

Thank you for participating in the 2023 Activist Toolkit Voter Guide to the Proviso consolidated election. This year's guide will collect articles, videos, relevant web links, and contact information and post them online at activisttoolkit.org for easy access by voters. It will be published on or before March 20, 2023 and updated periodically through election day. The guide is non-partisan and will not include endorsements.

We hope you will complete the attached questionnaire and return your responses to activisttoolkitop@gmail.com, along with a digital headshot, by March 15, 2023. Late submissions will not be included at launch but may be published late at our convenience. You are also welcome to include links to any online material you would like to have appear in the guide.

Activist Toolkit (activisttoolkit.org) is a resource for progressive activists in and around the near west suburbs of Chicago. The site was created in early 2017 by Paul Goyette and Carollina Song, Oak Park activists looking for ways to help people connect with local political initiatives and facilitate connections between progressive organizations.

DISTRICT 209 SCHOOL BOARD
2023 ACTIVIST TOOLKIT CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please limit answers to 200 words.

- 1) What motivates you to seek this office? What makes you qualified to serve? What metrics of success do you plan on holding yourself accountable to?
- 2) How do you make decisions? How do you handle working with others with whom you disagree?
- 3) How will you work to ensure that District 209 provides an excellent educational experience for all its students?
- 4) How would you approach the budgeting process? What is the per student spending on curriculum at Proviso now? What is recommended for best practices for the average student at District 209? How does that spending vary by school (East, West, PMSA)?
- 5) What would you say to voters who are worried about the tax burden?
- 6) Special education is mandated by federal law. Recently, District 209 pulled out of its relationship with the Proviso Area for Exceptional Children (PAEC) consortium, to in-house services. How have you tracked the results of that move, and how can District 209 better work to provide an excellent education for students in need of special education?
- 7) Since the 1960s, Proviso high schools have had a tense relationship with the communities that it services, arguably due to issues related to race and class. How do you propose to better educate all community members and ensure they support our public high schools?
- 8) How do you define equity? Have recent events and discussions in the larger community informed or changed your thinking?
- 9) Proviso has recently re-invested in its career and technical education curriculum (auto shop, culinary lab, etc.). How can Proviso ensure its investments in these programs are successful and balanced with the needs of students pursuing a career in trade vs those who wish to pursue higher academics?
- 10) A student organization, "Students for a Better Proviso", has raised concerns about conditions in the school - including a teacher shortage that could impact the ability of students to graduate, overcrowded classrooms, deteriorating buildings, etc. Would you establish lines of communication with students who have concerns and address their concerns? And if so, how would you address their concerns?
- 11) The School Board's primary responsibility is oversight of the Superintendent. What criteria will you use to evaluate the success of District 209 Superintendent James Henderson?

- 12) As elected public officials, school board members have fiduciary responsibility to the school district and have an obligation to provide financial oversight and accountability. Superintendent Henderson has been asked to repay \$91,000 in alleged improper spending to his previous district in Mississippi, which is now under state financial oversight; an audit found material weaknesses in internal financial controls. Please discuss District 209's internal financial controls. What (if any) structural changes need to be made in order to guarantee District 209's fiscal soundness and integrity?
- 13) District 209 has had a contentious relationship with its teachers and is facing a shortage of teachers exacerbated by a nationwide shortage of teachers. Please discuss how the district could bring more teachers, proficient in working with students from a wide array of backgrounds, into the classroom.
- 14) There has been a lot of discussion locally and nationally about the presence of police in school buildings. What is your vision for a safe school environment? How do police officers in the schools relate to that vision?
- 15) What lessons learned from the pandemic's early years do you believe will continue to be applicable to the ways that schools operate?
- 16) Public schools have been faced with deciding whether or not to remove books from their shelves if a parent or group of parents deem the content to be inappropriate, too controversial or objectionable. How would you handle this issue and how should District 209 handle this question?
- 17) Do you see a role for the Board in ensuring that the climate at District 209 schools is welcoming to students in minority populations, whether racial, religious identity, LGBTQ, etc.? How are the schools assessing the experience of students now? What specific actions or policies would you propose?
- 18) A new report issued by the Centers of Disease and Control found that in 2021, very large numbers of students experienced poor mental health. Twenty-two percent of students seriously considered attempting suicide and ten percent attempted suicide. Our District has had many tragic losses in the past few years to suicide. These feelings were found to be more common among LGBTQ+ students, female students, and students across racial and ethnic groups. What can D209 do to address this trend?
- 19) In 2015, sitting board members were challenged because they sat on the Board while not personally sending their high school age children to D209 schools. Where do you stand on a person sitting on a Board of Education but not sending their own kids to that school, especially during the term they are seeking election for?
- 20) For those who are currently serving or have previously served on the school board: What vote are you most proud of, and what vote do you most regret? Why?