

**April Hennessey, Candidate for Monroe County Community School Corp. Trustee
District 2
Responses to questions from the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce
For the Nov. 3, 2020 General Election**

1. What principles guide your decisions as an MCCSC trustee?

My decisions will be guided by the following three principles: 1) ensuring equity within and beyond the classroom, 2) committing to the whole-child, whole-community approach, and 3) holding the board and MCCSC accountable to measurable change. These principles must be embraced both in policy and in practice. They should be reflected in our hiring actions, decision-making about programs, and distribution of funding across the district. Our community will know when we've begun to fully commit to these principles because we will engage with them early and often in ways that are transparent, compassionate, and collaborative.

2. What is the board's role in helping navigate the school year in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic?

The MCCSC school board should listen to their constituents, be transparent as decision-makers, and communicate regularly with families and guardians as they consider the health and safety needs of the entire MCCSC community and the communities we affect by extension. We cannot allow inequities to become further exacerbated. We must be willing to think outside the box to find creative solutions for providing equitable and accessible learning, and we must value the input from diverse voices, including those with whom we might disagree. Part of the solution, then, requires the board to work productively with partners, individuals, and organizations that are willing to help put systems in place that would lighten the load of teachers and families whenever possible.

One of the common threads in many parent forums has been the sense of uncertainty and anxiety caused by MCCSC's lack of transparency and apparent disinterest in meaningful and open community discussion. Carefully crafted and endorsed petitions have been summarily dismissed. Many parent comments have gone unread or unanswered. And parents who have taken time out of their hectic days to write in for public comment have not been listed among those counted or named at board meetings. Much of this distress might be remedied by strong, unified district plans and communication. I recognize the incredible labor and strain that the school board and administration face at this moment, but this is all the more reason to stand in solidarity with families, teachers, staff, and students who embody a range of risks, needs, life circumstances, trauma, access, and privilege. We are not one in our experiences, but we can stand as one to support those beside us.

3. Other than the pandemic, what are the top three issues that MCCSC faces, and how will you address those issues as a trustee?

The school board will have to work with the new superintendent to develop a clear vision and plan to address the inequities and challenges that will inevitably be exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. But we must recognize that these inequities existed before this moment. As a parent, an advocate for equity in our community, and a former MCCSC teacher, this is where I have the most to contribute. Before all else, we must be invested in closing the wealth disparity in our district's schools. We don't succeed until we all succeed. Second, we have a great deal of work to do to repair trust and relationships with our teachers and our families; this means amplifying voices that often go unheard and empowering our families to engage with their school board members, as well as administrators at the district and building level. Third, I want to ensure demonstrable and sustainable improvement in student outcomes, particularly for students of color, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities.