

Candidate Questionnaire for 2024 Board of Education Candidate: Maira Lang

This questionnaire has been developed by members of the Ithaca Teachers Association Political Action Committee.

1. Why are you running for the Board of Education, and if elected, what will be your priorities?

I will be completing my third term on the Board at the end of June. I originally ran for the Board after being urged to by former colleagues from my time teaching in ICSD. Initially, I was reluctant, but when I considered that there might not be enough candidates to fill the four open seats, I felt that since I had time, interest, and experience in education I would be able to make a contribution. I have found my time on the Board to be a growth experience. I have learned so much that has enabled me to become not only a better Board member but a better communicator and collaborator in all areas of my life.

My priorities, if I am re-elected, will be to continue to collaborate with my fellow Board members, administrators, teachers, staff, and community members to develop and implement innovative curricula and programs that will serve the needs of all students and to recruit and retain the highest quality educators to lead and deliver such curricula and programs.

2. What do you see as the primary work of the Board of Education and what makes you particularly qualified to do this work?

Members of the BOE serve as a conduit for a flow of questions, concerns and information between community members and administrators and school personnel. BOE members must seek to be highly informed about district programs, policies and procedures and to ask questions of and provide perspective to those who develop and implement these programs and policies. Ultimately, Board members are responsible for making thoughtful and informed decisions on matters designated as within our purview.

My 35 years as a teacher/leader in three different school districts, including ICSD, where I was involved in a wide variety of programs and initiatives, and my nine years on the ICSD Board make me highly qualified to do this work

3. How can a school board know if its goals are being accomplished and its policies being implemented?

As part of the Superintendent Evaluation process, we work collaboratively with the Superintendent to define goals and to identify metrics to measure the achievement of those goals. The metrics are extremely varied, including multiple data sets, surveys, reports both internal and external. Recently the Board has engaged in multiple executive sessions, both with and without the Superintendent present, to define and analyze these goals and metrics.

4. The ICSD has a clear commitment to working towards being an "Anti-Racist School District". What does this term mean to you?

A commitment to being an anti-racist school district starts with a recognition that systemic racism in education nationwide has long been and continues to be a profoundly

negative influence on the lives of Black and Brown children. The District's curriculum and professional development work aims to identify and disrupt all forms of marginalization that impede the intellectual, social, and emotional health and development of all our students.

5. What are your thoughts on the ICSD's programs for special education students, English Language Learners, and gifted students?

ICSD has a deep commitment to inclusion and excellence which is reflected in the significant support for co-taught classes and in the professional development offerings that enable educators to develop their knowledge and skills in differentiation and teaching collaboratively. The move to offering programming for English Language Learners at all of our schools has enabled those students to go to school alongside their neighborhood peers. The development of Project-Based Learning allows all students to advance their skills and deepen their thinking. The vast array of co-curricular activities at the secondary level truly has something for everyone.

6. Currently, the ICSD is in contract negotiations with the Ithaca Substitute Association and the Educational Support Professionals. Next year, the District will enter into negotiations with the Ithaca Teachers Association. If you were elected to the Board, what would be your top priorities for those negotiations and how would you advocate for those priorities?

In the past, I have been an observer at negotiations with ITA, ISA and EA. My top priority is for the Board and the bargaining units to agree on contracts that provide the working conditions and compensation that will enable us to recruit and retain the very best people in all areas of our organization.