

**Jacinda Townsend Gides, Candidate for Monroe County Community School Corp. Trustee  
District 6  
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?**

Like so many parents, I habitually ask my children, when they return home from school in the afternoon, one primary question: how was your day? As a trustee, my guiding principle is that while no child is going to have a great day every day, we on the Board should be working to insure that every child is able to answer, more days than not, that yes, they had a good day. It is my guiding principle on every matter. Are IEP's being properly implemented? If so, we are helping our students have a good day. Are our bus routes running efficiently? If so, we are having a good day. Are there stark racial disparities in disciplinary statistics? Then a large number of our Black students are currently not able to come home and say they had a good day. These are just a few examples, but I am always working with the well-being of our students in mind. My children have long been my top priority. As a Board trustee, all MCCSC children are my priority. It's that simple.

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

I am one of two Board members who has consistently voted in favor of safety as the top consideration in the midst of a public health crisis. I understand that there are competing considerations, and I understand that all of the Board members have the public good in mind. That being said, the public good I am most concerned about, in the midst of a pandemic, is public health, and the preservation of life. Mathematical modeling projects that in a city this size, school reopening will cause between one and four deaths, and that is simply unacceptable to me. I know that our teachers no longer feel safe and as an educator myself, I empathize with that. I am currently teaching completely online, and I am grateful every single day that someone at my university advocated for me to do so: it is with great sadness that I have witnessed that not happening for our teachers. I pray every day that no teachers nor staff fall ill, and while they are a focus, students are, as well. Children are not immune from COVID-19. They have fallen ill. They have died. They have been left permanently disabled. Students can recover from a month or two of online learning. They can recover from a month or two of reduced socialization. They cannot recover from death, and they cannot recover from the kinds of permanent disability we are seeing caused by COVID-19 and the attendant diseases, such as Kawasaki's and MIS-C, that we are seeing in pediatric cases. At any rate, now that we have returned to in-person schooling, the Board's role is to help MCCSC be as transparent as we can. How are we using data? Why are we using some data and not other data? This is a public health crisis the likes of which the world has never seen, and the district should be clarifying its decisions, via its website and otherwise.

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

- a. We are poised to select a new superintendent, and Dr. DeMuth's departure leaves some big shoes to fill. As a trustee, deliberating through this process, I am looking at candidates who will help guide us through the pandemic and beyond, candidates who will help MCCSC preserve its legacy as a district that delivers high quality education.
- b. We will very likely be facing a budget crisis next fall, as a result of decreased tax revenue and state funding. As a trustee, I hope to help navigate a process that preserves the jobs of as many teachers and staff as we possibly can. MCCSC also has some incredible programming for its students, and I hope to help find innovative ways to hold on to that programming.
- c. As we move to our districting conversation, I hope to provide research-based solutions to the racial and socioeconomic segregation we currently have in our school district. Providing my children with sufficient diversity is the primary reason I left my job to move my family back to Bloomington, and fostering equity in those experiences is incredibly important to me. Our Black children are disciplined at a rate almost three times that of children of other races, and that is unacceptable. Black children are underidentified for ALPS and overidentified for special ed, and that is also completely unacceptable. Again, it boils down to every child having a good day at school. Neither segregation nor inequity deliver that.