

Date: January 11, 2019

To: MTI Voters

From: Kaleem Caire, Candidate, Seat 3, MMSD Board of Education

Re: MTI Voters 2019 School Board Election Questionnaire

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

First, I encourage your members to review my website at www.Caire4Kids.com for information about my background and credentials. You will learn that I have been involved in shaping many of the initiatives that presently exist within MMSD, and in Madison, that have attracted, empowered and supported the education and success of thousands of our children over the last 20-plus years.

Additionally, I first ran for the Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education in 1998. I was an employee of MMSD, have created programs for children within and outside MMSD schools (via partnerships), and have worked, volunteered and advocated within and for MMSD since I was a high school student in 1985 – more than 30 years.

Since graduating from Madison West High School in 1989, I have dedicated his life to creating opportunities for children that help them achieve to their full potential.

I am running to serve on the Board of Education because I want every child residing in the residential boundaries of MMSD (and Dane County) to have the opportunity to develop their talents, engage in their interests, identify their passions and reach their full potential, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or social, economic or disability status. Moreover, I would like to see our children develop the requisite knowledge, skills and passions required to solve an array of complex problems that we adults are creating for them and will leave them to address in the future.

I would like to see **stronger partnerships between MMSD and Madison's early childhood education community** that provide a sensible continuum of learning, growth and development opportunities for children from birth to age 5.

I see MMSD **operating new schools and programs** for the Visual, Creative and Performing Arts, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math), the Trades, Language Immersion, early college learning opportunities and other programs of interest and importance to children and families, within the structure of its current system.

I see a school district where **all students are held to high expectations of performance and personal conduct**, and where the community demonstrates its belief in its children **by investing more in their promise and potential**.

I see a school district where principals, teachers, school staff and parents are truly supported and regarded by the Greater Madison community, and where everyone digs a little deeper and goes a little further to **MAKE YOUNG PEOPLE, THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY IN OUR CITY**.

As a member of the Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education, I will help rally the community around creating the school district of the future and **PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST** among our policy priorities in our city. Besides the routine responsibilities of an MMSD Board of Education member, I will focus on the following:

- Reaching children in their first five years of life through expanded early childhood education programs and partnerships.
- Expanding new innovative K-12 school models and programs "within" our public schools.
- Building stronger partnerships between parents and schools and promoting high expectations for parental engagement.
- Giving students, parents and educators a greater voice in decisions that impact our schools, their jobs and their education.

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

It looks like this...(see attachment: An Student's Ecosystem for Student Achievement)

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

First, MMSD does a good job of trying to provide resources and educational opportunities for children who need it the most. Second, MMSD has done well engaging in partnerships with other entities in Madison and offering extra-curricular activities that enrich and extend the education of children. Third, they have done a good job staying focused on providing a high-quality education in classrooms while getting all staff aligned behind a shared vision for excellence among all students.

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

First, I am most concerned that for 25 years, I have personally pointed out our city's school achievement crisis among Black and Brown children. Unfortunately, our city has been slow to respond, and has not gone far enough to help our children win.

Second, I am also concerned that we are leaving it to the responsibility of our public schools and teachers to solve the educational crisis that affects all of our children. This will not get us what we need. Instead, it will take a concerted, joint effort on the part of educators, parents, employers, philanthropy, city/county/state government and the broader community to create and reinforce the conditions and shared expectations for all of our children to achieve to their full potential.

We also appear fearful to hold high expectations of parents and the broader community, and even more fearful to hold them accountable for being at the table to move children forward. Similarly, an underlying feeling of exclusion in our city's public schools still resides within communities of color. This is a situation we cannot be fearful to address: not with our parents, not with our educators, and not with our community.

Third, I am deeply concerned about the number of teacher vacancies we have mid-year, along with the rate of turnover of our teachers in some of our schools and the diminishing number of young people going into teaching. We have to make MMSD so attractive to teachers to want to teach there, that they don't want to go anywhere else. We have to do a much better job enlisting our community to help us recruit educators, and partner with others to create the conditions in our

community that will be attractive to a diverse workforce wanting to teach, live and remain in Madison.

My deep experience in workforce development and my successful efforts to set the stage for Madison to address racial equity and diversity initiatives, and lack thereof, will be a tremendous asset to have on the Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education.

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

We have to start a movement for change, school innovation and advancement for our children. This movement has to spark the interest and motivation of our community to get more involved in supporting our schools and school children and encourage pre-service and veteran teachers to want to teach in Madison.

We have to enlist the voices and work of parents and educators in our plans to move our children and schools forward into the future.

Please also refer to my answer to question number one of this document, for the answer to this question as well. We also have to stop dancing around the uncomfortable and quiet issue of race, and address the challenges that we face in this regard head on. For example, Black children are not performing well in MMSD. In fact, as an aggregate, their low level of performance should leave us all in tears. Far more are failing than are succeeding.

This situation is a reflection of challenges our children face at home, at school, among their peers and in the broader community. We have to catalyze our community around this reality, and not be afraid to make some people uncomfortable when we do. We should always be kind and considerate in our leadership, while also being honest about the reasons our children are not succeeding. Sometimes it's their experience in schools that hold them back. Sometimes it's their friends or peers. Other times, it's their parents...or, more than one of the above. We have to be willing to intervene here, when appropriate.

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

- Make high-quality preschool tuition-free for all children in WI, regardless of race or income.
- Establish an Innovation Fund for Public Schools that can be used to support the development and implementation of innovative school models in the state.
- Support district's efforts to prepare, recruit and train high quality teachers, who serve children from birth through high school graduation.

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

Please see my answer to question number one. I will also lead a movement that Madison has never seen before, to catalyze our community and others across our state, to ensure these initiatives win support, gain traction and are implemented in Madison and across our state. I will enlist the support of my colleagues on the Board of Education, members of the West High track team, and members of the broader community to support a tremendous community campaign.

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

First, the needs of children aren't on the menu. They are not the priority in our country or city right now. However, if we really want to succeed into the future, the needs and aspirations of children should be the number one priority in our city, county, state and country. MMSD is in the business of educating children, and therefore, they and the educators who serve our children are not enough of a priority in our community either.

Second, MMSD is serving larger populations of children who have significant educational needs. Connected to this are families who have social capital, cultural capital and financial means, and who are racially, ethnically and professionally diverse as well, who are choosing to buy homes and live outside of Madison. As poverty rates of MMSD children increase, and social and cultural disconnection increases as well, MMSD will struggle to serve children with greater needs without greater financial resource and a talented and experienced team.

Lastly, the amount of funding needed to build, promote and expand high quality public schools is not adequate to get the job done. MMSD has significant facilities challenges. We have a number of very old facilities that need more attention than patching up the latest cracks in the ceiling. They also need facilities that are designed to provide our children with an inspiring education that propels them forward into a more complex and uncertain future, with the knowledge, skills and aptitude to make a positive difference.

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

Partner with others outside of the school system and enlist teachers in the change as equal partners. Educators and the community must be involved in creating, designing and implementing innovations in our public schools. Also, MMSD and its Board of Education needs to be fearless in its pursuit of equity, opportunity and advantage for ALL of its students in its schools.

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?

MMSD needs to engage the broader community in its recruitment and retention strategies, and work in close alignment with local government, area businesses, housing providers and social organizations to create a climate in Madison where teachers of color will want to teach, raise their families and stay. If we do not address the underlying challenges in the culture of Madison that turn teachers and leaders of color away shortly after they arrive here, then we will continue to see a revolving door of educators of color in our schools.

Furthermore, we must grow our own teachers. We should look to extend our grow your own programs by establishing a pathway for teaching in our high schools, with earlier introduction to teaching professions in middle school. Children begin to consider career opportunities before they enter high school. We should give them early exposure to opportunities within the field. We should also ensure that they have good experiences while attending our schools, and work to enhance the prestige and respect that teachers receive in our schools as well. The more children see teaching as a noble, honored and adequately supported and celebrated profession, as it once was, and see it as a means to lead a good life financially, more will pursue teaching as a career.

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

America's racial achievement gap is rooted in our history. It would take me a book to explain it to you here. The subject is also far too complex to simplify in a few bullet points or short paragraphs.

African Americans endured 246 years of slavery, 99 years of Black Codes and Jim Crow and another 27 years of a "civil rights adjustment" period that culminated with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 where individuals could seek punitive damages against their employers if they could prove they had been discriminated against based on their protected class status. That is 372 years, or 19 generations, of legalized discrimination against Black people. We have only lived in the Civil Rights era for 55 years – 2 ½ generations.

There is no way we can expect that we could undo 19 generations of legalized disenfranchisement, unabated violence and the intentional destruction (or disruption) of Black families and businesses in our country, in just two generations. Unfortunately, our history is our history. However, we have an opportunity to write the future in a way where all of our children can benefit. But we will not achieve this if we continue to allow our public schools to decline, and no way to address these concerns if we don't break from the status quo that go us to this place where racial segregation and distrust among people in our country is increasing again.

Other groups – Latino Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans and ethnic and economically disadvantaged White Americans (Irish, Jewish, etc.), women, individuals with disabilities and others – have endured similar struggles as well.

We have many successful people to look to, to demonstrate that we can produce academic excellence among all children. We just have to go about the business of doing this, and doing so with thoughtfulness, courage, speed and vigor.

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

I support public charter schools, but only those that have produced higher levels of student outcomes and attainment, or that are designed to meet a particular need that traditional public schools either struggle with or do not offer. I also believe that all of these schools have place a very high and unrelenting focus on producing great outcomes among their students.

That said, I do not believe Madison has developed the capability to truly support its current public charter schools. Furthermore, I believe Madison should do more to support its existing charter schools (Badger Rock and Nuestro Mundo) so that their children are given every opportunity to succeed. At the same time, I believe MMSD should focus their attention on creating new and high-quality transformational school options utilizing the schools that it has created and controls.

Since Public School Open Enrollment was created via the provisions of 1997 Act 27 and the subsequent 1998-99 school year, thousands of children who have resided within the boundaries of the Madison Metropolitan School District have enrolled in neighboring school districts, at the expense of MMSD. By creating more attractive school options for children and families, MMSD can stem the growth of public charter schools in our capital city.

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

While I understand what is implied by using the term “private” charter school, there actually is no such thing. There are private, nonpublic schools that are sectarian or non-sectarian. There are traditional public schools such as the ones operated by the Madison Metropolitan School District (including Magnet or Specialty Schools). There are home schools that are operated in a person’s home. There are also “public charter schools”, which are public schools that have to submit to many of the same rules of traditional public schools but that are given greater freedom from non-discriminatory state rules to enable such schools to pursue different types of school innovations, such as longer school days, longer school years, different curricula, etc. I do support public charter schools, but only those that have produced higher levels of student outcomes and attainment, and schools that are designed to meet a particular need that traditional public schools either struggle with or do not offer.

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

For the last 20 years, I have supported the use of school vouchers by low-income parents who live in neighborhoods where the education provided by under-resourced traditional public schools that the broader community has long-abandoned. However, I do not believe that school vouchers are necessary for the Madison Metropolitan School District. We are not a broken school system. MMSD does, however, have to be more deliberately and timely about meeting the needs and expectations of our children, parents and teachers.

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

I have attended numerous school board meetings and PTO/PTA meetings in communities across the United States, including more than 100 MMSD Board meetings. I have advocated for solutions to Madison’s persistent racial achievement gap, racial disparities in suspensions and expulsions, dual language learning, dropout prevention strategies, comprehensive school reform and college preparatory initiatives, diversity hiring, greater opportunities for children identified as gifted and talented, and the Madison Preparatory Academy charter school proposal that I proposed and advocate for while serving as the President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Madison.

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

- a. Their pay and benefits
- b. Their working conditions
- c. Their students’ learning conditions (e.g. class size, use of technology, building conditions, behavior response)
- d. Curriculum and assessment selection and decisions

Employees should be able to have a voice in all of these things. However, it is the Board of Education that has to decide at the end of the day, what direction MMSD takes.

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

Yes, I would support the reinstatement of collective bargaining rights for all public employees. Moreover, I would like to see MMSD students, parents and the broader community have greater influence in the type of schools and programs MMSD offers going forward. I would also like to see all voices be respected as participants in the process, even individuals who might possess a dissenting or contrary opinion to the proposals that are being presented.

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?

First, I will look for ways within our current budget, to increase the compensation of all staff, particularly those with a direct impact on the education of our children. I will be very open to suggestions of where and how this can be done. At the same time, I will lead an effort to secure additional resources for public education from our state legislature and local community for the strengthening of our public schools and expansion of exceptional learning opportunities for our children. I will also advocate for high quality preschool being free to all children in Wisconsin, regardless of race or income.

We have to stop pretending that public schools can keep pace with the changes, supports and innovations that are needed without providing adequate resources to ensure the schools and our children succeed. We have to stop pushing of the responsibility for funding important and innovative school programs, staffing needs and school facilities into the future. The future is here now, and our children, teachers and schools cannot afford to wait any longer for the level of support that's needed to succeed.

19. 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?

Yes, I am aware of it and yes, I support employees being involved in the process of the employee handbooks development. I have heard of no good reasons why they shouldn't. That said, I would like the handbooks to respond to and facilitate the need for greater innovation in our public schools.

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?

I want to be honest with you. Can MMSD realistically endure another \$10 million in cuts when the needs of our children and schools are increasing? With all due respect, I think you all should change this question.

But for the sake of answering it, yes, when we have to make cuts, the last line item we should cut are the number of team members who work directly with our children. Financial difficulties do not release the Board of Education from its responsibility to provide a high-quality education to the children it serves.

If I had an additional \$10 million, I would put those dollars into additional training and support for teachers and teaching assistants, additional personnel to support children who need additional support, and efforts to more deeply engage parents in our schools and the education of their children at home.

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

MMSD should model what One City Schools is doing by embracing a two-generation strategy to improve the educational outcomes of children. The first two weeks of school each year should be focused on building strong relationships between parents and educators in schools. MMSD should also utilize programs like the FAST (Families and Schools Together Program) to build strong relationships between parents and schools/teachers, parents and their children, and among parents themselves.

Furthermore, members of the Board of Education should be much more vocal about needing parents to be more actively involved as partners in their children's education and development, and should be unafraid to engage parents, in productive ways, that promote accountability for their being involved and engaged as well. We need a movement for parent engagement in our schools. I have succeeded at generating strong parental involvement in schools and the daily lives of children, and will serve this purpose as a member of the Board of Education.

22. 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?

Yes. While I support the intentions of the Behavior Education Plan, I do not support the Plan as it is currently designed and deployed. The plan has helped reduce out-of-school suspensions, but it has not been effective enough at reducing incidences of poor behavior among children in our schools.

If we want our children to succeed educationally, the adults in their schools and homes need to have great relationships with them and hold them accountable to shared goals and high expectations. Additionally, our children need to be held to a higher priority by our community, and an even higher priority by their parents. I know, from my work with children in Madison, that many of our children of color, disadvantaged children and high ability students, feel unsupported, isolated and excluded in our schools and community. It would take me too long to explain my thoughts and ideas here, but I am happy to talk with MTI members about my thoughts of other ways we can tackle this challenge.

We need to build strong relationships with our children, in our homes, schools and community, and treat all children with high levels of care, concern and support. Children who are loved, cared for appropriately, and nurtured to succeed don't require a Behavior Plan to keep them in line, or correct their behavior.

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

The Board governs the school system and serves as the representative and elected voice of leadership by the Greater MMSD community who reside within the boundaries of the district. The Board is responsible for the employment, supervision and evaluation of the Superintendent, for setting the direction of the school district in partnership with the Superintendent, their administrative team, other MMSD team members, for vetting and approving the district's annual budget, and for keep parents and the broader community engaged in and informed about MMSD's progress.

The relationship between the Board, the Superintendent and their leadership team should be a respectful, trustworthy and cordial one. Lines of communication should remain open. The educational outcomes of our students, as well as the success and support of our districts team members, parents and partners, should be our priority.

If elected to the Board of Education, I will ensure that we think deeply about our priorities, goals and strategic plan, and that we involve all stakeholders in the process of creating them. I will also work in partnership with my fellow Board members to ensure the Superintendent completes a thorough evaluation each year, and that their evaluation includes meaningful feedback from their direct reports, school teams, staff divisions, students, parents, partners and the broader community.

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

I will seek advice from all stakeholders and constituencies that MMSD serves and impacts. It is my hope that MTI and its members will be deeply and actively engaged in the movement for exceptional public schools that I hope to spark, and rally, people around once elected to the Board of Education. MMSD's schools will not succeed with your involvement.

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

Yes, I would appreciate MTI endorsing my campaign. MTI endorsed me and provided financial support to my campaign when I ran for election to the Board of Education in 1998. In the last 20 years, I have helped many more public schools and school children succeed and thrive than I had when MTI supported me 20 years earlier.

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

Yes, I would appreciate MTI members supporting my candidacy for the MMSD School Board. MTI endorsed me and provided financial support to my campaign when I ran for election to the Board of Education in 1998. In the last 20 years, I have helped many more public schools and school children succeed and thrive than I had when MTI supported me 20 years earlier.

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?

I hope MTI members take the time to review my history at www.Caire4Kids.com and recognize that I have worked exceptionally hard and long to support the education of children in our city and across our country. I also want you to know how serious I am about leading a movement for greater public schools that inspire our children, unleash the knowledge and potential of their teachers, and effectively prepare our children for their future. I am not trying to charter all of MMSD, nor create a bevy of private schools that accept school vouchers. Instead, we need to reinvent public education for the future, and we must begin to do that now. MMSD is not a broken school system – not yet. Let's turn on the spigot that we can all drink from, and work together to build the best school system in the United States for our children.

28. Who has endorsed your campaign?

I have had a number of people endorse my campaign. However, I have not yet publicized the names of these individuals. Eventually, I will because that is normally what people do. However, I do not want to put out a list of who's who names in Madison because I believe every single person who supports my campaign, and who will support it going forward, deserves to be mentioned as well. I will share my endorsers names on future mailings on my website as we get closer to the primary election in February.

29. Who serves on your campaign committee?

I have a diverse group of individuals serving on my campaign committee. However, my core group includes my campaign manager, Marie Justice, and my campaign treasurer, Derrick Smith. I look forward to sharing more of my committee members names as we get closer to the primary election.

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?

There are no conflicts of interests that I am aware of, that would prohibit me from voting on items that will come before the Board of Education. Some have asked if there is a conflict between me founding and leading a public charter school in Madison, but there are no conflicts. One City Schools does not have any contracts, leases or binding agreements with the Madison Metropolitan School District that would otherwise be considered a conflict.