

## Bryant, Kingfield, and Lyndale Neighborhood Organizations

Neighborhood organizations on the south side have partnered to present a strong civic front and to turn out the vote once November 6th is finally here. Part of equipping our communities with knowledge involves asking candidates to delve into their platform. As director you would be tasked with being in touch with our community in order to best represent folks in this community.

Please answer each question with no more than 200 words for each question. If your answer happens to go over the maximum word count, your response will be truncated; we will not be editing for content. Thank you so much for your leadership and all your time.

1. Minneapolis School Board Directors set policy for the district while the Superintendent carries out those policies and manages the day to day operations of the district. Directors are often asked to give input on management decisions, while the Superintendent often makes recommendations on policy. What are School Board Directors responsible for, and where do you see the roles overlapping?

As elected officials, our work can only be done in close collaboration and partnership with the Superintendent. Good governance requires the Board to establish policies and strategic priorities to guide the Superintendent. Good governance also requires oversight and accountability of processes, systems, alignment and implementation by the Superintendent. Checks and balances. Overlap often occurs when an issue comes directly to the Board because our system failed a student OR a parent is unable to navigate our system that is sometimes inaccessible, unwelcoming and unwieldy.

Technically, policy and legislation outline Director's duties.

- \* Show up for meetings prepared, informed, and knowledgeable of the issues before us.
- \* Stewards of MPS property and taxpayer dollars with a fiduciary responsibility to approve the annual budget ensuring allocations align with policies and priorities focused on student achievement.
- \* Policy governance delegating authority to the Superintendent, overseeing and holding him accountable for implementing District Policies.
- \* Authentically engage with constituents in a timely, transparent, and accessible way so diverse voices are heard and valued.
- \* Together the Board and Superintendent establish and articulate the strategic vision and priorities of the District. Together we are responsible for educating the "World's Best Workforce" by providing equitable access to educational opportunities regardless of zip code.

2. Financial sustainability of the district is a large concern, and the resultant budget cuts have affected a lot of needed programs. What long-term changes do you foresee as necessary to the district's sustainability?

In my eight years, I've served with 17 different School Board Directors, two Superintendents and an Interim Superintendent. When we hired Superintendent Graff two years ago, stable leadership was important. We also wanted a stronger focus on educating the whole child as opposed to high stakes testing and oppressive accountability systems that don't inform classroom instruction, support the diverse needs of our students, or provide inclusive and welcoming learning environments. We hired Superintendent Graff because he strongly emphasized the interconnectedness of social emotional learning and academic outcomes. He stressed culturally relevant practices and curriculum. He supported developing partnerships to supplement scarce resources.

District sustainability requires leadership stability so that our current priorities are fully implemented and given the opportunity to impact outcomes. We have seen progress, academic growth, improved graduation rates, and growing enrollment. We are working on a Comprehensive District Wide Process. Our overarching goal is fiscal sustainability. Given the Trump pro-privatization of public education climate and the lack of commitment to fully funding public education at the state and federal level, we must right-size our own system of public schools. This does not mean closing or downsizing, quite the opposite. It means attracting and retaining students and building critical partners to support our work, including wrap around services.

3. One of the concerns about the district has been its declining enrollment. What can we do as a district to incentivize parents and students to enroll *and* stay in our schools?

In my tenure, MPS's enrollment grew from around 30,000 to 36,000 students. While we have increased student count, we have lost market share of eligible K-12 students residing in Minneapolis. We've made progress by re-opening and expanding schools, ensuring pathway programs K-12 to increase enrollment in our under-enrolled schools. Our Comprehensive District Planning Process prioritizes increased enrollment. I know we can overcome the challenges of attracting and retaining students like the different percentage of students choosing MPS across the city. SW and South Minneapolis have over 70% of eligible students choosing MPS, while parts of North and NE Minneapolis have under 50%. Another challenge is the proliferation of charter schools. I will continue to not only tell the truth about the privatization of public education but also changes in state legislation that holds charter and public schools equally accountable. MPS's promise of an urban, global K-12 education requires not only equitable access to college/career opportunities but integrated school communities and wrap around services that support the unique needs of our diverse students body. This includes

expanding PreK and early childhood/parent education programs for early buy in from families and increased preparedness.

4. Schools with wraparound services have had much success removing learning barriers for their students. Do you see MSP increasing their availability? If so, what are your visions for implementing wraparound schools? What are the opportunities and pitfalls?

Partnerships are critical to our future sustainability. Our government is unwilling to fully fund public education. We are also a system of PreK-12 public schools tasked with providing an adequate education that prepares students for career and post-secondary and life as engaged, informed citizens. Our students deserve a holistic education, addressing the needs of the whole child which are as diverse as our student population in MPS. There is no debate that our students' experiences outside of school impact their learning and academic outcomes. A significant percentage of our students experience racism, poverty, housing and food instability, fear of police and ICE and other traumatic life circumstances that perpetuate gaps and disparities. There are other experts ~ community based, non-profit, private and government entities ~ that have the professional skills and resources to provide the additional services our students need and deserve to fulfill their academic potential. In planning for the future of MPS, I will champion wrap around services co-located in our schools. One challenge is finding the resources to hire staff up front to develop, nurture, and organize partners, audit school community needs, and and connect them with relevant partnerships. That is a best practice for establishing quality and successful full service community schools.