

MTI-VOTERS

2017 School Board Election Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions. If you wish to add to/clarify your response, please do so by attaching the additional information, and designate your response by the corresponding number which appears in the questionnaire.

Please deliver your responses to MTI Headquarters (821 Williamson Street) by January 13. MTI-Voters will be interviewing candidates on the evening of Tuesday, January 24, between 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm

1. Why are you running for the MMSD Board of Education?

I want to serve on the MMSD School Board for the love of learning.

I believe in this community, and know we are capable of coming together to innovate our schools through empowering students. I want to be a part of making Madison a place where children, families, and educators feel supported, celebrated, and included by their school's leadership. As a graduate from Madison public schools, an educator in the district, and a mother of two, I have firsthand experience within the community. I've worked with MMSD teachers, the city's talented students, and their supportive families.

Madison has the tools to ensure that our children have access to the most relevant technologies. We have the drive to empower students to resolve conflict, seek solutions, and value each other. We have the ability to invest in our community by growing competitive public schools that nurture a new generation of innovative Madison leaders. We have the resources to help our children to imagine the future of Madison from inside their classrooms.

We are a community that prides ourselves on our progress. We are not a district to be defined by our past; we are a community of learners willing to embrace the work needed to ensure that every student in Madison succeeds. We will address racial disparities relentlessly until our schools are places where students of color are recognized, valued, and provided with meaningful opportunities for success and inclusion. We need to seize the opportunity to cultivate our students' intelligence and to support the educators in our community.

I want to serve on the school board to push our schools to bring out the absolute best of each student. I want our children to live in a fair and just community, one that embraces every student's curiosity and growth and adapts learning methods to fit each individual learner. By embracing highly-effective practices, we can adapt curriculum to offer all students the opportunity to experience the educational value of the arts, service learning, and diverse learning models.

Our school board serves not only the students, but our entire community--our methods and strategies should strive to shine light on the part of every one of us that yearns to learn, that explores new ways of solving problems, and seeks out the good in all of us. In my leadership, I will empower all of us--students, teachers, families, and community members--to innovate Madison schools and give all students the chance to love learning.

2. Name three things you believe the MMSD does well.

MMSD does well at creating collaborative partnerships. Despite the loss of collective bargaining, the decrease in pay, and that the state of Wisconsin no longer has as strong of a reputation for treating its teachers well, MMSD has been able to recruit and keep some amazing and talented teachers. MMSD also excels at seeking new and innovative approaches to education. We have a history of educating creative and free-thinking students as well. High school students were some of the first to occupy the capital building in response to the Act 10 bill. Teachers supported students and vice versa in those moments. In 2017, as much as any year, we should hope to continue doing this well for the future of our schools and our communities.

3. Name three things you believe the MMSD needs to improve. 4. How do you think the MMSD should address these challenges?

Please find here three areas MMSD could improve, along with ideas on how MMSD could address them:

MMSD could improve in staff representation. Representation is important from Hollywood movies, to elected officials, to our teachers and administrators in our school systems. Children of color need to be able to see themselves in positions of power in all the areas of life that white students get to see themselves in order to visualize their own success. Representation tells young people where they belong in our society. MMSD could improve in the area of representation in a number of ways. First, in the DLI programming, MMSD has struggled to hire Latino teachers, despite having an ever growing population of young, bi-lingual, Latino adults. MMSD often hires teachers learning Spanish as a second language (such as my husband). MMSD has recruited teachers from Spain, rather than from the Latino population in the U.S. or even recruiting teachers from Mexico, who share an identity with many of the students that they would teach in MMSD. In addition, Black students are underrepresented in the DLI programs, and in Gifted and Talented, while overrepresented in Special Education programming as well as in discipline.

MMSD could also improve in offering diversified learning environments and curriculum to meet the needs of all its diverse learners. The Pathways program that MMSD is beginning to implement needs to be examined with a lens toward equity. We cannot allow our schools to overwhelmingly push students of color and low-income students toward careers in manual labor positions, while pushing affluent white students toward higher education and to occupy the positions of power in our society. This merely perpetuates the status quo on issues of race and class. Although surely with many exceptions East High School, with a higher concentration of students of color and poverty, has been a gateway for students to get work at Oscar Meyer and other manual labor work, while West High School, with a presence of greater affluence than East, to funnel students into the UW-system and beyond. In addition, we need to be preparing students for an ever changing world. More than half of the top 10 job positions in our country in 2016 didn't exist ten years earlier. Rather than focus on preparing our students

for low-income careers or work that may not exist in 10 years, we need to prepare them to be capable, self-advocating, adults that can lead this country into the sustainable and equitable city, state, and country that we need to be.

Lastly, MMSD could invest more in their teachers and in retaining good teachers by increasing pay and benefits, as well as providing teachers more opportunities for growth and innovation in the classroom. While at a state and national level, we may not expect increased funding in our public schools, locally we are able to leverage local taxes as well as prioritizing funding within MMSD to make sure our teachers have the means to be the best they can be for our students.

5. Name three things you believe the State of Wisconsin could do better to support public schools.

On a state level, our schools are being underfunded, teachers are leaving the profession, or leaving the state, and the governor and state legislature seem intent on pushing policies that could lead to school privatization.

The state of Wisconsin could reinstate the collective bargaining agreement for teachers and other public employees (eliminate Act 10). It could increase funding for public education in Wisconsin. It could also make changes to the state Department of Public Instruction to allow for opportunities to hire talented teachers of all backgrounds as well as teachers that bring creative solutions to our particular needs at our local schools. This could be done along with funding for current teachers and new teachers to access more professional growth opportunities to keep up with our ever-changing needs as public institutions of education.

6. How would you advocate for these needs as a Board member?

These issues are very concerning to me, and as a school board member, I will fight alongside teachers, and community members to make our state a more hospitable place for public educators. I will also fight within the state and our local tax base to keep our schools well-funded.

7. What do you believe are the three greatest external challenges facing the MMSD.

The greatest external challenge facing MMSD is that we live in a state whose governor and state assembly are hostile towards public education, as well as toward the teachers that provide this education. They have turned Wisconsin into a state that is hard to recruit teachers to, as well as where schools are underfunded. Another external challenge is that our nation's new president elect, with the selection of Betsy DeVos as education secretary, could destroy public education on a national level. As a supporter of private charter schools, school vouchers, and defunding public education in Michigan, she will likely try to bring these dangerous ideas to the national level. Lastly, I believe external challenges such as poverty and race and class divisions in our society are challenges that our students and families face and that MMSD can play a role in overcoming. I do expect that these issues may get worse considering the leadership of our nation and of our state.

8. How do you think the MMSD can best meet these challenges?

At a time like this, when we are feeling unsure about the support we will get for our public schools on a State and Federal level, we must seek new ways to support each other as a community on a local level. If we do not get the necessary funding from State and Federal levels we can do what we can pass local referendums to fund what is necessary. As a city, only around 20 percent of us voted for Donald Trump or Scott Walker, and Madison has much wealth. If we can look on each other as a community that needs each other and takes care of each other, we will be able to provide schools that work for all our children with a staff that is loved and compensated well for their work. We also need to be efficient as a community and critical of ourselves, while investing in what does work well and being willing to change what does not. In Boston, school lunch is free to all students because they realized that it costs more to verify income than to provide free lunch to all.

9. What are your thoughts about public charter schools governed by the BOE?

I do support innovative education, and some “public charter” schools are helpful. James C. Wright Middle School as well as Nuestro Mundo that are a part of MMSD are examples of these. Nuestro Mundo has shown MMSD that bi-lingual education is not only possible in a public charter, but that it can be implemented as an option in many of MMSD’s other schools.

10. What are your thoughts about private charter schools governed by others?

I am not a supporter of private charter schools, school vouchers, or any form of privatizing public education. Policies that seek to take resources away from public schools, and redistribute them to affluent families to send their kids to private school are harmful to our most vulnerable students. In addition, running a school like a business, as many private charter schools do, is a problem because as a business the goal is to increase profits, and this can come into conflict with the number one priority that should be an excellent education for every child.

11. What are your thoughts about vouchers (using public funds to pay for private schools)?

I am not a supporter of school vouchers for reasons mentioned above

12. **Non-incumbents only:** Have you ever attended a PTO, PTA meeting or a school board meeting? If so, what issues motivated your attendance?

As a student having attended MMSD from K through 12, and as an educator working for the Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE), I have attended a few PTO meetings and many School Board meetings. The latest issue I was highly motivated to attend was the issue of Educational Resource Officers in our high schools. I have taught MMSD high school students at the Dane County Juvenile Detention Center, and seen how disproportionate the arrest of Black students is in our high schools. It was not uncommon for me to teach a class of ALL Black students at the detention center, some of whom were arrested at our schools. This prompted

me to get active in the discussion of how to better use ERO's in the schools, and to look deeply into our role in sending students of color into the school-to-prison pipeline.

13. Do you believe that teachers and other employees should have a voice in issues that impact...?

a. Their pay and benefits

Yes

b. Their working conditions

Yes

c. Their students' learning conditions (e.g. class size, use of technology, building conditions)

Yes

d. Curriculum and assessment selection and decisions

Yes

I believe not only that teachers and other employees should have a say in all of these matters, but that their ideas and input should be a top priority when considering policy in these matters.

14. Would you support the reinstatement of collective bargaining rights for all public employees (currently prohibited by Act 10)?

I would not only wholeheartedly support this, but I would be willing to help teachers fight hard for it. Of course, a hard fight might be the only way to win this particular battle.

15. School staff experienced a reduction in take home pay after Act 10 was passed and salary increases have not kept pace with the cost-of-living. The District is experiencing increasing difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified employees. If elected to the Board of Education, what is your plan to increase pay for school staff?

See also my answers in question 8. If we do not get the necessary funding from State and Federal levels we can pass local referendums to fund what is necessary to keep teachers well paid. As a city, only around 20 percent of us voted for Donald Trump or Scott Walker, and Madison has much wealth. If we can look at each other as a community that needs each other and takes care of each other, we will be able to provide schools that work for all our children with a staff that is loved and compensated well for their work.

16. Are you aware of the MMSD's collaborative employee handbook process with employee representatives?

a. If so, do you support the continuation of that process?

As I understand, the MMSD collaborative employee handbook process is one of few in the country, where representatives of MTI and school administrators collaborated in the content of the employee handbook, that addresses much of what has replaced the collective bargaining agreement which expired in July of 2016. Although I'm sad to see the collective bargaining agreement go, I certainly would support the continuation of a process that seeks collaboration, as long as employee representatives are happy with the process.

17. Do you believe that parents and students should have a voice in issues that impact them?

a. If so, how do you think the MMSD could improve in that area?

Parents and students need to have a voice. I would like to help create student newspapers in middle and high schools and make sure that the ones that we do have flourish and become even more of an avenue for communication with parents and input from students. I would also help create more podcasts and webseries for both students and parents to access electronically. We need to create a culture on the board, and in the administration, as well as all of our schools, where all parents feel welcome and appreciated, where their input is valued and listened to. We need to create a variety of ways for parents to access and show leadership, in ways that parents view themselves as participants and audience members. I would like to see us using a proactive approach to utilizing educational tools as a means to communication and collaboration with parents.

18. Are you aware of the MMSD's Behavior Education Plan?

a. If so, what are your thoughts about the goals of the plan? b. What are your thoughts about the implementation of the plan?

I am familiar with the Behavior Education Plan. One of the issues I have with it is that it puts too much of the emphasis on the teacher and may even lead teachers feeling like they need to spend too much time on "behavior management" and have less time to focus on providing quality instruction. It does not do enough to empower the students to take agency in navigating their own behavior. The Behavior Education Plan does take some amazingly proactive steps to lessening children's exposure to exclusionary practices, and for that I applaud it.

19. What do you see as the proper relationship between the Board of Education and the MMSD Superintendent and Administration?

The Board of Education's role is to provide oversight and a way of holding the administration accountable to the public that our schools serve. As elected officials, members of the School Board need to advocate for the MMSD students, parents, and staff. This can mean bringing attention of issues to the administration where issues are not being addressed properly, as well as seeking new leadership of the Administration when necessary.

20. Who do you plan to seek advice from should you be elected to the Board of Education?

I believe that the people with the best ideas are those that are directly involved and impacted by decisions. This means that teachers, students, and parents that spend time in our public schools are often the experts and the ones who can bring awareness of issues as well as have the solutions. I plan on regularly seeking the advice of these experts.

21. Are you seeking MTI's endorsement of your campaign?

Yes

22. Are you seeking MTI political action contributions for your campaign?

Yes

23. Is there anything else you would like MTI members to know about your candidacy and why you are seeking election to the Board of Education?

I love this community, the one I grew up and went to school in, and the community I now work for in Madison. As I have shown as an instructor of the course Foundations of Leadership and as a creator of the New Narrative Project at the Dane County Jail, I will work very hard to make a better future for all of our students. I would be excited to be endorsed by MTI and continue to work hard to make our schools places that our teachers and staff are proud of.