

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: Lisa Skjefte

Pronouns: She/Her

Which Seat Are You Running For?: At Large

Campaign Website: none

Candidate Email Address: lisa.skjefte@gmail.com

Candidate Social Media Channels:

- Facebook: Lisa Sk
- Twitter:X
- Instagram:X
- Others:

Candidate Questions:

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

I am a citizen of the Red Lake Nation of Anishinaabe, and I grew up in South Minneapolis. I graduated from South High. I have lived, worked, and attended Minneapolis Public Schools in South Minneapolis my entire life. I have a niece and a nephew that currently attend Minneapolis Public Schools. I am interested in serving on the Minneapolis Board of Education because members from my local American Indian community asked me to, and because I feel that I have demonstrated ways to co-develop with communities and parents to advocate for equity systems changes that greatly impact BIPOC communities.

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

I will receive my Masters of Public Health in Health Policy and Administration from the University of Minnesota, once my Master's thesis is complete. I have worked in Minneapolis American Indian non-profits, the University of Minnesota on community participatory research, and Children's Minnesota leading Health Equity work.

During my time at Children's MN as a Health Equity Specialist, I co-created a community-centered programs that uplifted community and patient experiences to leverage their voices to influence system-level impacts. I lead the team of Social Workers through an equity group where we partnered with Children's MN's American Indian Advisory Council to look at policies, practices, community, and patient experiences, using a Racial Justice Impact Assessment (REIA) from Voices for Racial Justice.

I plan to use tools like the REIA that have already been created and implemented to make equitable decisions about policy and practices within the 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?

1. Increase and retain teachers of color.
2. To assist in meeting the current goals of MPS to provide a high quality anti-racist culturally responsive education for all students, in order to achieve this the use of a Racial Equity Impact Tool (REIA) is imperative
3. Community and parent engagement from those who have been historically underserved or systematically marginalized

The best data comes from parents, students, educators, and the community. Stories and experiences are critical feedback that can lead to insightful solutions. I would also use data from the MN Report Card, data available through the MPS website on student demographics.

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?

ELL students deserve to have access and be included in general education with their peers. To address the inequities in ELL services there needs to be adequate funding and implicit bias training to eliminate disparities in services due to the implicit bias of educators and staff that may have that impact achievement goals for students.

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?

I would advocate investing into Minnesota's model for school-linked mental health, by partnering with local community agencies that share and are invested in the shared goal. I would advocate for programs that help identify and reduce behavioral interventions.

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?

I would meet with BIPOC teachers and ask what supports they need. Then I would look to community BIPOC agencies to partner on solutions to increase the percentage of BIPOC teachers within MPS. Most importantly I would work on implementing implicit bias training and accountability to improve the culture of schools and classrooms.

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?

I would increase the amount of funding for special education services. I would also advocate partnering with BIPOC communities to find community-centered approaches that are culturally relevant to reduce suspension rates, and to also address the disparity of Black students being over-identified as emotionally/behaviorally disabled.

I would also advocate the same inclusion and equity efforts for students who are disabled to have access and inclusion to general education with their peers but in ways that support the student.

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?

I would advocate for more money from State legislators. I would focus on bringing in more money as opposed to cutting cost.

Please email your completed questionnaire to kenneth@advancingequitycoalition.org along with a headshot.

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](https://www.instagram.com/advancingequitymps)
- Youtube: Advancing Equity Coalition Minneapolis