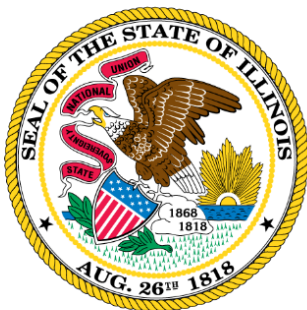


North Chicago Transition Plan

Moving Toward
an Elected
School Board

March 2023



**Illinois
State Board of
Education**

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Background

On August 1, 2012, an Independent Authority (IA) was installed as the governing body of North Chicago School District 187 pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/2-3.23f(b) and 105 ILCS 5/3-14.28. The State Board of Education (ISBE) replaced the elected board only after attempting less dramatic interventions over the course of several prior years; however, ISBE found that the elected board members themselves were one of the primary barriers to school district improvement. This IA installed by ISBE has been in place since that time.

Since August of 2012, the State Superintendent has appointed new members to the IA as needed to maintain the IA at the original five members. The IA's board members have served with distinction and have represented an array of experiences and expertise. Board members have been selected from parent, community, and regional leaders, and have voluntarily shared their expertise with the district. The IA, in partnership with the Financial Oversight Panel (FOP) and the administration, has led a dramatic improvement in academic and financial performance in the district.

The decision to appoint a school board was a courageous decision by the ISBE. The decision worked and has led to improvements for North Chicago's students. ISBE would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have served on the district's IA over the past 11 years especially the late Mrs. Evelyn Alexander who passed away while in office, and Mrs. Dora King, who has served, and continues to serve, as the chairperson of the IA since the inception of the IA.

The Illinois State Board of Education voted at a meeting held on September 21, 2022, to begin the transition of North Chicago SD 187 to an elected school board. This decision is, in fact, another recognition of the hard work and success of the appointed IA. This transition will start with the election of three board members in the 2025 school board election, followed by election of four more members in 2027 during the regularly scheduled school board elections. The appointed FOP will remain in place to support and provide guidance to the newly elected school board members.

The information that follows highlights two key initiatives that will take place to support this important transition back to an elected school board, as well as the outreach that took place to help inform this plan.

Community Listening Sessions

Meetings were held at five public schools in the district. A synthesis of these five meetings is below:

Meeting Location	Number of Attendees
Alexander Elementary School	14
North Chicago High School	15
Forrestal Elementary School	8
A.J. Katzenmaier School	8
Green Bay Early Childhood Center	4

Many of the speakers attended multiple listening sessions. Their input at each meeting was appreciated, but this analysis only captures the comments of each unique speaker; no comment is counted twice. Based on this, the listening sessions yielded the following information:

Stakeholders desiring a transition to an elected school board in 2023 - 20 comments
 Stakeholders desiring a transition to an elected school board in 2025 - 3 comments

Community Input – Written Comments

A link and QR code were provided to the community via the district, the Mano a Mano community organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the mayor of North Chicago. A total of 33 comments were received via the online tool. A breakdown of the responses is below:

No elected school board – 2 comments
 Elected school board with no timeline – 13 comments
 Transition slowly to an elected school board – 5 comments
 Elected school board immediately – 0
 Unrelated comments – 13

Community Transition Planning Meetings

The Illinois State Board of Education invited various stakeholders to meetings held in November through January to engage in conversations about how to best transition to the election of three board members in 2025. The following groups and individuals were invited to provide input:

- North Chicago Parents
- North Chicago School District Staff
- North Chicago School District Union Members
- LEARN charter
- North Chicago FOP and IA
- Lake County Regional Superintendent
- Mano a Mano
- Steans Family Foundation
- North Chicago Community Partners
- North Chicago Bilingual Advisory Council
- Boys and Girls Club of Lake County
- Gorter Family Foundation
- Exchange Club of North Chicago
- Rosalind Franklin University
- Youthbuild
- NAACP Lake County
- Great Lakes Naval Base
- Illinois Association of School Boards

What we heard in our conversations is that the community is both excited and nervous about the upcoming school board election. Here are some of the things that we heard consistently from members of the community:

1. There is excitement that the community will be directly electing the members of the school board. Residents of North Chicago are eager to have their voices heard and engage again in the democratic process of electing members of the school board.
2. Others expressed concern that some of the people who run for school board will be running for themselves and not for what is best for the students, families, school staff, and the community.
3. Several people mentioned that the election is a great opportunity to engage parents in the community and increase the level of parental involvement overall in the district, especially the Latinx community.
4. Some residents of the area feel that the Independent Authority created a stable atmosphere in the district, and there has been real progress in improving the quality of education. They expressed concern that district stability and progress could be in danger depending on who gets elected.
5. Many people are excited that the elected school board will be made up of residents who truly represent the community it serves.

Transition Plan

North Chicago School District's board has approved and paid for a multi-year contract with Parents for Public Education to offer the Parent Engagement Program at no cost to the residents of North Chicago in English and in Spanish.

The Parent Engagement Program has a track record of working with parents and community members to help them better understand the role of the community in public schools. This program will be a great benefit to the community as it sets out to host its first school board elections in over a decade. They also will be able to engage with local community organizations, such as Mano a Mano and the local branch of the NAACP.

The North Chicago Parent Engagement Program (PEP) will be tasked with preparing future candidates to run in upcoming school board elections. While other opportunities exist within North Chicago, this group can work closely with other organizations to provide information to prospective school board members.

The North Chicago PEP will prepare those interested in running for the school board by providing information in various areas that would be helpful to them in their role as a school board member. This includes the following topics:

1. School Board Roles and Responsibilities
2. Community Resources
3. Learning Styles
4. Parent Engagement
5. Leadership Styles
6. College and Career Readiness Standards
7. Learning Communities
8. Learning Supports
9. Accountability
10. Data
11. Barriers to Learning
12. Leadership and Advocacy

Any North Chicago resident interested in participating can contact Ebony Wilson at Ewilson@d187.org.

In addition to the training and support provided by the PEP, the transition is going to require an emphasis on increasing voter participation and voter registration. Various organizations have expressed a willingness to help in these areas.

Support from the Illinois Association of School Boards

The Illinois School Board Association (IASB) is committed to supporting the North Chicago community as they start the transition to an elected school board beginning in 2025. Leading up to the 2025 school board election, webinars will be made available to help community members understand the commitment of a board member and the full process of running a school board member election campaign. More information regarding this support can be found on the IASB website or by contacting the IASB Field and Equity Services team led by associate Executive Director, Nakia Hall

What Happens Now

The Illinois State Board of Education’s decision to remove the Independent Authority means that it will be phased out over the next four years. By 2027, the entire school board of North Chicago will be locally elected just as it was prior to 2012. Here is a timeline of how the IA will be phased out:

1. April 2025 – Three members of the North Chicago community will be locally elected to serve on the Independent Authority. Four IA members appointed by ISBE will also serve, bringing the IA to a total membership of seven members.
2. The current members of the IA are:
 - Dora King, Chairperson
 - Sylvia Riley
 - Dr. Myra Gaytan-Morales
 - Sylvia M. Johnson Jones
 - Amalia Gonzalez
3. April 2027 – Four members of the North Chicago community will be locally elected to serve on the school board. The IA will be dissolved and the entire seven-person school board of North Chicago will be locally elected.
4. April 2029 – The three North Chicago community members elected in April 2025 will be up for reelection.
5. April 20XX – School Board elections will continue to happen on odd years.

North Chicago School District 187 also is currently under a Financial Oversight Panel (FOP), which was appointed by ISBE to manage the finances of the district. The FOP will continue its work alongside the elected school board.

Once ISBE decides the FOP is no longer needed, it will be dissolved, and the school board will resume managing the finances of the North Chicago district.

Helpful Tips for Voting in the Upcoming Election

As a resident of the North Chicago community, you will have to make a choice between the candidates running for office in the upcoming election. If this is your first time voting in a school board election, there are three things you can do to help you make your choice -- learn about school boards, learn about your district, and learn about the candidates.

Learning About School Boards

It's important to know what school boards can and cannot do as well as their roles and responsibilities in managing the school district. Knowing this information will allow you to ask the candidates important questions about their plans and goals. Consider viewing the following resources:

- [How School Boards Work](#)
- [Understanding School Finance](#)
- [Foundational Principles of Effective Governance](#)
- Even if you aren't running for office, viewing the [Helpful Tips for Running](#) can help you learn more about school boards.

Learning About North Chicago SD 187

The Illinois State Board of Education has a Report Card for every school district in the state. This is the best resource for learning about how students in a district are doing.

- [District Snapshot](#)
- [Academic Progress](#)
- [Equity Journey Continuum](#)
- [Student Information](#)

Learning About the Candidates

Once you have an understanding of how school boards function and the learning environment in North Chicago, the last thing to learn about are the candidates running for office. Using what you've learned, seek out candidates and be ready to ask them the questions that are important to you. As you listen, here are some questions to keep in mind to help you evaluate what you are hearing:

- Do the candidate's goals and promises make sense with what you know about how school boards function and the powers they have?
- Does the candidate seem informed about the data and learning conditions of the school district that are listed in the Illinois School Report Card?

Helpful Tips for Running in the Upcoming Election

Running for office can be intimidating, but there are many resources available to anyone interested in serving on the North Chicago School Board. Anyone interested in learning more about what is required to run for a school board can use the resources below to find such information.

Illinois Association of School Boards

The Illinois Association of School Boards has several resources to help those interested in running for office. In addition, it offers support to newly elected school board members by providing training and information on how to be an effective school board member.

- [Qualifications & Characteristics of a School Board Member](#)
- [How to Navigate Running for School Board Webinar Series](#)
- [Key Dates for School Board Candidates](#)
- [Understanding School Finance](#)

Illinois Board of Elections

The Illinois Board of Elections has created a guide that explains the steps required to run for school board. This document includes qualifications, deadlines, forms, and other helpful information.

- Please visit the [State Board of Elections website](#) and download the 2023 Candidate's Guide.
- Candidate Checklist — page 12
- Statement of Economic Interests Receipt — page 19-20
- Board of Education Members Guide and Petition Forms — pages 43-44

Recommendations for Community Organizations

Community organizations in North Chicago have a great opportunity to help with engagement and voter turnout in the upcoming school board election. Here are some recommendations and resources to use if you're interested in getting involved:

Help Voters Learn About Candidates

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of those running for school board to get their message out to voters. However, candidates for school boards usually don't have a campaign team or funding to make themselves known to the community. With that in mind, community organizations can help voters learn more about candidates by:

- Hosting meetings, town halls, forums, or other gatherings and inviting candidates for school board to come and speak.
- Asking candidates a series of questions and publishing the results in a newspaper, handout, or website so voters can see where each candidate stands on an issue.
- Making the individuals you work with aware of events pertaining to the upcoming election that are hosted by other community organizations.

Turn Out the Vote

- School boards have notoriously low voter participation rates — some estimates say only 5 to 10% of voters participate. Anything your organization does to raise awareness can help increase voter participation.

Share (or Create!) Resources

- The Illinois Association of School Boards has created several helpful resources regarding school board elections. Making the communities you work with aware of those resources can help both the voters and the candidates.
- The Illinois State Board of Elections produces a yearly Candidate Guide with information on how to run for school board. Sharing this information now helps people running for office be familiar with the forms they'll need to submit in the future.
- You know your community best. Creating materials that come directly from you and address the needs of North Chicago residents will generate more engagement since it is coming from a known and trusted source.