



The following questions were emailed to candidates on February 10. Responses received by the deadline of February 20 are included in our evaluation. No edits were made to any responses.

Erik Hjerpe (District 200)

Do you believe your school's current Health Education curriculum should include age-appropriate sex education? What do you see as the strengths and/or areas needing improvement in this curriculum?

Yes. My district's curriculum does include age-appropriate sex education, as it should. I am pleased that it includes topics such as sexual abuse prevention (consistent with Erin's Law), reproductive anatomy, relationships, puberty, abstinence, contraception, sexual health, gender identity, sexual identity, various family structures, consent, dealing with intimate relationship violence, sexting, etc.

While I find it beneficial that these topics are covered with my children, reinforcing and adding to what my wife and I have discussed with them, as a Board Member I need to represent the community in which we live. As such I find it appropriate that there is an option for parents to "opt their children out" of this curriculum if they prefer to be their child's sole "formal" source of education on intimate relationships and sexual health.

What is your position on the renewal of the Invest in Kids Scholarship Tax Credit Program? Do you favor state tax credits or vouchers for use by families to send children to private schools? If so, how do you feel this will affect public schools?

This is an area where I will continue to educate myself, and where today I am somewhat ambivalent. As such I would reluctantly support renewal of "Invest in Kids" if it remains narrowly scoped (limited-benefit, means-tested, and expenditure-capped) as it is today. My understanding is that today the program administration is funded by charitable donations, donors receive a 75 percent nonrefundable tax credit, the program is only available to households with incomes below 3x the federal poverty level, and total expenditures are capped at \$75 million per year.

I am a strong proponent of public education, and quality public education must be provided to all under Illinois law. That system only functions if all contribute to it. Choosing to send children to private schools, or to educate them at home, should of course remain a choice, but that choice may not be allowed to adversely impact public education for the majority. So whereas a narrow program like "Invest in Kids" may have its place, I am strongly opposed to broad-based redirection of funds from public schools to private schools such as what most "school choice" and voucher efforts aim to accomplish.

What, if any, is the role of the Board in the selection of materials for school libraries and curriculum development?

It is a governance role only. The Board is responsible for establishing the strategic plans and objectives for the District. In CUSD 200 this includes refinement of “Vision 2026” (and its eventual successor) and “Portrait of a Graduate,” as well as the specific objectives and goals behind those.

Based on State of Illinois requirements, as well as the objectives, goals, strategies, and metrics established by the Board, the experts (educators and librarians) then author the curriculum and select library materials. I very much value expertise, and educators and administrators have the education, training, and skillset to create a curriculum and to determine how that curriculum may be most effectively delivered.

The Board then has an oversight role, reviewing and approving the proposed curriculum in order to ensure that it satisfies State requirements and is consistent with strategic plans and objectives. The Board also has a responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum in achieving desired outcomes, including of course academic achievement. Finally, the Board should work with the administration to establish policies for managing challenges to curriculum and library material decisions, so that educators are not burdened and distracted from their core mission and responsibility of educating the children.