

### **What experience qualifies you for this position?**

As a two term At-Large School Board member, I have the experience, institutional knowledge, and network of community and government leaders to help in this work. We are currently going through a Comprehensive District Design process to determine the future direction and investments in MPS. With a lack of state funding to match inflation and uncertainty at the Federal level, we must look at the fiscal stability of MPS as a system of schools. We have re-opened and expanded to schools to address overcrowding and increased enrollment. We have kept schools open like North High and opened a feeder middle school pathway, Franklin, in order to provide equitable access to educational opportunities throughout Mpls. I've served with 17 different School Board Directors in my 8yrs, as well as two Superintendents and an interim Superintendent. This makes stability and full implementation of programs and initiatives difficult. I believe it is critical, with a fairly new Superintendent and three Board members just in their second year of service, that I continue serving on the Board. I am known to be an informed, engaged, and thoughtful leader who understands the issues before me. I am often one of the only people, if not the only one, in a meeting who has the historical reference of past initiatives like Changing School Options 2009, Enrollment Capital Plan 2013, and the 2020 Strategic Plan. I have spent time at the Capital and engaging with other elected officials, building relationships and trust, so that we can work together. I pay close attention to the legislative work of the District and show up as a resource for legislators. As Chair and an exec member for three years of AMSD, I engaged at the state level on education task forces, during session, and with other Districts to promote a shared pro-public education agenda. As a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, NAGB, in my 6th year, I also have a national perspective and work on the Nation's Report Card which is a longterm indicator of how our students in all 50 states and Puerto Rico are doing in math, ELA, and other subjects. This is not a high stakes test, and it is the same assessment across all states. I believe "accountability" and reporting achievement are currently flawed at the state level and want to ensure we are accurately reflecting the work and progress happening in our schools, and when it is not happening so we can improve and support students who have greater needs. I ask tough questions, bring up difficult issues, and believe transparency and public discourse is critical to good decision-making and good governance.

### **Do you expect a serious challenge in this election? List opponents and relevant background on each**

Yes. There are two seats open At-large, and there are four candidates seeking those two seats in the general election. We had a primary and I came in second. Kimberly Caprini came in first, a parent and long time public education advocate. Josh Pauly came in 3rd and Sharon El Amin came in 4th. I'm not as familiar with these candidates. I know Sharon as a North High parent and she recently got involved on Site Council. Josh previously taught in MPS but quit after three years and formed a non-profit and was a fellow at a Policy institute 2017. I had never met him before he decided to run.

### **What are your campaign strengths?**

I have run two very difficult citywide campaigns. In 2010 I was unknown and only had the firefighters and Women Winning endorsements. I raised very little money (was very thankful for the \$500 from WW) and successfully ran an exhaustive grassroots campaign. In 2014, I had a PAC created against me, Progressive Education Fund for Don Samuels and Iris Altimirano against Rebecca Gagnon, that raised over \$250,000 to thwart my re-election, including negative campaigning. I will work hard and smart, am informed on the issues, and have a vast network of community members that are willing to access their own networks and get the word

out to vote for me. I also have tremendous support from front line Labor members, from educators to engineers and support staff.

**What are your campaign's biggest challenges?**

Fundraising will be a big challenge this cycle because of the money spent on other contested party elections before the primary. Also, there are still many contested elections at the county level. Not having any party or Labor endorsements might be a challenge. Also, I have had misinformation being spread about me that takes a tremendous amount of time and energy to correct. I have been pretty successful at getting in front of people and talking through the issues, but it is a distraction from campaigning.

**Please provide a statement for our website, should you be endorsed (written in 3rd person). Please provide a 2-3 sentence biography which answers the following questions: 1) Name, location, office being sought, 2) note if a first time candidate or running for re-election, 3) why are you running?, 4) what makes you the best candidate for this seat? \***

Rebecca Gagnon is a two-term citywide School Board Director in Minneapolis Public Schools running for re-election. As the incumbent At-large School Board Candidate in Minneapolis, she is running to continue the progress she has worked to build, including equitable access across the city to educational and extracurricular opportunities, and reducing administration and reinvesting more resources directly in to schools and classrooms. She will continue to work with Minneapolis students and families, understanding that public education must serve the whole child which is why she has championed longer recess, healthy farm to table meal programs, mental health supports, and the option of full service community schools.

**Please write one to two sentences about why you are running (or serving) for office? "I am running for office because..." OR "I serve because..." These will be used on the Women Winning website.**

I serve because I know a child's life trajectory is heavily dependent upon access to quality public PreK-12 education, and I am privileged to be able to do this work full time. Regardless of the fact that we are not given adequate resources from the State and Federal Governments, I know my work to improve academic achievement involves community, parent, government, and private/non-profit partners to target resources and support the diverse and often significant needs of our students.

**Women's Issues: Please note the top 2-3 women's issues you will work for and/or support strongly in office: \***

I will continue to support sexuality education in MPS, including the clinics we have opened since my tenure on the Board in every high school that provide access to confidential sexual health, as well as other mental & physical health resources, to our students. I will continue to support curriculum that reflects strong women, GLBTQ, and the incredible diversity within our MPS student body. I will also work on programs that support our young women, middle and high school, to empower their voices, allow their personal stories to be heard and valued, and serve their unique needs. Our female prison population has increased exponentially in the past 5+ years. Violence amongst our young women in schools has been on the rise. The societal pressures and misogynistic and racist norms have a tremendous and confusing impact on our young women, especially women of color. Schools can play an important role in giving access to a network of supports for these young women.