

Park Ridge-Niles School District 64 Candidate Questions, drafted by teachers and families in District 64. Please read below. Two Year Seat Four Year Seats

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
<b>Candidate</b>	How will you relate to and communicate with the teaching staff, seek out their perspectives, knowledge and expertise?	How can trust and collaboration be rebuilt between the teaching staff and school board to benefit our students?	How do the current candidates plan on handling parents/community on social media, misinformed communication, and ultimately making communication better for our district's community?	Do you have any thoughts/ideas to make permanent solutions/plans to adapt to the obvious growth in our district and the limited space our district currently has?
<b>Gareth Kennedy</b>	<p>It is important that District 64 educators have an avenue to communicate their perspectives, knowledge and expertise to the School Board. I would advocate for routine meet and greets between board members and the teaching staff. I feel relationship building is necessary in order to promote honest and open communication.</p> <p>Additionally, the school board should hold informal forums on a consistent basis for teaching staff without administration present. I want to facilitate a safe environment without fear of retribution in which educators can voice their opinions to benefit all our students.</p> <p>Also, I strongly believe school board members should be a presence within the schools. I would schedule routine tours of all District 64 schools. Through the tours, I hope to see firsthand the many accomplishments of our teaching staff. I would like to share in the many district celebrations, like students using the adaptive music instruments. In addition, I would hope to obtain a better understanding of our educators'</p>	<p>I feel part of the role of a school board member is to get to know the teaching staff. Our educators are one of the most important commodities we have in District 64. Rebuilding trust takes time, but it also requires effort. I would make this effort to get to know our teaching staff across the district. I would be interested in attending classroom lessons, participating in exciting classroom projects, and simply getting to know the amazing things our educators are accomplishing with our children each and every day. Part of collaboration is making sure the right people are brought to the table. Through the special education audit, teachers voiced their need for further education and training around behavior supports and goal writing. The school board cannot make the necessary improvements without our educators' input. Their voices need to be heard earlier rather than later. I also think that the building space constraints currently facing some schools need the input of our teaching staff. A viable solution cannot be formed unless the school board actively seeks out teachers' feedback.</p>	<p>First and foremost, I will always model respectful, accurate and open communication no matter the format. My profession as an actuary in a Big Four audit firm requires me to operate with the utmost honesty and integrity with my clients, regulators and stakeholders. Through my service as a Trustee on the Park Ridge Library Board, I have demonstrated the transparency and accountability we expect of public officials. I am proud to have run only a positive campaign even though others have not. My platform has always been substance over spin.</p> <p>It is apparent that parents and the community need an avenue to express their interests and concerns. I feel that parents and the community have felt that their voices have not been heard. Parent input is essential, especially when decisions impacting their children are under consideration. I believe strongly that education is a team effort. The learner, staff, administration, board of education, parent(s) and the community must all be involved.</p> <p>School board meetings are one vital and effective way for the public to be heard by the entire community. District 64 school board meetings have room for</p>	<p>The first step in the process is to have confidence in the estimates of District 64's future population. The demographer's projections are based on estimates that might not accurately reflect the population growth within Park Ridge. There are questionable assumptions that the demographer made in regards to birth rates and housing.</p> <p>From there, we need to put all the possible solutions on the table and get teaching staff and community input. We are looking at building space constraints, but also need to consider the quality of our students' education. For instance, numbers in a classroom do not always provide a clear picture with regards to instructional groupings, transition periods in the hallway, noise level, lunch/recess space, etc. The possible solutions will also need to contain costs and time frame for the school board to make informed decisions.</p> <p>Finally, we cannot be putting out fires as they arise. Long term planning solutions are needed with regards to our schools' population needs. District 64 School Board needs to be in contact with the city council since they control zoning and housing growth. The capacity of our school buildings needs to be shared with the city council for them to consider for any future zoning plans.</p>

	<p>everyday challenges, such as building space constraints. I think it is not only important to understand the layout of a school, but also to hear from educators how student numbers impact transition times, instructional groupings, noise levels, etc.</p>		<p>improvement in order to facilitate better communication. The Board President controls the agenda for each meeting and how the meeting is conducted. To facilitate parental and community input, I would vote for a Board President who will be flexible moving key agenda items forward; who allows for public comment before each action item; and where possible, is willing to place closed sessions at the end of meetings, so the public is not kept waiting.</p>	
<p><b>Rebecca Little</b></p>	<p>This has come up repeatedly in conversations over the last few months since I have been campaigning. It has been a concern not only of teachers, but of residents who have asked, “do you know if teachers are ever consulted in changes?” Teachers feel they have been shut out of the decision making process and that is certainly to the detriment of students.</p> <p>I think the board should hold periodic informal meet and greets with teachers so they can offer feedback on whatever issues they feel need to be addressed at their home school. I also like the idea of occasional anonymous surveys so teachers can be frank and not worry about recourse.</p> <p>Teachers are the heart of our schools — they know our kids, they know what initiatives are working and which are a disaster — and offer a vital, boots on the ground perspective that the board needs to weigh. Lastly, we need more teacher buy-in on curriculum. We should not be choosing any new curriculums without first asking our teachers about their</p>	<p>The board needs to show respect for teachers as an invaluable resource so we can hear about the effectiveness of our administration, and the policies that are currently in place. Teachers often seem frustrated that policies or curriculum are thrust upon them without anyone having asked for their input, and that their expertise isn’t listened to even as it pertains to individual students, particularly in IEP/504 discussions. The direct line to the board provided by the initiatives above (in the first question) will allow the board to equally value the teacher voice to the administration’s and balance concerns and perspectives for the good of our students.</p>	<p>Board members should model responsible social media use by refraining from confrontation and unprofessional posts, as well as arguments with the public. I am personally not a keyboard warrior and will remain that way. As it stands, only two board members can weigh in on a thread without violating the open meetings act, so once two members participate in a discussion, other members couldn’t jump in even if s/he was so inclined.</p> <p>I think we should model the responsible social media policies of successful organizations by designating a specific staff function (or maybe a board member) to monitor community forums and provide the board with a concise monthly report showing key topics and/or points of controversy. Next steps would be recommendations for any specific issues or areas that require further attention by the staff, admin or board. Facebook certainly has its place – SpEd issues were brought to light by parents who, after feeling ignored by the proper channels, finally brought their issues to the public and rightly so. Hopefully with improved communication issues won’t be ignored so long that they explode.</p>	<p>We need more long-term strategic planning to figure out how to balance the space issues at our schools and accommodate full-day kindergarten, which the district’s own survey in 2014 overwhelmingly showed that residents want. “Ignore, panic, repeat” isn’t a viable solution. And we cannot allow a school such as Washington, which is currently busting at the seams, to have class sizes much larger than those in our other schools. It’s inequitable. Young families continue to move into Park Ridge because we are a destination for those who want to balance suburban schools and housing with urban amenities. And we need to accommodate the resulting influx of kids.</p> <p>We will likely need to invest in some additions, a refresh of Jefferson school, and a possible reconfiguring of our current spaces. Washington certainly is likely to need an addition of classrooms, which even if population does decline in the future, can then be used to restore art and SpEd services to their own rooms. We have old buildings, and though they have their charms, classrooms needs are very different now. The previous boards have done a good job of catching up on maintenance, and now we need a strategic plan for the future.</p>

	<p>perspective, and then once curriculum is chosen, we need to partner with teachers to ensure proper training and rollout at all of our schools.</p>		<p>I think we need to set a clear, specific policy that board members don't weigh in on threads. I personally would be much more likely to see a discussion take place online and then reach out one on one to the person who posted so that I can get a fuller picture.</p> <p>As far as communication goes, there is information scattered across too many places and parents often miss important information – there's a school blast, a PTO blast, a district blast, and an ELF blast. I would like to look into making a more centralized communication portal with topline information broken down for each school. You could go to one place and find out everything you need to know. Believe me, as a mom who has scrambled last minute to find wacky socks, I would personally love this.</p>	
<p><b>Steve Blindauer</b></p>	<p>As a current middle school teacher with 20 years of teaching experience (retiring in June), I feel I can personally relate to the teaching staff. As a District 64 school board member I would propose that the teaching staff and assistants have the opportunity to meet with the school board so that the board can better understand the climate of the schools and appreciate the perspectives, knowledge and expertise of the teaching staff. This is something that I have personally experienced as my current district holds "meet the board" meetings for teachers. These meetings are held without administration to insure open, in depth dialogue and cover curriculum, discipline and any other care and concern the teaching staff may have.</p>	<p>Trust and collaboration between the teaching staff and the school board can be rebuilt by 1) getting to know each other, 2) listening to ideas and issues expressed, 3) creating venues such as collaborative work teams to actively work together to create ideas and solve problems, and 4) reinforcing to all District 64 stakeholders that focusing on the needs and achievement of students is our primary goal, and that the teaching staff is an essential part of that goal.</p> <p>A great start to building trust and collaboration would be to put into action the ideas I shared in the question above. These actions would bring the teaching staff and board members together to share ideas on a more frequent basis, both formally</p>	<p>One un-tapped opportunity for building more effective and productive parent/community communication is for the board to formally adopt community relations as a strategic priority, and/or for the board to form a standing community relations committee to acknowledge and address board external affairs. In either case, prioritizing community relations could include holding meetings specifically for parents/community members to share ideas and concerns with the board (similar to the teaching staff/board meetings mentioned in Q1).</p> <p>In addition, I propose that the board prioritize giving parents /community members a voice at school board meetings prior to addressing the evening's agenda topics. I believe the action of not making parents/community members wait until the end of the</p>	<p>Certainly, an evaluation of the topic of population growth and space constraints is warranted and could be one example where all District 64 stakeholders come together for collaborative ideation and solution building. Specifically, this could include a multi-stakeholder working team with parents/community members, administration, teaching staff and board members working together to consider the current student population, class sizes of all grades, and the anticipation of move-ins or exits over time by looking at past data averages and anticipated future trends. This team should collaboratively set goals, strategies and identify specific action plans to achieve the agreed upon goals. The multi-stakeholder working team should fully evaluate all options, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Benchmarking best practices of comparable districts with similar challenges</li> <li>· Construction addition to an existing building, or new construction</li> </ul>

	<p>In addition to having teaching staff and assistants meet periodically with the school board without administration present, I propose that the school board seek input from teachers, teaching assistants and school support staff via anonymous surveys on specific topics that the board is evaluating, and that school board members visit and engage with the teaching staff at school events throughout the year.</p> <p>I would also recommend that when the school board creates sub-committees or multi-stakeholder working teams to help address specific issues such as Special Education, overcrowding and redistricting and full day kindergarten, that teachers and teaching assistants are included as members of the team. My goal would be to ensure that when issues are being addressed, there is always an opportunity for some form of communication and input from the teaching staff.</p>	<p>and informally, through teacher/board member meetings, surveys, meet and greets at events, and sub-committees or work groups that include the teaching staff. The school board needs to understand that a teacher's job is a tough one, and that teachers look at education as a vocation not a job.</p> <p>That vocational commitment is what makes teaching staff go the extra mile in a work day that doesn't end at 3:05 pm. Lesson plans, grading, staff meetings, parent communication, IEP and 504 meetings, differentiation for special education students, projects, technology, collaboration, team meetings, school improvement, SEL, sports etc. are all efforts from teachers that benefit our students. I am running for election because I believe that a teacher should part of the school board, and that having an experienced educator as a board member can help ensure that trust, collaboration and respect between the school board and the teaching staff will grow over time.</p>	<p>meeting to speak will demonstrate a visible shift of the board to incorporate the parents/community members input into the issues being discussed – and that can only happen if parents/community members are given a chance to be heard in advance of topic discussion. This will enable board members to practice good listening skills and to further evaluate and incorporate ideas and concerns raised by parents/community members.</p> <p>I also believe that school board members should participate and engage with parents/community members both formally and informally at events such as parent university, extracurricular activities and curriculum night at the beginning of the school year. Regarding handling social media and misinformed communication, you can't stop anyone from using their first amendment rights, but you can ask that they are informed and civil with respect to the schools and all staff members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Modular classrooms or trailers</li> <li>· Evaluation of potential use of rooms at the Centennial community center/senior center</li> <li>· Evaluation of potential use of rooms at Lincoln Middle School</li> <li>· Redistricting</li> <li>· Purchase or rent a home across from/near Washington for kindergarten or administration (short term)</li> <li>· Note - If any options were to impact class size over the contracted number of 28 for middle school, then further review of (section N , Class Size) in the current teacher contract would be required</li> </ul> <p>My vision for success in terms of District 64 managing growth and space constraints would be to engage and build communication across stakeholders as a key part of the process of identifying permanent solutions and plans.</p>
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<p><b>Sal Galotti</b></p>	<p>This has been something I have recognized consistently. In talking to teachers, and studying the Special Education Departments evolution in particular, we need to improve communication with our educators. I want to compare what the teachers are experiencing against what the administrators are telling us. I am certain hearing from both sides will give us a more complete picture of the state of our departments and schools. A meet and greet with Board members and teachers by school would be helpful to get a relationship started. Teachers should be comfortable to be upfront with us. This is not a job for people who get offended, it should be for people that want to address valid issues. There are a lot of teachers and a lot of opinions, so I think an anonymous survey should be done to get a pulse on what the teachers think. This can be used to evaluate the administrators, and challenge what they are telling us if it is not consistent with survey results. We should look for consistency between what the teachers are saying versus the administrators. If there are discrepancies, that is an opportunity to lean in, so we can address issues BEFORE they become problems.</p>	<p>In my Pro GOOD teacher post on my website I say that any good relationship is set on transparency and accountability. The expectations need to be clearly set, the teachers need to be given the tools they need, and then we as a board need to hold them accountable. I believe in getting in good people and letting them do a good job. It is not our job as a board to micro manage, but we do need to listen to give teachers what they need within reason, which enables us the opportunity to fairly hold them accountable. If this process is fair and transparent, the trust will come. High performing teachers, who we want to attract and retain, will appreciate this.</p>	<p>One area where we need to improve is on the public comment section of the board meetings. I know it is policy not to address comments in session, and I can understand that, but I feel that it would be great for the board to respond in some way publicly online.</p> <p>We should address the concerns raised and correct anything that was misstated or misunderstood. It is hard enough as a candidate to get my hands around all the issues and even board members need time to be brought up to speed. We cannot allow for misunderstandings to spiral out of control, and cause strain or divisiveness where there should not be any. If the person who gave the comment is not satisfied, there should be an avenue to have a further discussion at next meeting.</p> <p>We need to protect this time and it must be done in the open. We need to also ensure that the people are not pushing agendas but have valid concerns and are being reasonable.</p> <p>There should be no back and forth between the community and the board on social media. As I have clearly stated on my website, just a few people ruin that process for everyone. We need to increase dialogue, but it must happen in person, with civility and respect and always available for all to see. I want to drive more community meetings where ideas can be shared, and consensus made. My GOP Forum speech goes into this on my website as well. Doing this will allow us to spend our precious time in board meetings more effectively, to</p>	<p>Crucial here is partnership with city council and get our hands around the housing being built and the strains it is putting on our district. I know some demographic studies have been done recently, but this is not a complete picture and I have more to learn before I can state a definite solution. Ultimately, building new space is not a decision that should be taken lightly. It requires money, time, and energy that is being taken away from education and maintenance of our current assets. It also can quickly become idle space if the projections do not hold true.</p> <p>There are real issues with space in some of our schools, and I would seek to address them with what makes the most sense for all the people involved. One of the reasons people move to Park Ridge is because of the schools, but if we allow them to become over crowded we will be creating an issue that will hurt our students and our overall community.</p>
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<b>Lisa Page</b>	<p>I believe it is imperative to include representation from all stakeholders in decision-making.</p> <p>Based on my observation of school board meetings and from what I have learned from parents and teachers in the community, this is one of the biggest problems with our current board.</p> <p>Additionally, I believe there needs to be an entirely new communication protocol put into place.</p> <p>Communication needs to be both streamlined and well-managed in a way to help reduce false information from getting out and creating or exacerbating problems.</p>	<p>With the significant amount of turnover that is occurring within our district, there will be an entirely new dynamic that comes into place. This is a great opportunity to build a new culture made from better relationships based on a healthy foundation of trust. This trust has to be built by the board, superintendent and district leaders “walking the talk” and listening to stakeholder’s concerns.</p> <p>There also must be greater transparency from the board, to the principals to the teachers/teaching assistants and all the stakeholders. When people see and understand what is happening and why, it is easier to help them accept changes or to have an impact on modifying changes. Relationship have to be built that will foster trust in order for this to happen so that people feel safe communicating up/down the chain of command.</p>	<p>To begin with, there has to be a communication policy set in place and strictly followed. The district must set some expectations for the public including the roles and limitations of the board and district. Also that the district is here to serve and care for all children, yet not everyone will always be happy with every decision-made. Some decisions have to be made to best benefit the district overall.</p> <p>While board meetings are held in public, this is for transparency purposes. Board meetings are not public meetings meant to be interactive with the public. This was a lesson learned for me. That being said, the public’s questions/concerns still have to be addressed. As appropriate these responses may be made public but there are also personal situations that may be best addressed privately and directly with a particular family or other stakeholder.</p>	<p>I believe there are several options to consider for addressing the growth needs of the school district. As someone who grew up in Park Ridge and attended PR schools, I recall at least three additional grammar schools than we have currently. I see opening Jefferson up as an additional grammar school as one option, lightening the load on Field and maybe another school. This may provide opportunities for full-day kindergarten at ‘home’ schools as I hear many, many parents or young kids who will be entering the school district over the next 2-3 years have requested.</p> <p>There has also been talk about a referendum to build an additional school, although I am not sure where this may fit geographically. I would be open to this or looking into other solutions. I believe this issue must be at a top priority moving forward before more schools become over-crowded.</p>
<b>Denise Pearl</b>	<p>With my first career as a high school mathematics teacher in District 150 in Peoria, Illinois and my current employment as an online instructor at Bradley University and Maryville University, I do see things from a teaching perspective. As the President of the Emerson PTO for the past three years, I have continually fostered relationships with the teaching staff, seeking out teachers’ opinions on a wide variety of topics. Specifically, during PTO meetings, having the</p>	<p>From the recent survey completed to formulate the Superintendent Profile, trust seems to be an area of concern for the current District 64 Community. Effective and transparent communication serves as a building block to re-build trust. Communication involves soliciting and listening to the teachers’ perspective, emphasizing that their perspective is a <b>valuable one</b> within the district.</p> <p>A communication process needs to be</p>	<p>Just recently I was invited to attend an organizational retreat for Maine South High School. To set the context for the day, Principal Ben Collins utilized a sports metaphor, describing how instead of “playing defense” with parents, he wants to “play offense” with parents. In terms of communication, I think the District 64 board can adopt this paradigm as well. By “playing offense”, this means that the board can be more forthcoming with information, and this will assist with improving communication. As a result, this might then lessen the</p>	<p>As far as space in relation to our current student growth, this issue needs to be thought about creatively, utilizing the resources of our parents, teachers, and other community members who have a specific knowledge about space ideas. This might require pulling together a focus group to assist in creating some innovative ideas.</p> <p>From the demographer’s recent study, it is probable that the enrollment growth will be temporary; therefore, we have to brainstorm on how to manage the enrollment bubble until the growth levels out. As a possibility, we might consider how to utilize the</p>

	<p>teachers' perspective in planning PTO-related activities and events has been beneficial from a parent perspective.</p> <p>I will continue fostering relationships with the teaching staff if elected to the school board for District 64, possibly adopting a communication practice from our partner district, District 207. One of the strategies employed in D207 is when board members visit with teachers during lunch time or before school with an event such as "Bagels with Board Members".</p>	<p>established so that information can be communicated both from the board to the teachers and, vice versa, from the teachers to the board. Perhaps a board member might attend a PREA Meeting to solicit input about areas of excellence and areas of concern that the teachers have about the district. Additionally, one teacher in each school might be willing to serve as a liaison to the board to foster improved communication.</p> <p>After all, both board members and teachers agree on the desire to offer the best educational environment for the students in the district.</p>	<p>conversations or complaints vocalized on social media.</p> <p>Related, from attending other neighboring school board meetings and reviewing their websites, I have noticed that other districts utilize Board Briefs to synthesize the meetings of the board. If community members then want more details on the meetings, they could then view the recording from the meeting and/or the meeting minutes, but the Board Briefs would provide a starting point. Also, in relation to practices of other boards I have assessed, many have a social media policy for school board members. I would advocate the need for this type of policy and then collaborate to develop a workable policy for the District 64 board. Ultimately, individual board members are not only representing themselves through posts/comments on social media but are representing the entire board.</p>	<p>space at Jefferson School differently. With Washington Elementary school specifically, I appreciate that the PTO leaders are collaborating with the staff at Washington to not only identify the space problems but to offer possible solutions to present to the board. This presents an effective model of collaboration that the board might utilize for other decisions within the district.</p>
<p><b>Carolina Sales</b></p>	<p>I would make it clear that the teaching staff (and all employees) should feel free to discuss issues with me through their preferred communication method (with the understanding that I care about their concerns and will seek to address them but that I also have no legal authority as an individual). I would encourage teachers to attend meetings when issues related to their specific schools or topics of interest are being discussed. In addition, I would make it clear that the administrators are expected to evaluate teachers' opinions in connection with considering any initiatives or policy changes.</p>	<p>Trust and collaboration can be rebuilt first by acknowledging that a problem exists and then by working to rebuild or develop a positive relationship. The board should ensure that the superintendent and other administrators are being held accountable. For example, as the district continues to address problems with the special education program, the board can require the administration to include substantive teacher input in the special education report that is provided at every board meeting (instead of simple anecdotes).</p> <p>Similarly, during the board curriculum</p>	<p>I would note the concerns of parents and the community on social media. As a board member, I would be cautious about entering into discussions in Facebook groups or other social media, to the extent that it could lead to violations of the Illinois Open Meetings Act and be subject to the Illinois Local Records Act. If people are misinformed, I would want the district to correct such misconceptions.</p> <p>When people are discussing issues of serious concern to the district, I would want the board president to include the topic in a board meeting agenda. The district should continue to disseminate information through its website, newsletter, and other forms of</p>	<p>The district should make sure that all spaces could truly be used as flexible learning environments. In connection with the discussions of full day kindergarten, we should consider adding sufficient classrooms for other grades as well. In addition, the district can revisit discussions about creating optional middle school attendance areas and otherwise making it easier for students to switch home schools and attend less crowded schools within the district on a voluntary basis.</p>

		meetings, the board should encourage more teacher involvement and ensure that the administrators are considering teachers' concerns.	electronic communication, but the public information coordinator should also play a more active role in communicating with residents.	
<b>Tom Sotos</b>	As I have over the past four years, I will continue to have an open-door policy that allows teaching staff to communicate with me directly. It's vitally important that we attract and retain top-quality teachers in District 64. Open communication is a necessary part of doing so.	We need to create an environment where the board, administration, and teachers are all working collaboratively and openly with each other. We must facilitate meaningful and honest conversation as we approach the most important issues facing our district. Without trust and collaboration, it will be difficult to address issues such as overcrowding and the upcoming negotiation on the teachers' contract.	<p>One change I would like to make is to change the format of board meetings to facilitate citizen involvement by moving important topics to the beginning of the meeting and insisting on following Robert's Rules of Order.</p> <p>Additionally, I will continue to be informed on the issues before the board. I will do this by continuing to spend significant amounts of time researching the issues prior to board meetings. Some people say that I talk too much in board meetings, but the truth is that I want to facilitate open and honest conversation amongst all stakeholders. If you're looking for someone to sit idly by when it comes to important issues facing our district, vote for someone else. On the other hand, if you're looking for someone who will bring experience, stability, and the willingness to have hard conversations, then I would ask that you cast your vote for me on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.</p>	We should restore Jefferson School and make it available to house all the kindergartens in the district, and make them Full-Day Kindergartens. This would solve two problems. 1) We would free up several classrooms in each school to help alleviate the crowding throughout the district, and 2) It would allow the district to provide Full-Day Kindergarten, a service that many parents ask for, and that studies show helps children succeed. Doing this with a building the district already owns would be the quickest and most cost-effective way to begin solving these problems as fast as possible.