

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: __Ricky F Mui_____

Submitted By: __Ricky F Mui_____ Date: ____4/18/2024_____

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?

I have many friends, coworkers, and associates that are devout Muslims and adhere to the cultural standards in dress, food, and prayer. A religious tolerant person understands that faith is deeply personal and may be the guide rails for how they live. While I was in the Navy, I visited Bahrain, Djibouti and other countries in the Middle East region. Through an exchange of knowledge, we will learn to see each other as humans. Last year, I led a multi-cultural Night for my local elementary school, where 25 different cultures from across the global shared their food, music, and artifacts with the students. Knowledge and time brings normalcy, which in turn fosters acceptance and support.

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

I bring a culmination of Knowledge, Experience, demonstrated Leadership and proven Strategic business planning to this role on the Board of Education. The skills teacher used to be successful in the classroom does not translate to success for the administrative and oversight role required for the Board of Education.

I bring a vast knowledge of cultures from my experiences traveling around the world in the Navy, while working with our Muslim partners around the world in Bahrain, Indonesia, Djibouti and Oman. I dedicated time to learn about cultures and customs around the world. In turn my experiences led me to easily connect with Muslims across the globe, in the DMV region, and in Montgomery County. To learn is to know, and knowledge builds expanded perspective.

I have led large teams of thousands of people. I have the professional M.B.A., business and large-scale financial management experience while working at Frito Lay manufacturing and during my roles as a naval officer. I have strategically planned maintenance and operational schedules for a fleet of ships and later for warehousing logistics within the manufacturing plant.

Other candidates reference their time as a teacher; I have also been an training instructor, where I developed and trained thousands in complex processes. I developed a portion of the curriculum for my Postgraduate program. I am ready for this role.

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?

a. Drugs in School

b. Overly sexualized or pornographic literature for children

c. Racially or culturally motivated Violence

Divisive behaviors are ripping America apart. Extreme rhetoric are pitting cultures and social groups against each other, in a land that represents hope and opportunities. We must protect each other against those that mean to cause our children.

The response must be measured and proportionally appropriate; we must provide the cultural and racial awareness and

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?

Parents with strong commitment to modest religious or cultural beliefs, are offended by the mandated requirement to read literature focused on sexualized content and acts that cannot be replicated in public, especially by underaged children; view the Opt-Out as their last cry for help. As a parent, I would never intentionally expose my children to pornographic material, and those that condone such literary filth, should be referred to the American Justice system. Every electronic device has the ability to be set for content appropriate for children, and the film and tv industry has an age-appropriate rating for sex, drugs, alcohol, nudity, language, violence, etc. However, extremists feel they are above the law and want to intentional use academic content to violate the established laws. The FCC routinely fines for obscene content on tv; this should apply to children's books as well. Fix the problem, don't sacrifice an education. Trust me on the Board of Education.

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?

Parents must be engaged in the public school system. We never relinquished our parental

responsibilities or accountability for our kids. Parents have parental control of what values we instill in our children, which should align with our customs, beliefs and religious practices. This is the Public School System, which must serve the Public. I will never allow the Public School System to espouse explicit favoritism to any one culture or religion, over another. This is the practice I have resolved to uphold for decades of my professional career.

We, the citizens, pay a tax to the County to hire teachers to educate our children in the fundamental building blocks of knowledge and to practice critical thinking. However, parents are still responsible for their children to practice and implement the knowledge, while the student is at home. Parents should be contacted when their student is not in attendance. During the time my wife was at MCPS, she would use multi-modal communications; to include the automated messages via the Synergy Learning System; at times my wife, the teacher, would call the listed number for the parents, send emails via the school email account, and handwrite letters, hopefully to be delivered by the student. Each of these avenues costs personal time, mostly performed outside of school hours, especially if multiple students are affected. I will support a policy to prioritize the use of the automated Synergy system, with periodic email communication. The teacher will answer all questions via the two-way communication via email or in-person meeting with the Parents.

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 support closing schools for the observance for Eid al-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha, and the Montgomery County Board of Education has the authority to make that policy decision. Hopefully, our kids will take the closing of school to honor a religious holiday as a sign of respect for faith, especially if that holiday may not be our own.

As a leader in Ascend Greater Washington DC Chapter, a professional networking organization, we have members of all faiths and cultures. We stand with our many members in recognizing and celebrating many Muslim religious holidays to include Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr, by gathering, sharing food and comradery. What we do as Parents or Adults ingrain into our children what should matter to them; just as our ancestor's views shaped ours.

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?

Focus on the fundamentals of math, science, reading and writing. These core skills must be practiced and honed from K-12. We have drifted far away from handwritten notes with the invention of electronic media; with strips the student of notes to refer and refresh their understanding. Students are forced to either memorize the material upon introduction, or lose the knowledge altogether. With a growing budget of \$3.3Billion, there is more than

sufficient funding for a few extra teachers and any programming. The issue the Board of Education must solve is the wholesale waste of funding by the different Offices within the Central Office, for programs or consultants that add little to no direct value to the classroom instruction. I will trim the financial overhead, as I have done for multiple federal agencies.

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?

Remaining Neutral should not be conflated with remaining silent. Neutral would include an objective, historic evidence-based discussion, without inciting hate, anger and hurt. The objective is to understand.

The model I will refer to is based on the directive given to all members of the U.S. federal government, to include the U.S. military, that all members must remain neutral on all political issues. Our service members are of all faiths, to include Muslim and Jewish. If we permit our agency members to take sides, we will only cause division amongst our people. It is natural for our K-12 students to be curious of all the news they hear from social media, the print media or sensational tv shows. All the rhetoric bombards and overwhelms the kids, so naturally, they will seek out confirmation. Public school teachers, who may be well versed in one subject or another, simply lack the historic or political knowledge to advise our student on a judgement; in fact, historians and religious leaders with dedicated careers often disagree on any one perspective.

When K-12 students protest, it is a cry out for knowledge and context. We should be teaching world history, this is the perfect time for that to take place. Allow the student to study and explore the historical evidence from all cultures for the same period; it is nearly impossible to corrupt evidence presented across a spread of geological time. Children should never simply parrot what they hear, that clearly demonstrates ignorance. It is up to the adults to fix the problem.