Candidate Questions for March 2, 2017

1. State your reasons for seeking a position on NSSD112 School Board

My involvement with District 112 began with advocating for my children with special needs. I continue to be their voice so that they receive the services and education they need to succeed despite their challenges. As hard as I have worked for them – talking to teachers, engaging with administrators, and consulting with therapists – I will likewise commit myself to advocating for all of the children in our district.

Once the referendum didn't pass and BDR3 implementation was near, I felt a need to advocate on behalf of the entire district for a more thoughtful approach to school closures. I became a voice for Elm Place families, then Ravinia families, a role that then expanded to include all families who wanted a better plan for District 112.

I have been and will continue to be a strong voice for our community. I am running for school board to take an active role in the decision making process for the district, one that respects the values of all of our constituents. As a board member, I will focus on preserving the integrity and stability of District 112 schools by actively, respectfully, and effectively engaging with community members, educators, administrators, and fellow board members on the challenges facing our district.

Together we can explore and implement thoughtful and balanced education policies and reconfiguration options for the benefit of our children and our neighborhoods.

2. Describe the skills, talents, and experiences you would contribute to your position.

My advanced degree in communications, coupled with my strong ties across the community uniquely qualify me for the position of Board Member. I am an excellent and active listener and an expert in the field of communications.

In addition, my proficiency with Spanish will help in my goal to increase engagement with our Spanish-speaking families, to make sure that their hopes, concerns, and ideas are being included in these discussions.

District 112 would benefit from a Board member with the skills to proactively solicit feedback to give our community a voice. I have been told that people find me warm and approachable, valuable traits for a group trying to make connections with the community. While it is gratifying to hear these things, it's also important to note that I am dedicated and persistent, and will be motivated to act on the concerns and ideas of my constituents.

Professionally, my mother and I have run a successful medical billing service for the past 20 years. In this role, I interact with physicians, insurance companies, and patients on a daily basis. My occupation allows me to problem solve and requires an exceptional eye for detail. I understand what is involved in slogging through mountains of documents to find and absorb the relevant information.

Most importantly, since I am self-employed, I have the flexibility to take on the responsibilities of being a Board member.

3. Write a brief job description of your view of this position, including the time commitment required.

Responsibilities of a Board Member:

- Engage with all of our stakeholders when making important decisions, collaborate between governing bodies, and promote our children's education — all while being financially responsible.
- Demonstrate the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively across all populations.
- Educate themselves on all district matters, be prepared to study financial reports, legal documents, reports from administrators and committees and review policies.
- Actively participate at meetings and presentations.
- Engage with fellow Board Members in a professional manner.
- Understand that the time commitment for this position may have no limit.

I will commit myself to being present and engaged for all of my constituents.

4. What do you feel are the most important issues facing District 112 Board and how would you address those issues?

The most pressing issues facing district 112 involve solving our reconfiguration problem while continuing to provide an excellent curriculum for our children. The board needs to work collaboratively with the Reconfiguration 2.0 Committee to come up with an appropriate plan for our district.

Since community input and buy-in is vital to the success of any plan, the process should be transparent and allow for as much engagement as possible with interested parties. I have been attending the 2.0 meetings and I am closely following their work.

The Reconfiguration 2.0 Committee deserves time and trust to present a fully vetted plan. However, if the Reconfiguration 2.0 Committee does not have a plan ready for the March 2018 ballot, then I would support a modest school closure plan.

Community input should be obtained before authorizing the closure of any school. I am a gradualist and believe that school closures should be carefully planned so as to be the least disruptive to our children, our educators, and our community. Prior to a decision to close schools, it is imperative that we gauge how much change our community will tolerate.

These reconfiguration issues need to be resolved as to not hinder the delivery of excellent educational programs.

Additionally we now have a fantastic opportunity to improve our children's education by hiring a new Superintendent and a new Curriculum Lead.

5. How would you reach out and engage all members of the community?

I feel I have much to offer to District 112 in repairing the relationship between the Board of Education and its constituents. The Board needs to lead by example: listening, accepting feedback, and collaborating with all groups to achieve mutually beneficial solutions

As a Board member I would maintain an open channel of communication with district residents. I believe that all Board members should make themselves readily available to communicate with all of their constituents.

For example; we need to change the current format of public comment at the beginning of public meetings. At present, the guidelines allow for no interaction with the Board during public comment; a policy that has only bred resentment and anger from the public. I believe that the format of these meetings should allow for more two-way communication, similar to the format of City Council meetings. I will consult with the City Council on how they cultivate a more positive environment with the community in their meetings.

I will advocate for regular community engagement meetings and work to make sure that we are connecting with the community as well as the parents using multiple modes of communication. For instance, I will encourage resident feedback through informal coffees, phone meetings, and small town hall-style meetings. District news should be disseminated via direct mail, email, newspaper

articles, and social media. I will work with my fellow board members and our Director of Communications on a comprehensive communication plan that keeps our citizens informed and provides a robust method for soliciting input.