

Blue Valley USD #229 Board of Education 2021

Response ID:1 Data

1. Candidate Information

1. Candidate Name

Jim McMullen

2. Candidate for Board Seat

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3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 15525 Kessler Street

City/State/Zip : Overland Park, KS 66221

4. Phone Number

913-220-1263

5. Email Address

jimmcmullen4bvschools@gmail.com

6. Campaign Website

www.jimmcmullen4bvschools.com

2. Candidate Background

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

Founder of Royal Blue Capital, based in Overland Park. We are an investment firm and have invested in and launched several local businesses.

8. If you are or have been affiliated with a chamber of commerce or other business organization, please list which organization(s) and any leadership positions you have held.

In the mid-2000s, I served as a board member of the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce.

9. Other recent political/community experience (50 words or less)

I am one of the co-founders of PVA Volleyball, the largest youth volleyball club in Johnson County. Active booster of the Blue Valley Southwest Wrestling program. Redeveloped the former Pepsi Ice Center into the current Drive 5 Basketball/Volleyball Facility.

3. Issues and Policy

10. As a candidate, what are your top three education policy issues? (100 words or less)

1. Embracing Classical Curriculum, including (a) phonics-based reading instruction, (b) explicit and intensive writing instruction, (c) content-rich material, (d) advanced literacy, and (e) public speaking.

2. Academic excellence that is free from identity politics, ideological battles, and propaganda.

3. Commitment to smaller class sizes, especially in K-8, through the rational use of the district's prodigious financial resources.

11. The Kansas Supreme Court ruled the current K-12 education funding formula is both equitable and adequate. The Court, however, has retained jurisdiction over the case to assure funding is maintained. What are your thoughts on the formula and additional funding that has been added? (100 words or less)

The Kansas Supreme Court should not be in the business of controlling funding of the State's schools. It is a uniquely unqualified governmental body for that task. That, of course, does not change the fact that the Court has exerted that control.

The school finance formula forces distribution of money away from Blue Valley and limits the amount that our local community can elect to spend on its own schools and students.

When I am a member of the Blue Valley school board, I will pursue every legal means to combat outside control on our district's finances.

12. The K-12 education system requires accountability measures for student performance, which have sometimes been a source of debate. Please describe the accountability measures you support and believe are accurately reflective of student achievement. (100 words or less)

The state assessment tests in Math and Reading have demonstrated a pronounced decline in performance between 2015 and 2019, with only 45% of Blue Valley students performing at grade level or above. That trend is statewide. The assessments themselves are good in that they at least provide a view of a basic skill level required to be college or career ready.

Blue Valley must commit itself to a content-rich classical curriculum that (a) at the younger ages teaches children to read using phonics, (b) at the older ages embraces advanced reading and writing in an interdisciplinary approach.

13. Kansas is experiencing low unemployment rates and employers are struggling to find qualified workers, especially in technical and skilled trades. How do you see the school district helping to meet the business community's future workforce needs through technical education and training? (100 words or less)

Most American schools have abandoned a traditional liberal arts education that is rigorous in nature and demands high level performance across a range of disciplines, including literature, history, sciences, arts and mathematics. Blue Valley is not an exception. Many kids do excel, but less than half.

If one is not well educated across a range of disciplines at an advanced level through the first 10 years of schooling, no amount of technical education and training in the final years of high school is going to appropriately prepare those young people to perform at the levels that the business community demands.

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

The school district has in recent years reduced its educational standards in favor of (a) its embrace of social emotional learning, a standard-less diversion that distracts from the measurable academic requirements that are its core mission, and (b) an accelerating emphasis on identity politics, where educators obsess over a child's immutable characteristics such as race, sex and ethnicity, all of which distracts from core academic goals as well as community cohesiveness.

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

I am seeking this office to redirect our schools to a higher, more noble mission, one that inspires our children to love their community and make it better.

The object of education is to teach us to love what is beautiful. The core mission of the schools is not to churn out future workers or good soldiers in a social justice cause. The core mission of our schools is to equip young people to live a rich and rewarding life with a mind that thinks critically and creatively and a spirit that embraces civic virtue.

16. What makes you uniquely qualified to serve on the Board and most distinguishes you from your opponent(s) in this race? (100 words or less)

The ideas that I am promoting here are simply not part of the lexicon of our schools today, nor its administrative leaders, nor my opponent.

Our schools need to return to their classical roots. I have spent my adult life studying these concepts and encouraging my own children to embrace them. Implementation of these ideas is the surest way to open up our young people to a world of opportunity, regardless of from where they come, and the surest way to heal the senseless division that is tearing American communities apart.