

# MTI-VOTERS

## 2018 School Board Election Questionnaire

Anna Moffit

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 (33 Nob Hill Road, Madison 53713) by January 12, 2018.***

***MTI-Voters will be interviewing candidates on the evening of Wednesday, January 24, between 4:00 and 8:00 p.m.***

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

I'm running because I want to continue working for the success of our students by building on my experience and accomplishments attained in my first term. I wish to continue my efforts to reduce exclusionary practices, and advocate for equitable distribution of resources. I will fight for policies, practices, and working conditions that validate and support our educators. I am a MMSD parent, a former teacher, and a family advocate with Wisconsin Family Ties; education is my life's work. Serving on the Board of Education is challenging and demanding, but I am ready to put my experience to work in a second term.

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

Valuing our diverse students, staff and families  
Creating opportunities and building capacity to better serve students with mental health needs  
Securing community partners and leveraging community resources

3. Name three things you believe the MMSD needs to improve.

Better treatment and recognition of our school based staff/educators  
Meeting the needs of struggling students  
Providing opportunities for authentic and meaningful collaboration and dialogue between the MMSD administration and our educators, students, and parents

4. How do you think the MMSD should address these challenges?

MMSD needs to give educators and staff a stronger voice in decisions about teaching and learning, and more flexibility with scheduling and curriculum to meet the needs of all children. In order to support struggling students, the district should improve our multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) at the school level, expanding the reach and assuring that this work incorporates linguistic and culturally responsive practices. Currently, the district relies on closed advisory groups for input into decisions. Increasing opportunities for broad and open participation in regard to district policies, budgets, priority actions and ongoing initiatives will increase transparency and lead to better decision-making. Finally, the district should prioritize school-based staffing over our expanding administrative staff.

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

Provide equitable and adequate funding for our public schools, including full funding for special education and English Language Learner services, while ending the diversion of public funds to private schools via vouchers and tax credits

Restore high standards for professional educator training and licensure

Restore full collective bargaining rights for all public employees, including educators.

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

I serve as the Board of Education's legislative liaison, so I am continually engaged in state and national policy that impacts Madison's—and Wisconsin's—public schools. I write op-eds to raise public awareness of these issues, testify at hearings, and draft resolutions for our Board. I also participate in groups like the Wisconsin Public Education Network (WPEN) and Madison Partners that advocate at the local and state levels for just policies and practices.

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

a) The Republican and neo-liberal movement that continues to: attack public education, siphon public money into school privatization, take away rights at the national level as well as local control at the state level; b) Racial and economic inequalities in our nation and our community, which have deep impacts on our students; c) Unrealistic expectations for schools and educators alone to overcome all inequalities and blame for the failure to do the impossible.

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

The MMSD cannot meet these external challenges alone. It is important for our district to be part of a strong and diversified network of individuals and organization that supports public education, opposes elected officials working to privatize education, and works to diminish inequality. At the district level, we can build support for public education and MMSD schools by celebrating our strengths as a school system and supporting our staff. We must recognize the ways that inequalities affect our students, and in collaboration with other governmental bodies and community organizations, provide the resources to close opportunity gaps.

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

I will support instrumentality charter schools that provide equitable access for all students and meet an unmet needs in our district. I strongly support continuing our current policy of not authorizing non-instrumentality charter schools. When we make decisions about instrumentality charter schools, we must consider the impact these schools will have on all the students in the MMSD, and not just the students who will attend the charter school. These schools must honor the collaborative handbook process and provide adequate staffing with licensed educators. I believe charter schools are more bureaucratic than neighborhood schools, as two governing bodies oversee their functioning. I think that all of our schools should have some autonomy and the ability to try different learning approaches, not just charters. I strongly support continuing our current policy of not authorizing non-instrumentality charter schools.

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

I am opposed to them.

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

I am opposed to them. As a disability and public education advocate, I have fought for years against their growth.

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

n/a

13. Describe which of the following issues you believe teachers and other employees should have a voice in and what that would look like?

Our educators and support staff MUST have a voice in decisions about all of these issues. That does not mean simply having an opportunity to express perspectives but having their voice meaningfully reflected in decision-making.

- a. Their pay and benefits: Yes. Our staff has not had an adequate pay raise in years. We must be cautious about implementing salary progression that fails to reward experience and long-term dedication to our district. We also need to address wage compression that results from increasing starting pay to attract new staff without raising the pay of our existing staff.
- b. Their working conditions: Yes. Our staff need to feel supported by principals and administrators, and they need to be able to safely voice concerns about both working and learning conditions at their schools.
- c. Their students' learning conditions (e.g. class size, use of technology, building conditions): Yes. I have supported increased funding for additional staffing in our schools; specifically, for smaller class sizes at high-poverty elementary schools and for additional SEA support at schools struggling to meet the needs of students with disabilities. We need to provide staff and students with technology that supports, not replaces, classroom teaching, with a focus on closing opportunity gaps.
- d. Curriculum and assessment selection and decisions: yes. We need to move away from rigid adherence to boxed curriculum. Staff need more flexibility to make decisions about instruction and implement culturally responsive teaching.

Our educators and support staff MUST have a voice in decisions about all of these issues.

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

Yes

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?

Due to my husband's employment as a district staff member, I cannot participate as a board member in matters of teacher compensation. I have supported, and will continue to support, compensation increases for other

employees. As a citizen and parent, I will continue advocating for fully funding public education and professional compensation for educators. If re-elected, I will advocate and vote for improved working conditions for our staff. I am concerned about our capacity to attract and retain licensed, qualified employees.

16. Are you aware of the MMSD's collaborative employee handbook process with employee representatives? Yes  
a. If so, do you support the continuation of that process?

Yes. I would like to see employee representatives have a stronger role in the collaborative process.

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

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

Parent and student input is heavily controlled via surveys and meeting facilitation that doesn't ask the right questions or provide opportunities for honest input. This needs to change. The district needs to bring together people of different races, cultures and backgrounds for difficult but important conversations about education. The current listening sessions for the next strategic plan exemplify how the district siloes people by race and identity, when seeking public input. I disagree with advisory groups that are not publicly noticed and closed. Any MMSD resident, parent or student should be able to give feedback to the district.

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

- a. If so, what are your thoughts about the goals of the plan?

I admire the goals of the plan and its shift away from punitive measures towards restorative approaches and social skill building, as well as greater consistency in addressing behavioral infractions. I support the use of restorative justice and Natural Circles of Support to reduce disparities in exclusionary practices, and ultimately end the school-to-prison pipeline.

- b. What are your thoughts about the implementation of the plan?

I think the BEP has been very poorly implemented for a number of reasons. First, staff have not received high-quality professional development in regard to social-emotional development, trauma-informed practices and mental health. The BEP was not implemented with adequate staffing or support structures within schools. Most of the work has been reactionary, which continues to decrease its effectiveness

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

The Board of Education, by statute, are responsible for all aspects of our schools. Democratically elected governance is an essential part of public education. Via resources and via our community values, profound trust is placed in the Board. We cannot fail to exercise that oversight or defer to officials who are not elected. That said, we should collaborate and question one another. There should be a respectful manner towards the board

that values their time and perspective and experience. It should be a check and balance with shared decision making and power.

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

I will continue to collaborate with all board members. I will continue to seek advice from and listen to MMSD staff members, parents and students. I will continue efforts to increase the openness and responsiveness of the board, and I will continue to be available to address concerns and questions.

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 received MTI endorsement in my first run for the MMSD Board of Education. In three years serving on the school board, I've worked closely with MTI and have advocated with and for our educators on a wide variety of issues. I believe my record has earned your continued support. I also believe I have earned the trust of many of our staff, and that the information shared based on this trust has been invaluable in expanding my understanding of our district.

My experience as a former educator and district parent are invaluable assets for both the district and MTI. As a school board member, I am in regular contact with staff and I am keenly aware of our district's strengths and challenges, including staff concerns about meeting the needs of all students. I believe that, as a parent of a child with a significant disability, I bring a unique and critical perspective to the board of education. Students with disabilities and students of color continue to struggle in our district. Students who fall into both of these categories are extremely vulnerable, and inadequate support for these students negatively impacts both these pupils and our staff, as well. Without adequate resources and support, both students and staff can be put in difficult and dangerous situations. As a board member, I will continue to be vigilant and advocate for the best possible working and learning conditions in our schools. We have been able to take some steps but we can do better and I will continue to insist that we do.