Name  Marina Kosak
For how long have you lived in our school district?  Almost 14 years

What is your vested interest behind your desire to serve as a school board member?  As a career educator I know the importance a school board has in shaping a district.  As a parent of a student in the district I am vested in continuing the award winning education and ensuring that our property values remain strong.  I want to bring my expertise to IPSD 204 to ensure that we continue to offer effective instruction to ALL students while providing a safe environment in which ALL students feel they have a voice and will achieve to their full potential.

1. What are the practices of an effective school board?

The Board of Education has several fundamental duties.  First, they are there to clarify the district's purpose.  They must monitor district performance and ensure that district goals are being met.

A school board must be aggressive in reaching out to the community to better understand issues and then they need to listen and hear the concerns that are brought to them.  There will always be people on different sides of an issue, however, everyone needs to make sure that they are being heard.

An effective school board stays focused on the big picture by empowering the administration and faculty to focus on the day to day operations of the district.  However, they do need to hold all staff accountable for academic progress and maintaining a safe environment that allows all students to achieve their full potential.
2. What is the role of an individual school board member?

As a member of a school board it is important to form your own individual opinion by looking at all the evidence presented on different issues that arise. Individuals should be able to express their opinion accordingly based on facts. As a member of a 7-person board it is safe to say that you won’t always agree with every member on every single vote, yet it is important to abide by the majority decisions. A school board member must also understand that many issues related to personnel or student discipline must remain confidential.

3. During contract negotiations, does the role of an individual board member change? If yes, please explain the difference.

No, I do not think it changes. A member of the BOE should always represent the basic interests of education: teaching and learning. During collective bargaining negotiations the interest of both students, education personnel and tax payers all need to be taken into consideration. Prior to negotiations, boards must know what their final goal is, have evidence to support their position but also listen to the union side and compromise when necessary.

4. What are the greatest challenges you see our district facing now and during the next
Right now we are in the midst of educational turmoil. For the past 11 months teachers have been asked to teach like they never have before. They have had to create thought provoking lessons without the hands on experience everyone is so used to. They have worked hard! However, the amount of material and the depth in which the curriculum has been covered is not the same. It will be important for the district and building administration to ensure that vertical articulation is occurring at all the different levels. We must have a reintegration plan to full time face to face instruction in which students, staff and parents feel safe when in the school setting. In reviewing the most recent assessment data on the 2019 State Report Card we also must address the achievement gap that exists in IPSD 204. Are the resources we are providing to students along with the interventions offering equal opportunities for success? Are teachers being provided the right professional development to understand equity and culturally relevant teaching to help address the gaps that exist? This is not something that will be solved overnight but there is a need to decrease the gaps that exist between our student sub-groups.

5. As a board member you will be regularly charged with making decisions that will impact 27,400 students, 3,100 non-certified, certified, and administrative staff members and this very large community as a whole. From whom will you seek counsel to help you formulate informed opinions that will lead to you making quality decisions? I think that it would depend on the issue at hand as to whom I would seek counsel from. Having been in the field
of education for my entire career I have a good network of colleagues that I would feel comfortable reaching out to for advice. However, I do understand that it would be very wise to seek the input of many of those not in education. Once again, it would depend on the issue at hand as to whom I would reach out to. If it was to better understand a fiscal piece I may reach out to someone with a financial background that could provide insight. If there was a HR issue I could reach out to people in that field to toss around ideas. The most important piece to remember is that we are making quality decisions based on what is best for kids while making sure that confidentiality of students and staff is always a priority.

6. What is your role as a board member in supporting the District 204 Equity Belief Statement? The IPSD 204 Equity Belief Statement is one of the better ones that I have seen compared to other districts. It encompasses the heart of what equity needs to be and how the district needs to go about in ensuring that the needs of ALL students are being met. I would love to believe that every single staff member in 204 is living by this belief statement. However, there are biases that exist that sometimes a teacher does not even realize and it could be affecting their classroom. So, I ask how are our teachers being given the appropriate resources to ensure that they are carrying out this belief statement? Along with
that, are we training our administrators to lead in this realm and coaching them to be able to have what may be difficult conversations with faculty and staff?

7. How do you respond to a neighbor who tells you that a focus on education equity could take resources away from some students while overserving others? First, I would ask the neighbor where their information was coming from and try to better understand the information they have given me to make sure that I am addressing their concern. If I did not have the information I needed to address this and be able to explain in detail how the resources are not being taken away from others, I would speak to the district administration to get the information. It is important to have all the facts. Many times it appears that with educational equity some unfairness may be occurring, however, it is important to educate all of our stakeholders on how the allocation of resources work to ensure that ALL of our students are getting the same opportunities.

8. What is your understanding of the Open Meetings Act as it applies to a school board, and how will you as a board member make sure that the Act is being appropriately followed? It is important that we understand as a Board that we cannot meet as a quorum without first notifying the public. All notices of meetings must be posted to the public along with the agenda. Minutes after the meeting must also be posted. Public comment must be allowed at every meeting. Issues involving personnel, student discipline, etc. are held during executive session and confidentiality is a must. As a newly elected member to the Board of Education I know that there is also training that every board member must attend to better understand their role and procedures like the Open Meetings Act. As an individual I will ensure that we are appropriately following the act.
9. As a board member, what role do you play in the day to day management of the district? As I stated earlier, the role of the board and the board members is to look at the big picture and empower the administration and staff to focus on the day to day operations in the district. However, it is also the responsibility of the board to hold the Superintendent accountable in all aspects of the district. The members of the BOE have to be able to challenge the Superintendent when appropriate to ensure that ALL of our students continue to get the education that will enable them to achieve their full potential.