

# Shawnee Mission USD #512 Board of Education 2021

Response ID:4 Data

## 1. Candidate Information

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### 1. Candidate Name

Mary Sinclair

### 2. Candidate for Board Seat #

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### 3. Address

Street Address/Apt/Suite : 5801 Lockton Lane

City/State/Zip : Fairway, KS 66205

### 4. Phone Number

9135153126

### 5. Email Address

SinclairforSMSD@gmail.com

### 6. Campaign Website

SinclairforSMSD.com

## 2. Candidate Background

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

Retired adjunct faculty/lecturer KU and UMKC. I currently serve as board chair for a small family business located in Pennsylvania.

### 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.

I routinely attended the legislative breakfasts hosted by the area chambers of commerce, prior to the pandemic. I am hopeful these events can be safely restarted for the January 2022 session.

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

I am a member of the Governor's Council on Education, currently Vice President of the SMSD School Board, Region 12 representative on the KASB Legislative Cmte, Vice Chair of the SMSD Finance and Facilities Cmte, an active member of the Kansas PTA Advocacy Team and Game On for Kansas Schools.

## 3. Issues and Policy

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

As an advocate for public education and school board member, my top three education policy issues begin with the state's school finance formula. I encourage the legislature to remain committed to the Gannon agreement. Multi-year state funding, along with adequacy, has restored critical capacity to local districts to plan for more than one year ahead. Secondly, equitable opportunity for every child to become college and career ready depends on keeping public dollars directed to public education. Third, full funding for IDEA at the federal and state level would allow districts to allocate operational funds on

needs like mental health, at-risk.

**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 Gannon school finance agreement is restoring districts' capacity to rebuild critical instructional supports. In 2023, Kansas public schools will be constitutionally funded to meet state education goals for the first time in over two decades. In the past few years, SMSD has begun to hire more teachers to normalize courseloads, provide more individualized instruction and build relationships, to hire counselors to facilitate real world learning, to restore more competitive compensation, to renew old curriculum resources, to grow preK early learning experiences. Commitment to the formula, along with stable revenues, has also been instrumental in allowing SMSD to plan ahead.

**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)**

Strengths of the Kansas accountability model include its use of multiple measures to assess progress, across five relevant outcome areas. Additionally, the accreditation system is tied to these five areas, with some flexibility for locally customized benchmarks. SMSD, for example, adopted the nationally recognized Panorama survey to measure social/emotional health and school climate. This metric sends a message that we care about soft skills and students' mental wellness, in alignment with our strategic plan. State Assessments, however, are expensive lag indicators and could be replaced by adaptive standardized assessments (NWEA MAP) to measure growth, with ACT-type test for high schoolers.

**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)**

Shawnee Mission is primed to bring student and future workforce needs together, in partnership with the business community. Several factors are coalescing, including the District's strategic plan, state restoration of school funding and infusion of federal relief dollars. The Kauffman regional Real World Learning initiative is enhancing the district's Signature Programs (BioTech, Engineering, Culinary Arts), Career Tech Ed (trades, Project Blue Eagle) and college credit options. The likelihood of student engagement increases with restored district positions like high school counselors, SMEF programs like Leadership and Scholarship Shawnee Mission with a Business to Education Officer, and career exploration tools like YouScience.

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

One challenge facing Shawnee Mission and districts nationwide is the press to privatize public education, often rationalized by outcomes of at-risk students. If Kansas is to create opportunities for every youth to be college and career ready, understanding why advocates call for keeping public dollars in public schools is important. One, the needs of at-risk students have exceeded the resources allocated to public schools for over twenty years, which won't be constitutionally funded until 2023. Two, the private school system is not required to enroll a single at-risk student, who number about 4x total private school enrollment. Recommended brief: <https://www.kasb.org/45132?articleID=75707>.

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

I have a long history with SMSD, as a student, parent, patron and most recently a school board member. Ten of my family members and I are all alumni. My main reason for seeking re-election is to support the district's mission and continue the work of our strategic plan. The heart of this plan is to ensure every student the opportunity to build their own foundation for success in life's pursuits, including college and career readiness. Shawnee Mission is primed to make meaningful progress and I hope to be a part of this success.

**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)**

My family and I have been a part of Shawnee Mission since the 1970s. I have a Ph.D. in Special Education and was a principal investigator at a Research I university, focused on student engagement and dropout prevention for youth with disabilities. I have an informed understanding of legislative policy, district budgets, school finance and taught graduate

courses in educational research. I currently service as the School Board Vice President and member of the Governor's Council on Education. I volunteer with district's MVP program, since 2011, which keeps me in schools and a longtime public school advocate with Kansas PTA.