

2019 Shawnee Mission School Board

Response ID:10 Data

1. Policy Questionnaire

1. Candidate Information

First Name

Jessica

Last Name

Hembree

Candidate for Board Seat #

3

Street Address

9625 Linden St.

Apt/Suite/Office

City

Overland Park

State

KS

Zip

66207

Country

Phone Number

913-229-6139

Campaign Treasurer

Melissa Cheatham

Campaign Website

www.jessicaforsmsd.com

Campaign Email Address

jessicaforsmsd@gmail.com

Candidate's Occupation

Fax Number

Mobile Phone

2. (untitled)

2. Occupation/Work History (last 5 years - 25 words or less)

I founded Platform Civic Strategies in 2018 to provide policy and advocacy consulting to nonprofits. Previously, I directed policy initiatives at the Health Forward Foundation.

3. Most recent Political/Community experience? (25 words or less)

PTA and school volunteer at children's school

Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce's Centurions program

Named a NextGen leader by the Kansas City Business Journal

4. As a candidate, what are your top three policy issues? (25 words per line)

1 : Striving for positive whole child outcomes, including academic achievement and social-emotional well being

2 : Recruiting and retaining the best teachers and ensuring that they have the support they need to meet all students' needs

3 : Embracing our district's growing diversity and ensuring we achieve strong outcomes for every student

5. The Kansas Supreme Court recently ruled the current school funding formula is both equitable and adequate, however, the Court retained jurisdiction over the case to assure the funding is maintained. Briefly, what are your thoughts on the new formula and the additional dollars that have been added to K-12 school funding? (100 words or less)

The current school funding formula makes important progress toward ensuring that Kansas schools can provide the best opportunities for children by increasing overall funding and accounting for inflation. In the last five years, funding for public schools has grown by one-third. Prior to these increases, Kansas fell in the bottom half of states in terms of per-pupil spending, putting us at a disadvantage over the long-term. These resources are badly needed to recruit and retain our most effective teachers and to provide the resources for instruction and support for all children according to their needs.

6. With the recent ruling by the Kansas Supreme Court that the new funding formula and related funding are constitutional, it is likely the legislature will look closely at accountability measures for student performance. Please describe the accountability measures you support and believe are reflective of student achievement. (100 words or less)

The School Board must have access to objective data about district performance, budget information, and input from multiple sources, including parents, teachers, and students. I believe that accountability measures should focus on the whole child with multiple inputs, rather than relying on test results alone. Teachers are the single most important factor in determining the value of this time and financial investment. Two measures that are particularly important outside of test scores are student growth, and the recruitment and retention of a diverse, high quality teaching staff.

7. Kansas is experiencing all-time low unemployment rates and employers are struggling to find qualified workers, especially in technical and skilled trades. How do you see the Shawnee Mission School District helping to meet our business community's future workforce needs through technical education and training? (100 words or less)

As a small business owner, I understand the importance of creating a strong pipeline of workers and retaining talent here in Kansas. I believe we should expand real world learning opportunities, such as technical and vocational training, internships, dual credit courses, and industry-recognized credentials. These are an opportunity for SMSD to partner with local businesses to give high school students real-world experience to apply what they learn in the classroom. We must be vigilant as a district that students are not tracked into these opportunities based on race or socioeconomic status.

8. Other than funding, what do you see as the greatest challenge facing the district? (100 words or less)

Every student in our district should receive a quality education regardless of their race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, or zip code. The Shawnee Mission School District has a gap between black and white students on both math and language arts tests. This gap is significantly higher in the SMSD than any other large district in the state. Teachers of color are underrepresented in the district. Research suggests that having same-race teachers for students of color has significant impacts on educational outcomes, both short-term outcomes like test scores, attendance and suspension and long-term

outcomes like high school graduation.

9. Why are you seeking public office? (100 words or less)

Children can't vote. They rely on adults to put their interests first. That's what I intend to do as a School Board member. Representing my community on the school board feels like a special kind of service that I can offer, especially as a parent of three young children committed to our schools over the long term. Between my expertise in children's health, school-based behavioral health, and education policy, I feel uniquely suited to make progress on my priorities of supporting classroom teachers, embracing our district's growing diversity, and striving for whole child outcomes including academic achievement and social-emotional learning.