

2022 MPS Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire

The Advancing Equity Coalition (AEC) has spent the last several months listening to and learning from MPS families, community leaders, teachers, and principals to help guide these questions. We invite you to fill out this candidate questionnaire to help inform voters about your plans to improve the quality of education for students of color and Indigenous students across MPS. Your responses will be shared with the Minneapolis community through our newsletter, website, and social media channels. AEC is a registered 501(c)3 organization. We will only use the information collected in this questionnaire for voter education purposes. We will not endorse candidates in this election.

Candidate and Campaign Information

Name: Abdul Abdi

Pronouns: He/Him

Which Seat Are You Running For?: *MPS School Board District 1*

Campaign Website: www.Abdulforschools.org

Candidate Email Address:

Candidate Social Media Channels:

- Facebook:
- Twitter: @RealAbdulAbdi
- Instagram:
- Others:

Candidate Questions:

1. Why are you interested in serving on the Minneapolis Board of Education?

I'm running because I believe in the importance of education and the principles of service. I am the father of five Minneapolis public school children, and I want this district to help children of all abilities, needs, and backgrounds reach their full potential. In addition, I'm running to promote and support a system that fosters trust between schools and communities.

2. What skills, experience, and/or expertise do you bring to be an effective member of the Minneapolis Board of Education?

I have twenty years of work, small business, and leadership experience. By trade, I'm a software architect who has led teams of software developers to solve real-world technological and business problems. I've been a member of the District Parents' Advisory

Council for the past four years. I oversaw several parent listening sessions as a DPAC representative and presented parents' concerns to MPS administration for consideration. My calm demeanor has always assisted me in navigating opposing points of view and finding common ground. I am also a father of five students at Minneapolis public schools.

3. The last three years of interrupted learning has only exacerbated Minneapolis Public Schools' nation-leading racial disparities in academic outcomes, leading to an academic crisis. What would be your top 3 priorities to address this racial disparity and improve the academic outcomes and experience for students of color and Indigenous students? What data and information will guide your decision-making in academics?

I am well aware of what is going on in MPS. For the last four years, I requested and received the state of MPS students' Fast, MCA, WIDA, and Learners' assessments. As a board member, I will thoroughly review the testing results and develop a plan of action. In order to focus students' learning achievement, I will also listen to experts in these fields, as well as parents.

4. One of the biggest assets of Minneapolis Public Schools is the diversity of families the district serves. However, students receiving English Language Learner services often have some of the worst academic outcomes in the district. What actions will you take to improve the academic quality and educational experience for students receiving ELL services?

I attended numerous meetings with ELL communities. In some of these communities, I represented DPAC and listened to the parents' concerns. I'll assess the needs of these students and schools to determine what kind of assistance they require to reach their full potential. I will continue to assess the needs of these communities, whether it is tutoring or other needs, with an emphasis on equity.

5. Given that we are in a child and adolescent mental health crisis, what key policy changes or investments would you make to support the wellbeing of MPS students?

The MPS school board will prioritize students' mental health and well-being. I'll go over the policies that are currently in place. I will work with experts to develop a strategy for identifying and supporting mental health in students, teachers and MPS Staff . Mental illness will not be stigmatized.

6. Teachers of color and Indigenous teachers are severely under-represented in comparison to the student population, with approximately 80% of the MPS teacher population identifying as white. Teachers of color and Indigenous teachers in the district report feeling isolated, experiencing a challenging work environment, and a lack of support. What strategies would you support to rapidly increase the percentage of teachers of color and Indigenous teachers in the district? What strategies would you support to improve the work environment for teachers of color and Indigenous teachers?

It is not secret that the diversity of the school staff contributes to a positive school environment for students and the school community. I will prioritize investments and hiring policies aimed at attracting a more diverse teaching force, while also bolstering the genuine voices of teachers of color through leadership pathways and opportunities.

7. Despite nearly 20% of MPS students receiving special education services, the academic experience and opportunities for students receiving special education services is rarely discussed by the Minneapolis Board of Education. What key policy changes and investments would you support to improve the educational experience and quality for students receiving special education services?

Students in Special Education must receive appropriate educational support in order to achieve and grow as well-rounded adults. I will advocate, along with other boards, for these students to be provided with the resources and tools they require, as well as for special education programs to be fully funded. Districts must meet state and federal mandates for special education services.

8. For several years, the MPS Finance Department has said, “the current cost structure is unsustainable long term” and “enrollment increases alone are not the solution”. As a policymaker and financial steward for MPS, what changes would you consider to MPS’ cost structure to ensure MPS is financially sustainable into the future?

My financial priorities will reflect the most important value to me, which is the future of students. My ultimate goal is to provide leadership and lay out plans to enable children with diverse abilities, needs, and backgrounds to reach their full potential. I will work to remove any obstacles to that goal.

Please email your completed questionnaire to kenneth@advancingequitycoalition.org along with a headshot by Sunday, July 31st.

About Advancing Equity Coalition:

The Advancing Equity Coalition (AEC) is a coalition of organizations, working closely with MPS parents, educators, and community members, who have come together to develop the political will to eliminate institutional racism in Minneapolis Public Schools. We are driven by a vision that every student in Minneapolis Public Schools can succeed and deserves a high-quality education. With that, we are focused on ensuring the policies and conditions are in place for high-quality academic experience and opportunities for students of color and Indigenous students.

If you would like to learn more, you can visit our website: www.advancingequitycoalition.org

You can also visit our social media channels:

- Facebook: facebook.com/advancingequitymps

- Twitter: @EquityMPS
- Instagram: advancingequitymps
- Youtube: Advancing Equity Coalition Minneapolis