



**AAUW Naperville Area
Candidate Questionnaire**

**Consolidated Election
April 4, 2023**

**Plainfield School District 202
Board of Education Candidates
(alphabetical order)
Vote for 3**

1. [Savena Joiner](#)
2. [Elias Kalantzis](#)
3. [Margarita Morelos](#)
4. [Heather Roach](#)

Methodology

We emailed all candidates and invited them to answer questions relevant to AAUW public policy priorities and the position the candidates are seeking. We sent follow-up reminders and collated all the responses. Candidates' responses have not been edited. Candidates who did not respond are indicated as "No response received."

Savena Joiner

Website: <https://savenajoiner.org/>

1. Are you satisfied with the district's implementation of the Keeping Youth Safe and Healthy Act and the district's general sex education and health education? Please describe the program strengths or needed improvements.

At this time, I don't feel that I have enough information to speak on how the district is implementing the Keeping Youth Safe and Healthy Act or the district's sex education and health education. I would be interested to hear from the community to learn about how they feel about these things and how they feel about the way the district has implemented them.

2. 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 affects public schools?

In a perfect world all schools are created equally, and quality education is available locally to all students. However, the reality is that students in low-income areas do not always have access to highly ranked, top-notch schooling in their neighborhood. I personally live in a suburban area where the schools are great, and my child had access to a good school right outside of her door. I favor all parents being able to provide their children with the best education possible. If receiving the best education means receiving vouchers and attending a non-public school, then so be it! I cannot in good faith be against a program that would assist other children in receiving the same quality education that was available to my daughter and other children growing up in middle class suburban areas. I don't feel that voucher programs are a huge detriment to the quality public schools. I feel that the populations who most benefit from voucher programs are living in areas where the schools are experiencing challenges that go far beyond the effects of voucher programs. The failure of public schools in low-income communities is more systemic in nature. The existence and need for voucher and tax credit programs are a symptom of a greater issue, not the cause.

3. Do you believe the current paid leave policy for employees in your district is appropriate? What, if any, changes would you implement in the number of weeks of paid leave and the purposes for which it could be used?

I feel like the current paid leave policy in PSD202 is standard and consistent with what the neighboring districts are offering. However, I'm speaking from the perspective of someone who has not needed to take an extended paid leave or absence from work. I

feel that one truly does not have a basis of what is fair or practical in reference to a paid leave policy until one finds themselves in need of an extended absence from work.

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

Any decision the board has on the selection of materials for school libraries and/or curriculum development should be under the advice of teachers and/or curriculum specialists. Although the board has a fiscal responsibility to the school district, most school boards are composed of members with little to no educational background. Without a background in education and/or curriculum & instruction, it would be difficult to make sound decisions on library selections and curriculum development.

5. What actions would you recommend to encourage the inclusion of female students and underrepresented groups in the most challenging STEM classes?

Some actions I would recommend to encourage the inclusion of female students and underrepresented groups in the most challenging STEM classes is to actively expose, recruit, and engage those groups to promote interest in STEM classes to those populations. Representation is also key in increasing engagement in STEM classes for underrepresented populations. I would host STEM related events where students can meet people from diverse backgrounds who are working in STEM related fields. Students need to be able to visualize their success. Seeing representatives of their background and culture accomplishing great success in STEM careers is a way to help them broaden their horizons and be aware of the different options in STEM.

Elias Kalantzis

No response received.

Margarita Morelos

No response received.

Heather Roach

1. Are you satisfied with the district's implementation of the Keeping Youth Safe and Healthy Act and the district's general sex education and health education? Please describe the program strengths or needed improvements.

The good news is that District 202's curriculum already covers the requirements of SB818. I believe the Keeping Youth Safe and Healthy Act is important as it ensures children are taught what is and is not appropriate and who to talk to if they feel someone is being inappropriate with them. Unfortunately, in too many cases, the perpetrator is someone the child knows and/or is related to. In these cases, the child may not even understand what is happening to them and that it is not appropriate. As far as the general sex education and health education in District 202, I believe our teachers have created an unbiased curriculum that covers topics in an age-appropriate manner. Parents are always welcome to review the curriculum and have the option to opt out if they feel a topic is too much for their child.

2. 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 affects public schools?

I am not in favor of the tax credit program. Public schools provide free education to all whereas private schools tend to be restrictive as to who can attend. Public schools are not able to fundraise to offset the cost per pupil and do not charge monthly tuition like private schools. If the state wants to create a program that allows individuals, organizations and/or companies to "invest" in kids' educations, I feel they could use the funds to support public schools in communities where there are additional needs. An exception to my stance would be for those students who are not college bound but are looking for a certification from a trade or technical school that is not provided by their local public school district.

3. Do you believe the current paid leave policy for employees in your district is appropriate? What, if any, changes would you implement in the number of weeks of paid leave and the purposes for which it could be used?

District 202 follows FMLA guidelines allowing up to 12 weeks or 60 working days of leave. There are multiple purposes for which the leave can be used including birth or adoption of a child, having a serious health concern, having to care for an immediate family member suffering a serious health condition and other qualifying emergencies. To be eligible for FMLA in District 202, the employee has to have been employed for 12 months and worked at least 1000 hours. The leave can be paid if the employee has

accrued enough sick time. I feel our policy is fair. In most cases, a staff member's absence requires the extra expense of the district to hire a replacement with the hopes that individual is as equally qualified as the departing staff. If not, there is also the potential expense in having to train the replacement. In my opinion, the two sections of our policy that may be worth reviewing would be:

- 1) Changing the duration from 12 weeks to a full semester as some positions may be easier to change at the natural break of the semester.
- 2) Not requiring a full year of employment for eligibility. The purposes for taking FMLA are usually unplanned events/emergencies that could occur at any point in a person's life and perhaps it should be that if the employee has been employed for less than 12 months/1000 working hours, there is additional review needed.

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

The Board of Education is not involved in the selection of materials for school libraries or curriculum development. The board's only employee is the Superintendent who is given goals by the board. The Superintendent's job is to then delegate responsibilities to others in order to fulfill those goals. Our district has the Curriculum Coordinating Council (CCC) which is a group of administrators, teachers and parents who discuss all levels of the district's curriculum and materials and make recommendations for additions and/or changes. The board is given a novel reading list each year to approve, and they also approve new textbook purchases.

5. What actions would you recommend to encourage the inclusion of female students and underrepresented groups in the most challenging STEM classes?

I believe that before a student is able to enroll in the most challenging STEM classes, they need to have shown growth in prerequisite courses as well as have a desire to pursue this field. I feel by offering STEM opportunities/projects during the elementary years that are fun and engaging, all students, including females and the underrepresented, will be eager to learn more. Also, our district's middle schools offer STEM encore courses that include hands-on activities related to real world jobs. These classes are taken by all students and give additional opportunities for females and the underrepresented to explore this career area prior to entering high school. Students who show an eagerness to pursue this direction should be encouraged by their teachers and high school guidance counselors to enroll in the prerequisite math and science courses needed to succeed in the most challenging STEM courses they will take in future years.