

MTI-VOTERS

2019 School Board Election Questionnaire

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

Because Safe Schools = a Safe Community

Because we can close the achievement gap only by restoring discipline and high expectations to Madison education regardless of race, income, or other identity politics. Yes, there is a racial disparity in achievement in Madison and Dane County. No, our teachers are not institutionally racist. The kids hijacking cars and shooting up the school bus are not being turned away at the schoolhouse door. David Blaska did not eat their homework. Madison wants to help them but we cannot as long as we keep telling those kids they are victims incapable of making a better future. Or when a candidate for mayor blames racism for failing to meet the basic threshold to get on the ballot. Or when too many current school board members treat Madison police as hostile interlopers requiring more supervision than cafeteria brawlers.

Teachers with high expectations for their students, who do not make excuses, ought to be honored, not vilified.

- Because good teachers are quitting in frustration. The district's overall achievement score has declined in the last five years — to 58.2 from 63.5 points, according to the Department of Public Instruction.
- Because when parents are intimidated at school board meetings, imagine the chaos in the classroom! None of the other candidates have called out the harassment visited by Freedom Inc., the International Socialists, the Community Response Team, and their allies on Progressive Dane. On 07-19-18, Police Chief Mike Koval described it this way:

“If you saw some of the dynamic that unfolded, what you saw was a choreographed and orchestrated show of force. It is daunting, it is meant to intimidate, it is meant to marginalize and for those who otherwise want to express some civic opinion that is counter to [the terrorists] own, you are literally leaving the hallway in fear.” ...

- Because Madison residents are fleeing our schools; MMSD suffered a net loss of 804 students through the open enrollment program this school year.

- Because reformers like Dr. Michael McCabe are applying to Scott Walker's Office of Educational Opportunity for charter schools instead of to MMSD.
- Because Madison's public schools are in trouble.
- Because school discipline is Job #1.

2. Please describe what quality public education looks like to you?

High standards. No excuses. Stand and Deliver. Challenge the student to grow. Instill responsibility. Parental involvement. Color-blind. Community-minded. Proud of themselves because they have achieved. One thousand points of light.

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

Make excuses. Blame state government. Dumb down deviancy. Feed the culture of victimization. Lower expectations. Monger guilt.

BUT ALSO: Hire great teachers. Pay them well. Welcome every student.

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

1. Classroom Discipline. Return control of the classrooms to teachers.

2. More charters (call it "one thousand points of light") One size does not fit all.

3. Lose the fixation on identity politics.

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

- Abolish the aggregation of performance statistics based on race, gender, and national identity (subject to legislative approval).
- Open up to district charters or lose education to outside charters and suburban school districts.

- Trust teachers to control their classrooms. They are the captains of their ship. (Start by restoring civility to school board meetings. No profanity, no disruptions, no intimidation.)
- Each student participates in school maintenance; from at least middle school on up, one hour a week pushing broom, shoveling snow, cleaning whiteboards, etc.

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

Wrong question. The question is “What can the State of Wisconsin do to improve student outcomes?” Eyes on the prize, people! Public schools are not the purpose, they are a means to an end. The goal is an educated citizenry — not insulating the silo. Therefore:

1. Close down all failing schools receiving taxpayer dollars: that means public and voucher. Take over the entire Milwaukee public school system, which has received failing grades for years and is, in fact, failing generations of young people.
2. Make the Department of Public Instruction a cabinet-level department whose secretary is appointed by the governor. (Requires constitutional change.) Education should sit at the same table with natural resources, transportation, veterans affairs, revenue, workforce development, etc.
3. Set up residential, secure-campus schools for at-risk youth — both court-ordered and voluntary admissions to save young people from troubled home environments. Replaces Lincoln Hills with regional schools, including one in Dane County on a dedicated campus. Contract education to most qualified bidder, including MMSD.

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

I’m not shy. I know how to harness public opinion. You need one member who gets along with (and knows) Republican legislators. Maybe one member who represents the Great Unwashed.

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

1. Progressive Dane. (Ali Muldrow, T.J. Mertz, Dean Loumos, Anna Moffit, Nikki Vander Meulen are members), Freedom Inc., and their terribly “woke” allies. 2. Better alternatives: suburban school districts, non-district charters, vouchers. 3. The general cult of victimhood promoted by identity politics. (The urban myth of “school-to-prison pipeline.”)

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

Elect David Blaska.

10. What ideas do you have to support the recruitment and retention of teachers of color so that our work force is more representative of our student population?

See #2 and #4. while it is important to have teachers of color as mentors and examples, having “great teachers” is not dependent on one’s race or ethnicity. This question implies yet another ‘excuse’ for the failure to close the achievement gap.

11. What do you view as the underlying issues involving the achievement gap? How would you address those?

Parents who don’t read to their children. Absent, neglectful, or abusive parents. Contact with substance abuse, crime, and physical abuse. Chaos in the classroom. Lowered expectations. The cult of victimhood, which robs the individual of agency over their own lives. NOT RACISM!

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

The more the better. Set up a drive-through window at the Doyle Administration Bldg. to approve more. It is a scandal that the Urban League’s proposed Madison Preparatory Academy was never approved. Paved the way for the Office of Educational Opportunity to bypass MMSD’s closed shop mind-set. The latest to file with the OEO instead of applying at MMSD is a Dr. Michael McCabe. For shame!

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

A reaction to the failure of public schools. It’s called competition in the marketplace of ideas. No parent is forced to send their children to a voucher school — yet the parents of 28,000 children in the Milwaukee district (alone) choose to do so. Name the failing public school (mainly in Milwaukee) that has been shut down (not consolidated).

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

Taxpayer dollars follow the kids. MMSD must meet and beat the competition instead of outlawing it, Soviet style. The goal is an educated citizenry — not closing down the marketplace of ideas. Folks, this argument is over; it has been decided in favor of consumer choice, not government monopoly.

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

Many. School safety. Performance, Madison Urban League's Madison Preparatory Academy many others. My son graduated Memorial high school.

16. Describe which of the following issues you believe teachers and other employees should have a voice in and what that would look like?
- Their pay and benefits
 - Their working conditions
 - Their students' learning conditions (e.g. class size, use of technology, building conditions, behavior response)
 - Curriculum and assessment selection and decisions

A voice, yes, of course. Teacher input is critical, especially for #d. A vote, no. We elect a school board.

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

No and it's not going to happen any time soon. Let's move on. Without the right to strike (which MTI never had) collective bargaining was always ephemeral, at best.

18. 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?

Everyone experienced a reduction in take home pay after the Great Recession of 2008-09. Even pensioners invested in the WI Retirement System. But sure, increase pay as can be afforded. But pay is not the primary reason in staff recruitment & retention. Restore control of the classroom to teachers. One teacher said: "I, too, left MMSD after teaching here for 25 years. Many of the same circumstances at my middle school caused me to leave as well. I took a job with substantially less pay and worse benefits, but could no longer stay in a district that did not support teachers ... I felt guilty leaving knowing what my students were going to be left facing in classrooms often in chaos.

In the last MMSD budget, Madison teachers received an average total compensation increase of 4.13%, including steps and lanes in a zero-inflation economy. What's more, the district absorbed all health care costs increases (3.85%) from being passed onto 55 employees. Nice!

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

1) Yes, I am aware of it. 2) Yes. See #16 and #17.

20. If you had to identify \$10 million in necessary cuts, what would you prioritize cutting? If you could identify \$10 million in additional investments what would you invest in?

Save money by cutting the Behavior Education Plan bureaucracy. Invest money in more counsellors and more school security, including school resource officers in the middle schools (perhaps on a shared basis). Residential treatment

21. How do you think the MMSD could improve in providing parents and students greater voice on issues that impact them?

By electing one out of the seven Board of Education members who actually represents parents and taxpayers, not the Madison's political/education establishment.

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

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

The goal of the BEP, unfortunately, is to jigger the numbers so as to avoid the race card. "There is overwhelming evidence that Obama-era policies culminating in this 'Dear Colleague' letter pushed schools to avoid disciplining students who needed to be disciplined. It made avoiding politically incorrect numbers more important than maintaining school safety." <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/dear-colleague-letter-obama-administration-withdraw/>

The WI State Journal article says so, too. The Behavior Education Plan "... emphasized the need to avoid suspending or expelling misbehaving students — largely as a way to reduce the disproportionate number of students of color who were missing school due to behavior problems."

After four years of the inscrutable BEP and dollar cost of \$15 million, Madison's public school classrooms are more unruly than ever.

- out-of-school suspensions dropped from 2,905 in 2013-14 to 2,521 last school year.
- "Behavior incidents" nearly doubled from 35,460 in the 2013-14 school year — the year before the BEP went into effect — to 69,279 in 2017-18.

Federal policies requiring school districts to make the numbers work by disciplining fewer minority students are being rolled back. A federal Commission on School Safety blamed the 2014 directive for an increase in school violence. "The commission's focus was part of a broader effort to reject

the previous administration's race-conscious education efforts," the New York Times reports. The safety commission found that the focus on race over safety has made schools more dangerous. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/17/us/politics/trump-school-discipline.html>

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

Un-implementable. Undesirable. Counter-productive. The symptom, not the cure.

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

Board of Directors / Chief Executive

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

Parents, teachers, police, alders and community leaders, reform-minded thinkers.

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

I am here at MTI's invitation because I sincerely believe that teachers ought to be given back their classrooms, in part, by removing the impediments placed in their way by backward, excuse-driven policies of the District. Teachers ought to be supported and rewarded who strive for excellence. I am happy to engage with all voters and groups on the merits.

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

Write checks to Blaska for Safer Schools, P.O. Box 44663, Madison WI 53744-4663

27. 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?

My principal opponent is Ali Muldrow. She is Progressive Dane. She is against cops in school. She and Ananda Mirilli are running as a team. Both support Freedom Inc. Ali Muldrow wrote Progressive Dane's cops-out-of-school manifesto.

According to Progressive Dane's own website, Seat #4 school board candidate Ali "Muldrow was endorsed by Progressive Dane during her 2017 Madison School Board campaign and continues to serve

on the Steering Committee where she is helping draft the first local Education Platform in our county's history."

That platform reads:

- Stop contracting with Madison Police Department for educational resource officer presence in schools.
- End the practice of expelling students.
- Oppose zero-tolerance policies, including, but not limited to those for the use of cell phones and other personal devices.
- Fund legal services/right to counsel for students facing formal discipline, including suspension and expulsion.
- Educate students and staff on issues of systemic racism and compel teachers and administrators to document their efforts to end racial inequalities in scales large and small.
- Uphold the right of students and families to opt-out of standardized tests and the right of staff to freely inform families of their right to opt-out.
- Oppose the ranking and grading of schools based on standardized test scores and participation rates.

On January 15, 2018 Ali Muldrow said: "I struggled to understand how Madison could be so liberal, and racist enough to discriminate against children at school. Because, you see, it is no coincidence that children who were once enslaved in this country are now filling our Juvenile Detention Center ... I am here tonight because we are determined to end the incarceration of children, and I am just getting started."
-- <https://prodane.org/education/>

Each of these candidates ought to be rejected by MTI. They stand for so many things that are harmful to our teachers and our schools. MTI could make a bold statement by refusing to endorse. If MTI chooses to endorse one of those candidates, it may properly be perceived as a cynical statement about the future of schools and rejection of the facts on the ground.

28. Who has endorsed your campaign?

You would be surprised!

29. Who serves on your campaign committee?

A cabal of very intelligent and public-spirited citizens

30. Are you aware of any conflicts of interest which may prohibit you from voting on certain items before the Board of Education? If so, what are they?

Blissfully unaware.

Now I put it to the 5,000+ faculty and staff of the Madison Metropolitan School District: Are you running a school-to-prison pipeline? Do you discriminate against students of color, orientation? David Blaska says no. What say you?