1. **Why are you running for the MMSD Board of Education?**

   I am running for Madison School Board because our public schools must work effectively for all students and their families. We need to rebuild (and in some cases create) trust with families, staff and teachers, and the entire Madison community. We must support teachers and staff in their work. We must continue to recognize, and we must commit to end, the disparities in our educational system. We need Board members who have the experience and the skills to make change happen and to engage the community as both part of that change and as a partner in defining it. That is what I will bring to my work on the Board.

   For the past 20 years, my career has focused on teaching, advocating, and improving engagement and communication in schools and in communities. I have worked for non-profits, universities, and in the Madison schools. Currently, I work for Galin Education, developing afterschool and summer academic enrichment courses for middle and high school students. As a parent at Crestwood Elementary, I helped to designate the woods as a state School Forest and to create academically focused events. Recently, I worked with the Simpson Street Press to conduct an evaluation of their academic-focused after school programs. Early in my career, I was a prevention specialist at Centro de la Comunidad Unida in Milwaukee where we developed and taught a life skills curriculum in the Milwaukee Public Schools.

   I think I’m the only candidate for school board who has worked as a tropical bird zookeeper, though I don’t think I’ll need to use those skills as a board member. I earned my MS from what is now the School of Environment and Sustainability at the University of Michigan and earned my BA in Biology from Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota. I grew up in a working class family in Minneapolis, where my grandparents and mom were part of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers union. I am a proud graduate of Minneapolis public schools.

   Carolyn Stanford Taylor, a former principal in our district and currently the State Superintendent said, “Every child…deserves the chance, the opportunity, and the supports to become a success. This will only happen if we…work together to make sure every student has what they need to learn when they need it.”

   That is a very good statement of my educational philosophy. I would be honored to serve on the Madison School Board and I would be honored to receive MTI’s support.

2. **Please describe what quality public education looks like to you.**

   Quality public education:
   - serves every student by creating school communities that are responsive to the learning needs of those students and their families.
   - supports safe and welcoming classrooms, which are both the learning environment for students and the working environment for teachers and staff.
   - works to engage families in the education of their children.
   - creates and sustains partnerships with the larger community that are essential in order to maximize resources and to increase community-wide investment in the success of students and schools.
3. Name three things you believe the MMSD does well.
1. MMSD invests in neighborhood schools designed to meet the needs of every student. The addition of the community school model has allowed extra resources and support to be added in high needs schools, providing more wrap-around supports for students and families. Ideally the identification of these needs is driven by the school communities themselves and connected to both short term and long term metrics including academic outcomes to measure the effectiveness of the model.

2. MMSD develops connections with the larger community to invest in our schools and our students. That support is evident in the network of organizations that support MMSD schools through strategic partnerships, through the Madison Foundation for Public Schools Adopt-a-school program and through historically strong taxpayer support for operating and facilities referenda.

3. MMSD nurtures and produces students who are and will be change makers for a better world. MMSD students have shown through their activism and engagement that they are independent thinkers, attuned to the issues that face our society and our City. They organize, they speak out, they ask tough questions, and they take on complex issues.

4. Name three things you believe the MMSD needs to improve.
1. Internal evaluation of practices and how these practices affect student outcomes

2. Leveraging the experience of staff and teachers to effectively implement district level policies and plans at the school level.

3. Taking action to address disparities in academic outcomes within a larger system of academic excellence and high expectations for all students. This includes recruiting and hiring more teachers of color.

5. How do you think the MMSD should address these challenges?
1. Internal evaluation of practices and how these practices affect student outcomes. We have been relying on 3-5 year external evaluations to tell us, comprehensively, if our policies and plans are being implemented effectively. Ideally, evaluation should be internally built into every implementation process so we can measure our progress along the way and determine if adjustments are needed to adequately serve student needs.

2. Leveraging the experience of staff and teachers to effectively implement district level policies and plans at the school level. I attended all three of the Superintendent candidate forums last week. One observation that stood out to me is that these candidates (who were only in our district for one day) noticed that our teachers are overwhelmed by all that we are asking them to do. We need to do a better job of using staff experience to integrate best practices from all of the district-level policies and plans into a functional strategy that both aims for consistency across schools and allows for school level expertise to guide implementation. We must support schools in their work instead of making their work more difficult.

3. We need to identify specific actions we will take to address disparities in academic outcomes, what resources are needed for effective implementation, and what metrics will be used to measure effectiveness. As an example, the selection of a new research-based literacy
curriculum is essential and is the foundation of learning in the elementary years. We must ensure that until grade three, students are learning to read, and after grade three, students are reading to learn.

Recruiting and hiring more teachers of color is an important strategy for reducing gaps. MMSD’s TEEM scholars program is an important long term strategy as a “grow-your-own” program. In partnership with the UW Madison School of Education, this provides an avenue for current MMSD high school students from underrepresented backgrounds to enter the teaching profession. We should also create pathways for staff already working in our schools who would like to pursue their degree in education and become a teacher. These staff are already invested in our school system, and by tapping into their talent and potential, we can grow our own network of new teachers.

Recruitment efforts at the state and national levels to find teachers of color willing to relocate to Madison will also be a crucial strategy. Our city has many resources and assets with strong local support for public schools and educators. With Madison poised to potentially become a technology hub of the Midwest, proactive efforts to recruit teachers are essential.

To retain teachers of color, we want teachers to feel welcome and supported within their school communities and feel that they have a voice as part of the larger district system. The Black Educators Network is one example of a group that supports and connects teachers of color from across the city.

Part of the challenge of recruiting teachers of color is simply that there are not enough teachers to meet the demand, either locally or nationally. We need broad strategies to make the teaching profession more attractive as a career option.

6. Name three things you believe the State of Wisconsin could do better to support public schools.
   1. Fix the school funding formula so that we equitably fund public schools to the levels needed.
   2. Address the larger societal issues that affect our students and their learning including: employment opportunities and job training, literacy and education for adults, affordable housing, access to health care, and inequities in the criminal justice system.
   3. Strengthen networks among school districts to learn best practices from each other.

7. How would you advocate for these needs as a Board member?
   In my work as a professional and in my role as an MMSD parent and a concerned community member, I have engaged in advocacy and outreach around issues facing public education for over a decade. Serving as an elected school board member provides additional opportunities to advocate with legislators, editorial boards, elected officials, parent organizations, and peers around the State. I will take that opportunity to make the case for changes in the formula to fund public schools. I will utilize resources the Wisconsin Association of School Boards could provide. I will work with other organizations that have an overlap in student interests, including local and state level agencies and nonprofit organizations that support mental health, wellness, economic opportunity, literacy, and other large scale support for students and families.
8. What do you believe are the three greatest external challenges facing the MMSD?

9. How do you think the MMSD can best meet these challenges?

The larger societal disparities that lead to and exacerbate disparities in educational outcomes, including employment opportunities and job training, literacy and education for adults, affordable housing, access to health care and inequities in the criminal justice system. All of these issues create disparities in student readiness for school, how they experience school as they move through their 13 years in our educational system, and their post-secondary options. Quality education provides opportunity and we must do our best to challenge students and hold them to high expectations for academic success.

Homelessness and food insecurity. These two issues are part of the larger societal disparities that I mention above. I am pulling them out in this answer because of the outsized negative impact they have on too many of our students.

Decline in enrollment. Students leaving our district means less funding to meet the needs of students in our district. This includes the lack of control MMSD now has over non-instrumentality charter schools within our district authorized by the UW system. We must be proactive in providing the innovation and different learning options within our public schools. We have to understand (in addition to changes in birth rates) the reason enrollment could decline in order to strengthen our own response to student needs. Madison is poised to become a technology hub of the Midwest which should bring many families to our city resulting in a growth in enrollment. We want Madison public schools to be their best educational option.

10. What ideas do you have to support the recruitment and retention of teachers of color so that our workforce is more representative of our student population?

See answer to 5 above.

11. What do you view as the underlying issues involving the opportunity gap? How would you address those?

The opportunity gap starts with disparities in large societal realms beyond the ultimate control of the school district including employment opportunities, access to affordable housing, access to health care, and inequity in the criminal justice system. These are large, systemic issues. But we admit defeat if we say they are “everyone’s problems.” Why? Because if it’s everyone’s problem, no one takes actionable steps to solve them. As community members, we all must choose to be involved in addressing these larger societal issues, based on our expertise and interests. As educators, as parents, and as Board Members, we must each do our unique parts to improve the lives of our students and the education they receive. As a board member, my role would be to work with the district administration to ensure effective implementation of policies and plans and also provide a feedback loop from a wide variety of stakeholders to inform decision-making.

12. What are your thoughts about public charter schools governed by the BOE? (Instrumentality schools)

Charter schools governed by the BOE could provide the opportunity for innovative learning environments that have the potential to engage and reach students in a way that the traditional
neighborhood school may not. Magnet schools that are organized around a specific theme and centered on student learning also have potential as an innovation.

13. What are your thoughts about private charter schools governed by others? (Non-instrumentality schools)
I do not support non-instrumentality charter schools. Unfortunately, MMSD no longer has the power to control non-instrumentality charter schools approved through the UW system. My approach as a Board Member will be to continue to speak out about the importance of ensuring that public dollars support public schools and to encourage MMSD to seek and implement effective, innovative options that meet the learning needs of all students.

14. What are your thoughts about vouchers (using public funds to pay for private schools)?
I do not support using public funds to pay for private schools (vouchers).

15. Non-incumbents only: Have you ever attended a PTO, PTA meeting or a school board meeting? If so, what issues motivated your attendance?
Many! My involvement has always been motivated by a desire to find ways to better support schools and students. My professional experiences have all had connections to education. Earlier in my career, I worked as a prevention specialist at a community center on the south-side of Milwaukee that was funded by the United Way and then as a consultant for National Wildlife Federation to help teachers build wildlife habitats on their school grounds. As the founder of the Madison Partnership for Advanced Learning, I’ve interacted with school board members and other policy makers. Part of our emphasis is ensuring students from all backgrounds have access to and preparation for advanced learning opportunities.

I was active in the PTO while my children were at Crestwood. I founded the Academic Booster Committee which was part of the PTO. We worked to provide extra academic opportunities for students and families such as Explore Science night, Explore Art night, and after school clubs. I also worked with a network of teachers and volunteers to build a comprehensive outdoor education program at Crestwood. With students at Memorial High School for the last five years, I am an active and engaged parent with that school community.

I recently created an Adopt-a-School partnership between my church and Glenn Stephens elementary school. We have supported the school for the last three years with volunteers, pen pals, a healthy fruit snack once a month for every student, writing thank you notes to staff, and by financially supporting needs identified by the school. This partnership is also an opportunity for church members to see the great things happening at one of our local elementary schools.

16. Describe which of the following issues you believe teachers and other employees should have a voice in and what that would look like?
- Their pay and benefits
- Their working conditions
- Their students’ learning conditions (e.g. class size, use of technology, building conditions, behavior response)
Curriculum and assessment selection and decisions

Teachers and other employees should have a voice in all of the above.

Teachers and staff are at the core of effective schools. Our schools are improved when they have a voice in issues that impact the larger system that supports their work. And, we must make sure, not only are we providing the opportunity to weigh in, but that we are incorporating that input into the action we take.

I will support efforts to ensure that for every decision process the district undertakes (revising policies and plans, adopting new curricula, etc), there should be a mechanism designed to gather teacher and staff input and expertise on the subject.

17. Would you support the reinstatement of collective bargaining rights for all public employees (currently prohibited by Act 10)?
Yes.

18. School staff experienced a reduction in take home pay after Act 10 was passed and salary increases have not kept pace with the cost-of-living. The District is experiencing increasing difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified employees. If elected to the Board of Education, what is your plan to increase pay for school staff?
I will advocate for more school funding on a state level. I will support referenda that bring needed additional funding to our district. In the budget for 2019-20, the board made a dedicated investment in a cost of living adjustment. The steps and lanes designed to attract and retain teachers is also important.

19. Are you aware of the MMSD’s collaborative employee handbook process with employee representatives? If so, do you support the continuation of that process?
Yes. The employee handbook is a process that allows teachers to have a voice in their working conditions and other aspects of their jobs. I would like to hear from MTI and teachers if there are elements to the process that could or should be improved.

20. The school board is considering two referenda questions for the community to vote on in 2020 – one for facilities and one for operating expenses. Do you support these referenda? If yes, how will you work to support the passage of these referenda?
I do support these referenda and have supported all MMSD referenda in the past. I attended the Board of Education retreat on January 11, 2020 and it appears that the board will vote on these measures in March, before the election. If the referenda are on the November ballot, I will work with other board members, administration and community support groups to clearly and effectively communicate the district needs to the Madison community. It will be important to convey the need of our schools while respecting how this large ask will affect Madison taxpayers.
21. If you had to identify $10 million in necessary cuts, what would you prioritize cutting? If you could identify $10 million in additional investments what would you invest in?

Contemplating necessary cuts is not as theoretical this year as the district will simultaneously be considering two budgets (one with cuts) in the event the operating referenda does not pass in November. I would focus cuts on creating efficiencies in the central office and cutting positions as far removed from the classroom as possible.

If there was an additional $10 million in investment possible, I would focus on the areas where schools are asking for investment; more counselors, more support for mental health and wrap around support of students, more staff in schools to support classroom teachers and specific student needs, and the resources for the strategic focus on equity work. Investment in maintaining our buildings as optimal learning environments is also needed.

Another unique investment would be a K-8 talent development program that recognizes disparities in achievement as an opportunity gap. This would be designed to recognize and grow and supports the academic talents of students currently underrepresented in advanced learning. Without a robust program that supports this level of learning during the school day, gaps in achievement will remain.

22. How do you think the MMSD could improve in providing parents and students greater voice on issues that impact them?

Parents and students having a voice on issues that affect them is crucial to having them invested in their schools and their own experience in the schools. An important strength of our district is the diverse talents and experiences of our families. For families to feel like they are part of their school community, it is essential that they feel their experience is valued, understood and considered in school decision-making. Recognizing that families may have different comfort levels and potential barriers to participation (work conflicts, transportation and childcare issues), we have to provide multiple methods for engagement with the goal of every student and family feeling welcome and included in our schools.

Working to create a two way dialogue with families is important. Gathering feedback is just one component of that. Schools and the district must also communicate back to families on how their input was used to guide decisions and action. Otherwise, it is difficult for families and students to see the results and the value of their engagement. At the board level, ensuring that accurate and comprehensive information is accessible in a timely and transparent manner is essential.

I have been involved for the last 10 years in a district advisory group where I have seen concerned parents attend and then never return as it is not clear how their participation will affect change. We must do better.

23. Are you aware of the MMSD’s Behavior Education Plan? If so, what are your thoughts about the goals of the plan? What are your thoughts about the implementation of the plan?

Yes. The goal of the Behavior Education Plan to reduce exclusionary practices, establish a more progressive and restorative approach to discipline to address disparities was needed. At
the core of the Behavior Education Plan is building deep, positive relationships between teachers and students and their families.

Unfortunately, the implementation of the plan has been a challenge and educators in schools haven’t had the needed support or resources to make it successful. It is my sense that implementation has been plagued by issues that have left teachers feeling unsupported in managing student behaviors in a way that maintains classroom environments which are optimal for student learning. Restorative approaches take time and resources to implement effectively in order to meet the goal of keeping students in classrooms to better support their learning.

24. What do you see as the proper relationship between the Board of Education and the MMSD Superintendent and Administration?

The board is responsible for holding the superintendent and administration accountable for implementing plans and policies. The Board and the Superintendent are responsible for crafting an effective, respectful working relationship in order to ensure the district is meeting its responsibilities to all students. Hiring the Superintendent is one of the Board’s primary responsibilities along with overseeing the budget, setting district policy and approving plans. The Board must ensure it receives accurate and timely information on which to base its decisions. The Superintendent and the administration are responsible for implementing policy and plans and keeping the board informed of progress.

25. Who do you plan to seek advice from should you be elected to the Board of Education?

I would seek advice from a broad array of stakeholders with an interest in strong Madison schools. Also, each board member is assigned to specific schools. I envision my work with those assigned schools as a window into how policies and plans are being implemented and how implementation affects working conditions for staff and the learning environment for students.

26. Are you seeking MTI’s endorsement of your campaign?

Yes.

27. Are you seeking MTI political action contributions for your campaign?

Yes.

28. Is there anything else you would like MTI members to know about your candidacy and why you are seeking election to the Board of Education?

This year is a pivotal time for our district. We will be welcoming a new superintendent. We most likely will have two referenda questions on the November 2020 ballot. We have ongoing challenges including closing the opportunity gap, supporting our teachers and school staff, underfunding on a State level, and rebuilding trust where it has frayed. My skills and experience in administering and evaluating programs, in helping guide systems through times of change, and my knowledge of MMSD will enable me to hit the ground running as a member of the MMSD Board. I would be honored by your support.
29. Who has endorsed your campaign?
I look forward to publicly announcing endorsements in the near future.

30. Who serves on your campaign committee?
Many people encouraged me to run for school board and I am honored that a number of them – district parents and concerned citizens – are helping on my campaign. I am working to involve individuals for all four high school attendance areas in my campaign.

31. Are you aware of any conflicts of interest which may prohibit you from voting on certain items before the Board of Education? If so, what are they?
Not that I am aware of. I currently work as the Director of Enrichment at Galin Education. A small number of MMSD teachers may teach enrichment courses for us during the summer. I do not see that as a conflict of interest but would seek a legal opinion.