

Shawnee Mission USD #512 Board of Education 2021

Response ID:1 Data

1. Candidate Information

1. Candidate Name

Zach Roberts

2. Candidate for Board Seat

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3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 2914 w 92nd ter

City/State/Zip : leawood, ks 66206

4. Phone Number

913-585-5015

5. Email Address

zvaughnr@gmail.com

6. Campaign Website

2. Candidate Background

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

Orthopedic Surgeon. 2008- Present

Employer: Orthopedic Health of Kansas City 2017-Present.

Employer: OU physicians. Oklahoma City. 2008-2017

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.

N/A

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

N/A

3. Issues and Policy

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

1) Transparency in governance, specifically with regard to budget/spending. Education funding has outpaced inflation over the last 2 decades, without compensatory improvement in test scores or other academic achievement.

2) College ready vs Career ready upon graduation. At present in SMSD 1/3 of graduating students are considered college ready, 1/3 are ready with remediation, and 1/3 graduate below grade level. All of these students should graduate with a career plan, not necessarily college acceptance.

3) Covid Measures. It is clear (in retrospect) that SMSD school board needs a medical professional to assist with governance as we emerge from the pandemic.

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)

I do not think the problem is the amount of funding. I think "shortfalls" likely a function of spending. I would like to see more of the dollars actually get to the classroom vs fund administration. I think the school budget should be open to the public and easily accessible. Teachers who are passionate about their work and consistently perform should be compensated well enough that they remain teachers, rather than seek promotion into administration.

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)

I support accountability for student achievement. I also think we need to understand what we are measuring. Student performance is a complex interaction between student ability, teacher performance, and parental reinforcement. I am not convinced that the transition to tablets or laptops (for purposes of data collection) has been universally good. Digital learning has to some extent disconnected the parents from the process, as kids no longer have textbooks, visible homework, or "report cards". Testing anxiety, classroom distractions, peer pressure, or poor student motivation all contribute to "performance" and are not necessarily reflective of the quality of the teacher.

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)

Our goal should be for every graduating student to be on a college track or training for a technical career upon graduation. Those who fail to enter one of these two pathways within 18 months of graduation struggle to succeed in life. I do not think that every student should go to college. I would support counseling programs to help students navigate this decision, particularly with respect to what ALL the options look like.

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

For the next calendar year, return to normal post COVID is the biggest hurdle. Questions regarding masks, vaccines for children, classroom sizes and scheduling, virtual versus in person learning all need to be answered with regard to consideration of medical data and medical opinions. It is not clear that this is currently happening.

For the next decade, I think academic achievement and career readiness upon graduation is THE ISSUE. 1/3 of SMUSD students graduate below grade level. While that itself may be a disservice, what is worse is to graduate that young person without a plan for gainful employment.

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

I do not think the schoolboard has been accountable to the families who pay taxes and entrust the education of their children to the school district. I got tired of complaining about that and decided to do something about it. I think I can make a difference.

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)

I am a practicing Orthopedic Trauma Surgeon. I am not a politician or advocate. I don't have future political aspirations. I care about my own children's education, and by extension the education of all of the children in our district. I am a pragmatic human being who will not compromise my ethics for favors I do not need. If elected, I will always try to do the right thing. If not, I suppose I'll continue going to work at my regular job...