

MCMC Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire 2024 Primary Election Cycle

The Montgomery County Muslim Council (MCMC) invites you to answer this candidate questionnaire and return it to us by **Friday, April 12, 2024**. Please return responses to president@mcmcmd.org. Responses may be made public.

Candidate Name: _____ Shebra L Evans _____

Submitted By: _____ Date: _____ 4/11/24 _____

1. Addressing Islamophobia and Ensuring Muslim Representation: How will you address Islamophobia within the school system, ensuring that the concerns of Muslim students and families are heard and addressed effectively?

It will be even more important for MCPS to include additions to the social studies curriculum to build an understanding of everyone's rich heritage.

2. Unique Qualifications and Distinction: What unique qualifications do you possess that distinguish you from other candidates running for the Board of Education?

I'm committed to ensuring our students receive a high quality education and believe that commitment requires a proven track record to get the job done. I have successfully collaborated with my colleagues over the years, worked with partners at the various levels of government and devoted my time locally and at the state level to address the inequities that have disadvantaged students for far too long. The race for excellence has no finish line and my commitment has me seeking re-election. Elected to the School Board in November 2016. Served two consecutive terms as the Board President and twice as Vice President. Chairing the Board's Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Committee, serving on Strategic Planning and Policy. At the state level, treasurer for MABE, Current chair of MABE's Educational Equity Committee and on Policies and Procedures. Prior to serving on the school board, I was a passionate advocate and activist for public education serving in numerous volunteer leadership roles with Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA), and various other workgroups. I believe my experience coupled with my leadership will be an asset.

3. Non-Negotiable Issues: What are the top three issues for you that are non-negotiable, and what actions will you take to address them?

Improving outcomes for students is the most important issue. The Board has directed the superintendent to use every board meeting to discuss how MCPS is progressing on improving outcomes for students in math and literacy. The transitional years (grades 3, 6, and 9) are our focus. The school system is not serving all students well. Having ongoing discussions at the board table to look at data and identify problems and/or acknowledge successes will be important. Additionally, it will be important to further improve the communication infrastructure to

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build more trust and improve the ways in which families receive pertinent information. The continued recruitment and retention of diverse staff. The Office of Human Resources and Development is in the process of developing a recruitment plan and having a recruiter that can identify the talent and skills needed to attract a diverse pool of candidates. The plan will be devised over the next year to help the school system monitor and alter recruitment efforts and make adjustments so we can see our return on investment. Prekindergarten expansion. We level the playing field when every child has access to early care and education.

4. Parental Opt-Out and First Amendment: Do you support allowing parents to opt-out of classroom materials based on sincerely-held religious beliefs, even if these beliefs are unpopular?

It is always important to have a curriculum that meets the needs of all students. I am not in favor of opting out of curricula that builds a child's empathy and respect towards an experience that might be different from their own.

5. Parental Input and Effective Communication: How do you prioritize parent input and feedback in shaping district policies, and what strategies will you implement to enhance communication between MCPS and parents?

As the chair of the Communications and Stakeholder Engagement committee, several meetings have included the voices of parents/guardians and students to share their experiences. It was important for board members and MCPS staff to be informed. As a result, adjustments/enhancements were made. The topics ranged from academic achievement, technology, communication, and more. Providing system-wide programs and workshops can help increase the knowledge of the school system and at the same time collect feedback and input from parents/guardians. Public comments, public hearings, and regional cluster meetings are a few ways to hear input and feedback.

6. Recognition of Islamic Holidays: Would you support closing schools on major Islamic holidays like Eid al-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha to accommodate Muslim students and staff for religious observances?

I have supported and will continue supporting closing schools on major Islamic holidays. In addition, I support schools making accommodations for students and staff during periods of fasting.

7. Academic Achievement and Return on Investment: What actions will you take to restore MCPS to its previous high academic achievement and ranking, while maximizing taxpayer return on investment?

Prior to the pandemic, MCPS piloted the science of reading at a few schools. This method considers how students learn to read and comprehend the written language. The Board approved MCPS to implement evidence-based practices that would enhance students' literacy outcomes. In a prior budget, the science of reading was implemented throughout the entire school system. In the area of math, the Board added math coaches to support math teams and/or teacher support to improve mathematics achievement and differentiation to meet the needs of targeted groups of students. Therefore, the Board is currently requiring administration to report regularly on progress monitoring in both areas of math and literacy. This step will help

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ensure we are in line with state requirements and at the same time allow board members to see how changes being implemented around differentiation of resources, building staff capacity and implementing accountability structures are leading to improved outcomes and practices.

8. Political Neutrality and Free Speech: How would you ensure that MCPS remains neutral on political issues and upholds free speech rights, particularly concerning the recent rise in anti-Palestinian sentiments and the slanderous labeling of political speech as anti-Semitic?

Public comments and hearings are a few of the ways that community members share their views. The challenges arise when speech lacks dignity and respect and attempts to create division. In the first question, I reference additions to our social studies curriculum to build an understanding of everyone's rich heritage.