



Edwardsville | Glen Carbon  
Chamber of Commerce

## **POLICY COUNCIL & BUSINESS BUILDS PAC**

### **ECUSD#7: SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Candidate: Allison Carroll**

**Position Sought: School Board**

**1. Please provide us with some basic information. Tell us briefly about:**

**a. your family:** *I am married to my husband, David. Our daughter, Maggie, is a second grader at Goshen Elementary and our son Graham is in PreK.*

**b. how long you've lived in District 7:** *I am originally from the Milwaukee area and relocated to Edwardsville in 2009 from Washington D.C.*

**c. your education:** *I have an undergraduate degree from the University of Iowa and hold a Master's Degree from Trinity College Dublin.*

**d. your employment:** *Currently, I am a senior developer with McGraw-Hill Education. I have worked in this role for nearly 11 years. Prior to that, I was a researcher with a nonprofit Congressional ethics watchdog group in Washington D.C.*

**2. Why are you seeking this office?** *With two young children, I have an implicit stake in making sure that this District continues to grow while upholding it's mission of developing students to their full potential. I have dedicated my career to educational development and would value the opportunity to apply that experience to the challenges facing the district today.*

**3. What education, skills and experiences have prepared you to deal with the complex financial, technical and legal issues that regularly come before the school board?** *In my current role, I am responsible for developing and managing the editorial budgets for, on average, 13 different projects a year. I am aware of both the complexities and constraints that budget management presents. That is something I navigate continually in my role. The development of learning platform assets is a long-term, technical process that requires constant attention to detail while maintaining accountability to schedule, growth, and revenue-cycle goals. These skills will be a value-add to a district*

that is constantly having to reassess and adjust their financial goals that are that whim of ever-shifting state and federal funding.

**4. Identify and prioritize the three most important challenges facing District 7. Please justify your prioritization. How do you propose to pay for these projects?**

1.) The lack of technology. This is a well-publicized issue in D7. It is no secret that we are nearly a decade behind our neighboring districts in our in-class technology programs. This goes deeper than simply trying to create a selling-point for our district – not having a curriculum that you can effectively deliver in a dynamic manner to all of our students should be of deep concern to this community at large. Without agile technology systems in place, we risk not only leaving vulnerable students behind – we are also not fulfilling our responsibility to graduating students by preparing them to effectively use technology in the workforce or in pursuit of a higher degree.

2.) Maintaining a balanced budget. To be clear: this is really, really challenging thing to do amid the dismal fiscal environment that the State of Illinois continuously finds itself in. That said, all districts have a responsibility to the taxpayers and financial transparency plays a key role in fulfilling that.

3.) The lack of a diverse workforce. This isn't a D7 issue alone, according to the ISBE, only 14% of teachers in Illinois are from minority communities. Hiring and retaining a workforce reflective of the community we live in should be a top priority.

**5. What are your thoughts on school district finances?**

**a. Are there opportunities to cut expenses?** There are always places to make cuts. It's really more of a question of do we **want** to make those cuts? I have seen districts reduce extracurriculars and athletic programs, for example. While that may feel like an easy place to start, those programs provide key outlets and opportunities for our students. So, short answer? Yes. But the long answer is much more complicated than that and would require some painful concessions that I don't think our community wants to see happen.

**Specifically, where are those opportunities?**

**b. Is there a need for new or additional revenue?** Always. There are always going to be needs to generate new and additional revenue for a district. Very few districts that I know of are feeling flush with cash these days and wondering where to spend it. That need will always be there – especially for any district operating at the mercy of the state of Illinois funding.

**Specifically, where would it come from?** Taxpayers in Madison County do not have the appetite for higher sales taxes – that was made clear in 2018. There are foundations in Edwardsville that work to raise money for our schools – I believe this District needs to seek out more fundraising opportunities from the private sector.

**c. Are there areas where spending needs to be increased?** Absolutely.

**Specifically, where does spending need to increase?** As addressed above, we need to update our technology in this District. That is without-hesitation, spending priority number one. The technology budget has increased dramatically over the last two years in D7 but unfortunately, we are SO far behind that it will take several years of budgeting at this increased rate to even catch up to where we should have been.

**Specifically, where would the money come from?** It is my understanding that passage of Prop E has helped generate revenue here – which is great news but looking at other sources is also important. On the immediate horizon is the COVID relief federal package that should include money for schools – whether or not D7 qualifies is yet to be seen.

**6. District 7's superintendent, approximately halfway through the employment contract, announced plans to depart; the district is currently engaging in a search for a new superintendent. If elected, how do you plan to partner with the new superintendent? What are your recommendations for minimizing superintendent and key personnel turnover?** Superintendent turnover in this district is rather alarming as a taxpayer and parent. That reflects on this community as whole and partnering with a new superintendent to create a more positive culture is of the utmost importance. For me, this would boil down to communication – which has been nothing short of abysmal in the previous administrations. Establishing clear, effective and frequent communication is the first step in developing a more positive relationship between not only the Superintendent but the the district as a whole. We cannot possibly expect to successfully fulfill our mission operating as siloed divisions.

**7. In March 2018 the 1% county-wide school facilities sales tax appeared on the ballot for the third time, and Madison County voters resoundingly opposed the implementation of this additional sales tax. If elected, would you support putting this tax before voters for a fourth time? Why or why not?** No, not at this time. The 2018 results were an abundantly clear message from voters on how they stand on the issue. Those results are to be respected.

**8. If you're the incumbent, what have been your significant accomplishments during your term? If you're the challenger, what do you believe have been the significant disappointments of the incumbents, and how would your term in office be different?** Not applicable.

**9. If elected, how would you engage with the Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce as a conduit to the business community?** Developing and maintaining a partnership between the District and the business community is paramount.

**10. At the end of your term in office, how will you know if you've been successful?** *I would know that my time on the Board has been successful if I can walk away from it leaving behind a balanced budget and classrooms where teachers are armed with the technology they need to effectively deliver their curriculum to ALL students.*

**11. What changes you would like to see regarding:**

**a. how District 7 functions as a whole?** *I would love to see improved communication from District 7 all around. Without that – so much is left to speculation which leads to confusion and misdirected anger. On a more personal note, there is simply no sense of community in the messaging - communications to parents from the current administration are entirely devoid of any positivity or uplifting nature. We have amazing schools lead by amazing educators. There is SO MUCH to celebrate and be proud of here – I wish that our current Superintendent and administration felt the same.*

**b. how District 7 addresses unfunded mandates?** *Again...communication. Being fully transparent and direct with regards to our fiscal situation can help head-off issues like this. We all have a laundry list of things we would like to see implemented, created and developed: being honest about whether or not we can afford them will not give taxpayers/parents a false sense of expectation.*

**c. how District 7 approaches curricula innovation?** *This needs to be done in a collaborative nature – at the end of the day, it is our teachers who are on the ground putting those changes into action. Curricula innovation is a complex endeavor but cannot be implement successfully without input from the teachers we expect to deliver it.*

**d. how District 7 prepares students for entry into the workforce?** *The lack of vocational/CTE programs in our schools is frankly, embarrassing. Not offering workforce ready programs only serves to disenfranchise the students for whom a college degree is not a desired reality. Focusing only on “college-readiness” also sends an implicit message that trade careers are somehow less than. They are not and we owe our students the opportunity to explore all options for their future. These programs are, however, very expensive. This District should focus on “depth over breadth”. Studies show that the **“benefits of vocational coursework accrue to students who specialize rather than those who take multiple vocational courses in several areas”** We should focus on creating a well-executed and developed program in a few course areas rather than taking on a financial burden to deliver a bloated course offering just in the spirit of having more to offer. Follow the data – allow that to guide the decision making on what courses to bring to D7.*

**e. how District 7 has managed the COVID-19 situation?** *My sincere hope is that we are transitioning past the immediacy of reactionary policy by this district. That we can start to look forward now, reflecting on what we've learned – and hopefully what we've all learned is that we deserve an elected Board*

that will **act alongside and with** an administration in developing school COVID19 policy.