

# Shawnee Mission USD #512 Board of Education 2021

Response ID:2 Data

## 1. Candidate Information

### 1. Candidate Name

Heather Ousley

### 2. Candidate for Board Seat #

Seat 6, At Large

### 3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 6800 Farley St

City/State/Zip : Merriam, KS 66203

### 4. Phone Number

913-424-5558

### 5. Email Address

heatherousley@smsd.org

### 6. Campaign Website

OusleyforSMSD.com

## 2. Candidate Background

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

Trial Attorney U.S. Dept of HUD

### 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.

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

Served as Board President since Jan 2019.

## 3. Issues and Policy

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

- 1) Preserving constitutional funding under Gannon;
- 2) Utilizing federal ESSR/Covid dollars to keep class sizes small and support the transition from pandemic learning to in person learning;
- 3) Meeting the goals established by the community in the District's five year strategic plan, including building upgrades and reducing secondary educator's workload from 6 sections taught out of 7, to five sections taught out of seven.

### 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 funding is not "additional," but rather restored dollars that were cut during the unsustainable tax structure that went into

effect in 2012, when corporate revenues in LLCs went untaxed. The court ruled that the formula would reach "adequacy" at the end of the 5 years of jurisdiction, due incremental increases occurring each year. It is important to note, Districts will still not be receiving the same amount of funding they received prior to the defunding, but will reach legal adequacy. With this formula Districts can plan their spending cycles and SMSD restored much needed staff and programming.

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**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)**

Students participate in and meet District requirements for course credits, State Board requirements for standards, state testing requirements, and federal testing requirements. Ultimately the most necessary bar for success is if the District is graduating students that are college or career ready, and graduation rates and employment and college acceptance rates are the gold standard for whether students' academic needs are being met. This data can be and is broken down by student demographics, and the SMSD under the strategic plan has presented the data on achievement gaps and has emphasized in the community's strategic plan addressing these gaps.

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**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)**

The SMSD has partnered with the Kauffman Foundation and their Real World Learning Initiative to address career readiness for students who choose to enter the workforce directly after graduation. Students obtain work experience and "market value assets" in specific fields that assist students in achieving in work after graduation. You can learn more about this initiative here: <https://www.kauffman.org/real-world-learning/>

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

Providing a transition from pandemic times to "normal" times that has the structures and resources to meet students educational and social/emotional health needs, while increasing staffing to reduce workload as laid out in the strategic plan. I am also concerned about funding specifically in two years, when ESSR funding ends, and jurisdiction over Gannon ends, and whether funding will remain stable at that time. Finally, there are several members of the state legislature who still desire to redirect public dollars to private schools, at the expense of local public schools. This would be a terrible blow to JoCo School Districts.

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

To provide continuity on the Board during the transition of District leadership from Superintendent Fulton to Superintendent Hubbard, and to ensure fidelity with the community's strategic plan.

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**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)**

During my current term, the District has adopted a five year plan, passed a successful bond initiative to address aging infrastructure and reallocated capitol dollars to custodial salaries in order to utilize operational dollars to address secondary educator workload, while maintaining a Triple A bond rating. The Board has also provided additional funding for special education, hired additional social workers, reduced the administrative footprint through attrition, and managed the tumultuous last pandemic year. Our Board has weathered significant events, gaining valuable leadership experience, while remaining true to our mission. Experience can be a great asset when facing future issues.