

Answers submitted by Christen Bollig

What do you see as the major issues facing D4 and how would you propose addressing them?

The most pressing issue I see is the poor relationship that appears to exist between the board and a significant portion of the community. As a relatively new Addison resident, having moved here in October 2019, I was shocked at what I both witnessed and heard from others in terms of how the board operates and interacts with community members. I think that for any group to be successful, there are key foundational elements that have to exist. And one of those key elements is respect. Certainly, there are big issues ahead of the district – being fiscally responsible, ensuring we’re doing everything we can to avoid tax increases, getting schools open as quickly as possible while also being safe, hiring and retaining the best teachers, keeping class sizes down, basically doing more with less. That is what this board, and most other school boards, are up against. But I would argue that before any of that we have to ensure that the board has a positive and constructive relationship with the community. Without that, we will be severely hindered in accomplishing any of our goals. To get there, we need to actually execute a community engagement strategy and increase transparency of board activity. We can do that through things like regularly scheduled active listening sessions, more community surveying, and ensuring the board consist of people who value feedback from the entire community.

Do you believe that teachers should have a greater input/voice in district decisions that impact their work and their students?

Yes. Those that have had conversations with me know that that when I refer to our community, I am including our teachers and staff. They are not just part of our community - they are at the core of our community. And absolutely every person in our community deserves to have their voice heard, and to be respected in the process. That isn't to say that everyone who voices an opinion will be pleased with the ultimate decision – that would be impossible. And in fact I am certain that if elected to the board there will be times when I hear the perspective of our teachers, and still make a decision that they don't agree with. But listening is still a critical part of the process, and the ASD4 Board needs to do better on that. I'm proud to have been endorsed by the Addison Teachers' Association and view their endorsement of four individuals not currently on the board as an indication that they don't feel heard.

How does diversity, equity, and inclusion play a role in your vision for the community?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is a core component of my vision for our community, as identified in one of my three platform positions. I've focused on DEI in my work with Changing Worlds over the past five years, as the 2020 Chair of EDGE, a group within my company focused on the advancement of women, and as the executive sponsor of a DEI Council that was founded last year in the 200-person department I lead. And although DEI is not a new concept, events over the past year have both highlighted and exacerbated inequities that exist within our

community. An immediate priority is to ensure that policies and board actions do not have unintended negative consequences for the children and families that our schools serve, and the teachers and staff that they employ.

One way to improve the chance that DEI initiatives will be successful, is to have a diverse set of decision makers or leaders involved. Our community is diverse, and yet the ASD4 board does not reflect that. That lack of diversity exists in several facets, but I do have to highlight the lack of gender diversity, and that I'm very excited to be one of the two female candidates in this race, along with Ms. Ellen Finizio.