

**Please tell something about yourself:**     Rebecca Gagnon, [www.RebeccaforMN.com](http://www.RebeccaforMN.com),  
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*I am the Incumbent At-large School Board Candidate, finishing my second term on the MPS Board of Education. I moved to Minneapolis with my family in 2008 after having the privilege of raising my three children in Missouri, Singapore, and Austin, TX. I have two MPS graduates and a freshman at Southwest High School. My areas of focus are fiscal stability, transparency and sustainability of our system of public schools, allocating resources equitably to address barriers to student achievement. I lead by building and strengthening partnerships with community, parents, teachers, staff, students and other elected officials. This work requires courage, collaboration and an unwavering commitment to the belief that all children can achieve academic success and every child's success matters.*

**Please describe the relevant professional experience you would bring to the MPS Board:**

*I have extensive experience on the Board, in the community, and as a member and leader on external education focused boards. I am deeply informed and well versed in public education policy and finance due to the knowledge and insight I've gained, as well as the network of influence and expertise, from my service on boards, committees, state and national task forces, engaging at the State Capitol and attending professional conferences. During my 8yrs on the School Board I have held numerous leadership roles, including Treasurer, Chair of Policy, and Board Chair. I was nominated in 2012 by Secretary Duncan and renominated by Secretary King 2016 to the National Assessment Governing Board, overseeing the Nation's Report Card. I was Chair and on the Executive Committee of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts, an advocacy group for public education. I take pride in being prepared, informed, and active in seeking out the information and depth of knowledge and understanding I need to do this incredibly complex and challenging work. I know as a Board, in collaboration and partnership with the Superintendent and other external partners, MPS is on the right trajectory ~ growing enrollment, increased graduation rates, investments in re-opening and expanding schools, and more recess and less testing. I am running for re-election because MPS needs stability and an experienced, committed and hardworking leader so that MPS is not just surviving but thriving in 2020.*

**What, for you, is the number one priority for the 2018-2019 school year?**

*Fiscal stability and future sustainability of Minneapolis Public Schools requires that we not only work within a balanced budget without accessing reserves, which we achieved FY14, FY15, and FY19. It also requires that we increase revenue. The two referendum ballot questions are critical. However, we must retain and attract more students in order to generate the resources necessary for all schools to be fully funded.*

**What, for you, are some other priorities?**

*1. Quality, integrated schools with school based wrap around services and increased student supports. 2. Career tech pathway programs, Associates Degrees and Certificates, that align with the job shortages we are facing in the metro. 3. Reducing Administration and creating efficiencies so that we can redirect maximum funding to schools. This requires that we have a transparent budgeting process that provides school and department budgets that fully and clearly reflect the funding streams and allocations. 4. Educating the public about and*

*dismantling privatizing of public education and other ed reform efforts. 5. Advocating for our union employees to provide better wages, benefits, and working conditions that provide a climate of professionalism that is safe and supportive. 6. Allocating resources to increase our culturally relevant and historically accurate curriculum, diversifying our workforce, and both providing educators the professional development and supports they need to work with our beautifully diverse student population as well as the time and resources to develop authentic relationships with their students and colleagues. 7. Stability in leadership. The past 8yrs I've served with 17 different Board members, 2 Superintendents and an Interim Superintendent. The future stability and sustainability of MPS requires that we also have stable leadership to fully implement plans with integrity.*

**Do you feel that the current budget, with its \$33 million cut, will provide sufficient funding for those priorities?**

*No, but our referendum ballot questions and the work we are doing with our Comprehensive District-wide assessment, prioritizing growth and retention, will create greater fiscal stability.*

**As an at-large candidate, your constituency is the entire city. What kinds of questions or concerns have you been hearing from residents during your campaign?**

*1. Not enough community input for the Comprehensive Planning Process 2. Safety 3. More funding for public education 4. Transportation issues 5. Appreciate the capital investment to expand, reopen, and improve schools, with kitchens and air-conditioning for example. Need to continue investing in infrastructure to provide safe, welcoming, supportive learning environments for students 7. Class sizes*

**What do you think about the effectiveness of the English Learner programs in the city schools?**

*Our students testing out of ELL services in MPS outperform their peers. We have promoted an asset based approach to educating our bilingual/multilingual students. We've increased our resources, increased the number of ELL professionals in schools, and have worked to better integrate ELL and SpEd services when needed. Our work with new immigrants with interrupted education is working. We must be able to tell the story of our students receiving ELL services, their progress and achievements. We had over 800 students receive a bilingual seal from the State of MN which has varying levels attaining college credit. We also have worked hard to provide sanctuary school environments that are not only welcoming and supportive but provide access to necessary resources for students and families. We must work on attendance which has declined since the anti-immigration Trump rhetoric and policies.*

**Do you have (or have you had) children in the Minneapolis public school system? Can you talk about that?**

*Yes, two graduates and a freshman in high school. My kids went to both community and magnet schools. My youngest has gone all the way through MPS K-12, Whittier IB, Anwatin, a year at Justice Page MS, and now Southwest High School. Even as a Board member I've had to advocate for their academic and social/emotional needs. It is incredibly beneficial if not critical to have that connection to MPS to know what is happening, how Board and Administrative work is*

*playing out in school buildings, and have a network of parents, educators, employees, and students who will reach out and share issues, concerns, and accolades.*

**What issues do you feel are not being addressed (or addressed insufficiently) by the current Minneapolis School Board?**

*Safety for our employees in the schools and a restorative practices behavior strategy that relies heavily upon student support services and wrap around supports to ensure the holistic needs of a student are being met. Intervention and prevention requires greater partnerships with the County and other government bodies, nonprofits and private providers. They are skilled, trained professionals more adept at working with mental health, chemical dependency, trauma, homelessness, and other issues our students and families experience outside the classroom and school building. We know these issues deeply impact academic achievement and are barriers to access to opportunities. While we lack the resources we do not lack the partners and must rethink how we utilize school buildings to provide space for services that meet the unique needs of our school communities.*

**Do you have a choice of Board committees?**

*We have reduced our committees to Policy, Finance (and Audit), Superintendent Evaluation and a Community Engagement Committee that is without staff support. I officially serve on all but Finance, however I attend Finance meetings.*

**And anything you'd like to add:** *Please visit my website for additional information about my work, priorities, experience and campaign. I am proud to have the endorsements of other elected officials that I partner with to do this work, including Senator Jeff Hayden, Mayor Jacob Frey, Council Member Abdi Warsame, Park Board Commissioners Kale Severson and AK Hassan, and School Board Directors Ira Jourdain and Kerry Jo Felder.*

Do you have a photo (jpeg) that we could use with the article?

Thanks much,  
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