Ellen Sherratt Ph.D. - District 4A

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RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

Common Cents Education, LLC, President/Founder (2021-Present)

- Advised leaders at the Illinois State Board of Education in teacher shortage strategy development and cost-effectiveness decision-making, including convening Chicago Public Schools and districts statewide for the Illinois Teacher Vacancy Grant Summit. Facilitated a statewide working group and drafted policy recommendations for two states' legislatures on competitive compensation for teachers, administrators, and school support staff. Spearheaded a national effort in response to the federal education cuts to continue to provide states and school districts around the country with the education research and supports to make sound policy decisions. Led an advisory group to develop a national Moonshot goal to end the STEM teacher shortage.

The Teacher Salary Project, President, Board of Directors (2014-2024)

- Led the execution of the organizational vision to make teaching a prestigious, desirable, professionally-exciting and financially-viable career. Led the introduction to the U.S. Congress of the bipartisan *American Teacher Act* to raise teacher salaries nationwide to a minimum of $60,000, including securing over 90 endorsing organizations and presenting at the U.S. Capitol. Led the vision and implementation of a large-scale national campaign to identify 1,000+ Teacher Salary Champions, including prominent policy, business and non-profit leaders to inspire greater dialogue about the importance of compensating educators.

American Institutes for Research, Senior Research and Policy Associate (2007- 2017)

- Served as the Deputy Director of the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders federal technical assistance center, bringing research to policy leaders and connecting education leaders across all 50 states to share best practices and lessons learned. Oversaw national strategy for the federal Excellent Educators for All initiative. Presented at major national conferences of the National Council of State Legislatures, Council of Chief State School Officers, Council of State Governments, American Association of School Personnel Administrators, the National Association of Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, and the U.S. Department of Education Effective Educator Development Annual Grantee conference. Co-authored 40+ articles and 2 published books on education policy.

EDUCATION

Cornell University (Bachelors of Arts, Economics)
Meinig Family Cornell National Scholars; graduated with Distinction in All Subjects.

Oxford University (Doctorate and Masters, Education)
Oxford University Press Clarendon Scholar; dissertation on historical and cross-national approaches to addressing teacher shortages.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Board of Directors, the National Network of State Teachers of the Year
Volunteer, Literacy Chicago and Turning the Page
Intern, U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL)

Ellen Sherratt
FOR CHICAGO SCHOOL BOARD

Ellen's Priorities

Student Learning Comes First

Only 24% of CPS students are proficient in math. Only 40% in reading. That is the emergency, and it should be the first item on every board agenda. Too little of this board's attention has gone to student learning. As an education researcher, I know how to read student data — what it tells us, what it hides, and which schools are quietly falling behind while district averages look stable. Children who don't reach reading proficiency carry it into adulthood. I saw that up close tutoring with Literacy Chicago. The research is clear about what moves those numbers: strong curriculum taught well, early literacy done right, capable school leaders, and excellent teachers supported with real training and development. That last piece has been my life's work — 25 years on teacher quality, with the Illinois State Board of Education, with state lawmakers, and nationally. I'll bring that expertise to making sure every classroom in District 4A is led by someone equipped to do the job. Every decision I make will be measured against one question: does this help a child in District 4A learn more this year than last?

Honest, Responsible Budgets

Every dollar this district spends on debt is a dollar that could have gone into a classroom. I came to education through economics, so look at CPS's own budget: more than $9 billion in long-term debt, $794 million in debt service this year, and a total burden the CPS Board President himself puts above $900 million annually - more than $28,000 per student. Nearly $200 million of that still pays off bonds sold a decade ago to paper over a deficit. We are living inside the consequences, and this board keeps reaching for the same shortcuts: budgets balanced with money nobody has appropriated, and pressure on management to take out high-interest loans and payday lending at the scale of a school system. Both move today's problem onto tomorrow's students, and both end in mid-year cuts that come out of classrooms. The state genuinely does shortchange us (its own formula has CPS at 73% of adequacy) and I've won education funding fights in Springfield before. I'll fight that one hard. But a budget has to be built on money that exists. I'll vote for real numbers and tell District 4A families the truth about the tradeoffs.

Safe Schools, Full Classrooms

A student who isn't in the building can't learn, and roughly 40% of CPS students are chronically absent. Students show up for schools where they feel safe and known. That takes resources: social workers, counselors, and nurses actually staffed in our schools, alongside social-emotional supports and a welcoming environment in every building. The district's Whole School Safety approach points in the right direction — what it needs is the staffing and funding to deliver on it. It also takes getting kids there. I'll push for what the evidence supports — early warning systems, mentoring, family coordination — and for restoring transportation, including lower-cost options like helping high school students earn commercial driving licenses through workforce development grants and safe "bike bus" routes. Built with the families who struggle most to get their kids to school, not for them.

Accountability and Transparency

Parents deserve to know how their district is performing, in plain language, without hunting for it. CPS has a five-year plan with real targets like cutting chronic absenteeism 15% as well as raising 3rd–8th grade proficiency 20% by 2029, and a monthly board process for tracking it. I'll push to use it honestly: a public scorecard against the district's own goals, reported whether the news is good or bad, with leadership held accountable for hitting them. And I'll start the work on what comes after 2029: a 10-year plan to make CPS the best big-city school system in America by Chicago's 200th birthday in 2037.