



Oak Park Public Library Board Candidate Responses to Collaboration Survey, 2017

Candidates were asked two questions:

- 1. What are your views on the role of the D97 board in achieving the goal of assuring access to affordable, high quality early childhood care and education and support to parents for all families?*
- 2. If elected, would achieving the vision of an integrated and high-quality early childhood system as outlined in the one-page overview attached to this email be a priority for you as a policy maker? If yes, then what steps would you propose to further this plan as a priority? If no, then what items do you view as higher priorities and why?*

Adam Olson

1. The Oak Park Public Library is a central part of our village's lifelong learning and literacy infrastructure. I am glad that the Library is a founding partner of the Collaboration for Early Childhood and that the Library's current strategic plan reflects its important role in early childhood development.

My local library played a big part in my own early learning. I remember borrowing books and attending storytime with my family before I could read. Absolutely all children and their families should be able to take advantage of libraries in these ways and more. The fact that the Collaboration for Early Childhood amplifies the library's role in concert with other governmental agencies, organizations, and families - all with an emphasis on equal access - makes the value of your work obvious to me.

As you know, the Oak Park Public Library Board is responsible for the library's budget, policies, and working with the Executive Director. It does not run day to day operations.

I believe your critical goal of assuring affordable access to high-quality early childhood education and support to families is shared by the Library. The current strategic plan states, in part, "We are an organization committed to our own learning and to education and learning for everyone." I feel that current resource allocation, partnerships, and programming reflect this from the early childhood perspective. The Library Board must allocate appropriate resources, align other policies, request updates from staff, and commit to the Collaboration.

2. Yes. I would support this vision by ensuring supporting goals continue to be part of the library's strategic plan, ensuring staff have the resources to contribute to the Collaboration's vision, requesting staff reports on this matter, and inviting the Collaboration to update the Library Board on village-wide efforts.

One of my highest priorities is that the Oak Park Public Library remain a place of empowerment for all. I see public libraries as a force for equality; an institution that can help level the playing for anyone who avails its services. The Library Board must actively work with staff and the community to eliminate barriers – real or perceived – to access library services. I believe the Oak Park Public Library is already doing a good job in this respect.

Brandon Spurlock

Thank you for your thoughtful letter and allowing me to share my views on how I believe the Oak Park Public Library can help further the goals of assuring access to affordable, high-quality early childhood care and education.

Local libraries play a key role in providing families who have infants and toddlers the chance to experience the positive effects of reading, talking, singing and playing, as all these activities help build healthy neural connections. Our Library currently has numerous free resources, including kindergarten readiness resources, regular early childhood "Baby to Play group" to name a few; and as a Library Board Member, I would work hard to ensure that the Library continues to focus on and improve the early childhood development programming.

Further, as part of a Board Members' duty to get out into the community, I would personally seek out opportunities to meet with your organization, and others like it, to not only highlight what the Library already offers, but to also gain feedback and get a better sense of how the community views this programming, the role the Library currently plays with respect to early childhood development, and solicit suggestions on how the Library could improve. So I would not only be a strong advocate for the Library to continue to focus on this topic, but I would be an active listener and excellent communicator back to the other Board Members.

On a personal note, when my wife and I moved to Oak Park almost five years ago, our daughter was 3½ and our son was a newborn. We found the Library to be an excellent resource for early childhood development. We utilized the children's section on a regular basis to read books, experiment, listen to stories, and interact with other children. I feel like I have recent first-hand experience with having an excellent library available and I want to ensure that the Library continues to be such a resource for the entire community.

The vision set forth in the one-page overview of an integrated and high-quality early childhood system is one that I share and support. To further the goals and priorities of your organization, one approach I would certainly encourage as a Board Member is that the Library make it a priority to engage with your organization to determine how the Library can better serve the priorities of early childhood development within the community and I would be a strong advocate on the Board for the Library to intensely focus on allocating the appropriate resources to achieve those objectives.

I hope this letter provides a good overview of my perspective on early childhood care and education, and how I believe the Library can be a key resource. A little background about myself to conclude this response: As I mentioned, I am a father of two, who are now almost 5 and 8 years old. I am a former U.S. Marine where I served for five years as an intelligence operator. I attended Northwestern Law School in Chicago and was a practicing attorney for almost 10 years before moving into the technology space about six years ago. I am currently a Senior Vice President at a legal technology company based out of New York, and when I am not traveling to see clients, I work from home in Oak Park, and on many occasions, take my work to the Library. I am a lifelong lover of libraries, and when I thought about ways to serve my community, it made sense to focus on something that I am so passionate about.

Again, many thanks for the opportunity to respond, and if I am elected to the Library Board, I very much look forward to working with your organization.