

Progressive Dane Endorsement Questions for 2019 School Board Candidates

1. Why are you running for elected office?

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. As a School Board member, I believe I can leverage my personal experience, my professional expertise, and my community relationships established through both, to bring about the changes our students need.

2. What are your 3 biggest areas of concern with MMSD, and what would you like to see changed to address these concerns.

Despite dedicated administrators, passionate teachers, and committed families and students, MMSD continues to produce disparate outcomes for students correlating to their identities. We need to explicitly commit to being at the forefront of inclusion, which requires innovation in curriculum, instruction, and school culture.

Increased community participation in decisions about resources would lead to more effective decisions about efficiencies and priorities, and would strengthen community trust and community support for the district by assuring that all members have a meaningful voice in district governance.

I'd like to see MMSD better provide opportunities for arts education to all students. Our district has amazing teachers, classes, relationships, and spaces, and all of our children deserve to utilize these resources to pursue all of their educational goals. A commitment to integrating the arts into core curricula and offering daily opportunities for creativity, we can promote equity, academic achievement, positive behaviors, and improved attendance for all students while supporting smaller class sizes, more planning time, and innovation in the classroom.

3. Please read the attached education platform. What recommendations do you have for additions and what pieces of the platform would you prioritize? Is there any proposal, that you do not support?

I appreciate the opportunity to revisit the education platform after having been privileged to work on it's development as part of the Steering Committee, and having specifically provided guidance with a lens of justice and equity for students and families whose identities have led to their being devalued. I do support the platform in its current form, which I believe leaves room for nuanced application when necessary to respond to the

individual needs of each student. Accordingly, the portions of the platform I most support are those that recognize the individual brilliance of each student and provide for that to be nurtured and recognized. We all do better when we all do better.

4. Evaluate the issue of transparency with the way the School Board currently operates, what problem areas do you believe need to be addressed and how will you work to address them?

I believe in transparency and support decision-making processes that seek input from all members of our community, especially parents and students. Current operations would benefit from increased community participation and feedback throughout the process, which can only occur when communities feel truly seen, heard and valued. I believe my presence on the School Board would lead to more participation from members of the community that have felt unable and unwelcome to address our institutions of power here in Madison.

5. Do you support the recommendations from the ad hoc committee on educational resource officers (EROs)? What are the most important elements of safe schools?

As with any collective body, the members of the committee themselves recognize the lack of complete agreement and consensus in approach and in recommendations. I have never recommended an immediate or complete removal of officers from school, but rather have always maintained that the conversation about their use should focus on objectives and outcomes. I have taught MMSD students inside the Dane County Jail. It was not uncommon for my class to be entirely Black students. I am uniquely aware of the effects of the school-to-prison pipeline on primarily our students of color in MMSD.

However, as I would not rest responsibility for our district's achievement gap entirely on the backs of educators, I do not rest responsibility for the incarceration disparities in our schools solely on the backs of our ERO's. I do specifically agree with the following statement from the report: "A broader analysis of the root causes as to the actual and perceived safety risks at our school sites is necessary. This was beyond the scope of what this committee was able to accomplish. "There should be an acknowledgement that school leadership and climate have a larger impact on school safety than the presence of an ERO or police officers in MMSD school sites."(p.6). I agree with the committee's conclusion that leadership and climate are the predominant drivers of school safety. We must stand for safe learning environments that are welcoming and inclusive for students of all backgrounds, cultures, languages, and identities.

6. What strategies do you favor to address the achievement gap?

I support the evidence-based practices of equity and inclusion. These include recruitment and retaining of teaching staff of color; curriculum and instructional design that is inclusive, representative, and and responsive; establishing a school culture that

is rooted in self-determination and consent; and a holistic educational approach that responds to all of a child's needs, strengths, and interests.

7. Do you support charter schools? What can the school board do to protect against the constant pressure of privatization?

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. By definition, these institutions are not subject to School Board oversight, but I believe they can be rendered superfluous and unsustainable by MMSD's BOE and administration committing to the innovation required to provide every child in our district with an education that meets the holistic learning needs of the child. The district has many tools and resources at its disposal to address gaps. Among other options, this includes pilot programs, experiential learning opportunities, learning cohorts created by pathways and other programs, micro-schools, advanced learning, medium and high-intensity partnerships, independent study, and instrumentality charter schools, such as Nuestro Mundo. As a member of the BOE I will consider the outcomes for students and staff, especially outcomes related to equity and inclusion, when deciding to support these various structures.

FOR NEW CANDIDATES ONLY

8. What are the unique qualities and perspectives that you will bring to this office?

I was born in Madison and attended MMSD for over 12 years, graduating from East High school. I have a deep understanding and a profound love for this community, and it is from that place of love and understanding that I advocate for innovation and improvement.

2013's Race to Equity report opened the eyes of most of Dane County. For me it validated and gave voice to my own story. I grew up black, queer, and low-income, designated as 'special education' by MMSD, and am intimately familiar with many dynamics impacting students and families with these identities. For many local leaders and organization, Race to Equity was a catalyst for action. For me it was confirmation of the importance of the work I've been doing for over a decade, and an echo of my career-long priorities for educational change. I have lived the truth, but also seen the research to believe that student achievement benefit from educational environments that prioritize consent, freedom, learning and human rights, and this has guided my work with schools, students, and communities throughout the district and the state.

My lifetime of personal and professional relationships established in Madison means that no day goes by without my crossing paths with MMSD students, families, educators, and administrators, and benefitting from their perspective and their stories.

9. In what ways are you currently active in your district and the community at large?

I am a parent, partner, writer, instructor, advocate, and doula. I have worked in education for 13 years since becoming the after school spoken word club liaison for the East High School in partnership with UW-Madison's First Wave program. Inspired by the passion of my students, I worked to create Wisconsin's first Spoken Word class for which high school students could receive academic credit, a class I led for 4 years as an artist in residence at East High School, while establishing spoken word clubs at five Madison public high schools through MSCR. In addition to serving as co-director of GSAFE, I Director the organization's Youth Programming and Inclusion activities. Through this work, I developed and delivered the curriculum for Foundations of Leadership, a district-wide course based in the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth of color who are advanced learners in the areas of leadership. through partnership with MMSD, I founded GSAFE's New Narrative Project in the Dane County Juvenile Detention Center, providing the youth with clear channels to academic success, civic engagement, and self-determination. I sit on the Board of Fair Wisconsin, and was recently appointed to Governor Evers' Criminal Justice Reform Council. I am a frequent contributor to local print, radio, and web-based media, speaking about education and community, including on my weekly WORT radio show, and on my widely-followed social media platforms. I am frequently honored by requests to deliver calls to action and keynote addresses for such community-initiated movements as the March for Our Lives, the Women's March, screenings of social justice films. I was humbled to receive the 2018 City-County Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award, as well as the first "Collaborator of the Year" award from the Black Women's leadership conference.