

**Cathy Fuentes-Rohwer, Candidate for Monroe County Community School Corp. Trustee
District 4
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?

Every decision I make must be grounded in the best interests of the students and emphasize the whole child. Each decision must focus on creating a system that will work for *all* children.

I am proud of our school district and the work that is being done to give voice to our students, facilitate difficult conversations, and learn from them about their experiences and visions for their schools. I am glad that we have put resources into teaching kids (and teachers) about social-emotional health because students learn better when they feel respected, connected and heard. Many of our students live with the effects of childhood trauma (often stemming from poverty and/or racism, among other factors) and we have put resources into trauma-informed practices and care. We no longer practice “lunch shaming,” for example—the act of giving students in debt an alternate, stigmatizing lunch—and, instead, have created a safer place for kids. I believe we need to continue to find ways to ensure that decisions are being made with the input of those closest to the classroom, recognizing that our teachers’ working conditions are our kids’ learning conditions.

Beyond the principles of equity and concern for all students, I am guided by the belief that our public schools are the cornerstone of our democracy and the heart of our community. We must protect and improve this public good in an era where privatization, through charter schools and vouchers, is encroaching on public funds. Public schools must be a big enough tent to hold all children, regardless of background, race, or ability. Learning to respect and value differences, to find our commonalities, is essential not only to living in pluralistic society, but to the future of our country.

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

The school board must ask difficult questions, raise concerns, listen to the community’s widely varied responses, and then think about who is not at the table or not in our inboxes. Then, ultimately, we must recognize that the educators and administration are the experts in the education of children and the health department/Metrics Committee are the experts in this pandemic landscape. The recommendations from both should guide our decisions and this is the process. We have not always agreed on where we land with the opening and closing decisions; but, as school board members, after this decision, we must work hard to

support the entire MCCSC village as we go forward. We must ensure that the additional trauma this pandemic brings, particularly to our most vulnerable student populations, is addressed and that we continue to hold high standards for all of our students when it comes to learning.

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

First of all, we are in the process of hiring a new superintendent. The board must be prepared to help and support this new person transition into this role and into our community. Secondly, due to the pandemic and a severe shortfall in revenue from the state, we are likely to see a serious funding crisis. We must engage our community and work with the superintendent to be strong fiscal stewards of our public funds, ensuring that our budget prioritizes the student learning in the classroom. Lastly: we must continue to work toward equity. Our public schools do not serve all children equally and we must work to ensure that they do.