



# **Vacant School Board Seat Applications**

Election District 3

October 2024

## **Applicants**

[David Tilsen](#)

[Lucie Skjefte](#)

[Fatimah Hussein](#)

[Kowsar Mohamed](#)

[Michael Dueñes](#)

[Christin Crabtree](#)

### **All applicants verified that the following statements are accurate:**

- I will be at least 21 years old or will be prior to day of appointment
- I am an eligible voter in the State of Minnesota
- I reside within MPS election district 3 and will do so for the duration of the term
- I am not a sex offender convicted of an offense for which registration is required under MN statute section 243.166
- I understand the duties of this office and be willing and able to follow all applicable laws, policies, regulations, and reporting requirements

**Name:** David Tilsen

**What experiences and skills would you bring to the School Board?**

My name is David Tilsen. I was elected to the Minneapolis Board of Education city wide in 1983 and again in 1987. I had the endorsement of the MFT, the Central Labor body, the DFL and the Star Tribune. I chose to not seek reelection in 1982, and instead supported Bill Green for my seat. I served as Clerk, treasurer and Chair. I was elected to leadership in six of my eight years.

Since that time I have been an activist for equity and strength in our city and schools. I have supported candidates for election in the city, and have played a constructive role in the culture of the city.

My three children attended K-8 in our schools graduating from South High School. I have lived here in South Minneapolis since 1971.

I am knowledgeable, experienced, and will be a board member that seeks compromise and good decisions by listening and studying the facts. I will not have a strong learning curve.

I do not seek this as a step to higher office, only to improve and protect the education of our students.

I believe the primary rolls of a BOE member is to hire, guide and evaluate the Superintendent, pass policy, and advocate for the district, especially when there is a referendum before the voters, as is the case next year. Of course performing due diligence on the budget and financial decisions is also important, but micro managing is a mistake. We hire competent administrators and if the Board does not have confidence in them, then it is time to talk about change, not undercut them.

I am experienced, mature, and on board with the goals of the district. I will not seek another term, or any other elected office.

**Why do you want to be appointed to the School Board?**

I wish only to contribute and serve.

**Do you plan to run for the seat in the 2026 election?**

No

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**Name:** Lucie Skjefte

**What experiences and skills would you bring to the School Board?**

I bring a wealth of experience and skills to the Minneapolis Public School Board, including:

1. Educational Background: With degrees in Advertising, Graphic Design, and Web Interactive Media, I have a strong foundation in communication and design that supports effective outreach and advocacy.
2. Leadership Experience: With over 5 years experience as the Chair of the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC), I have demonstrated my ability to lead, collaborate, and make informed decisions that enhance the educational environment for Minneapolis students.
3. Cultural Advocacy: I am committed to integrating diverse perspectives into education, ensuring cultural representation and inclusivity so that Minneapolis students feel valued and supported.
4. Community Engagement: My experience in fostering collaboration among parents, educators, and community leaders showcases my ability to build partnerships that enhance student success and well-being.
5. Focus on Mental Health and Discipline: I advocate for culturally competent mental health services and restorative disciplinary practices, reflecting my understanding of the unique challenges faced by many Minneapolis students.
6. Vision for the Future: I emphasize the need for a long-term strategic plan that incorporates cultural knowledge into curricula and prioritizes language revitalization and relevant STEM programs to align education with future needs.

7. Design and Communication Skills: My design background enables me to identify creative solutions that raise awareness and drive change, which is essential for effective advocacy.

Overall, my blend of leadership, cultural advocacy, and community-focused approach positions me as a strong candidate for the Minneapolis Public School Board, ready to advocate for all students and enhance educational equity.

### **Why do you want to be appointed to the School Board?**

I believe I should be part of the Minneapolis School Board because I bring a unique combination of experience, skills, and a deep commitment to educational equity, particularly for American Indian students. As Chair of the American Indian Parent Advisory Committee, I have effectively advocated for marginalized communities and created inclusive educational environments.

I focus on integrating Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum to promote cultural relevance and a sense of belonging among students. My commitment to mental health support and restorative discipline reflects my understanding of the challenges students face, ensuring that their emotional and academic needs are prioritized.

Additionally, my background in design enhances my ability to communicate and engage with diverse stakeholders, fostering community partnerships that are crucial for student success. With a vision for long-term educational improvements, I am dedicated to culturally competent practices and would be a valuable asset to the Minneapolis School Board, advocating for a brighter future for all students.

**Do you plan to run for the seat in the 2026 election?**

Yes

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**Name:** Fatimah Hussein

**What experiences and skills would you bring to the School Board?**

My name is Fatimah Hussein, and I am a proud graduate of Minneapolis Public Schools and a current parent in the district. My educational journey through Minneapolis Public Schools has profoundly shaped my life, and I am deeply thankful for the great education and invaluable experiences I received. After graduating from Roosevelt High School, I pursued higher education, earning a Bachelor's degree and a Master's in Health and Human Service Administration from Saint Mary's University. As a Licensed Graduate Social Worker (LGSW), I have cultivated a diverse background serving our community across both nonprofit and government sectors .

I have dedicated my professional career to community service, focusing on improving educational access and social equity. My experience as a social worker has equipped me with skills in advocacy, conflict resolution, and crisis management, all of which are important for a role on the Minneapolis Public Schools School Board. I have worked closely with families and children from various backgrounds, listening to their needs and addressing systemic barriers that hinder educational success.

As a coach, I am a firm believer in the power of sports to unite our community. I have seen firsthand how being part of a team can foster teamwork, leadership, and resilience among young people. My initiative to start an all-girls open gym at the Brian Coyle Community Center in South Minneapolis has provided a safe and loving community for girls and women of all ages to build confidence and pursue their passion for sports. This program not only helps girls and women from our communities prepare for school sports but also respects their religious beliefs, showing that inclusivity is possible in athletics.



Recognizing the unique challenges faced by young Muslim girls in sports, I co-founded the Asiya Sport Hijab. This initiative was born out of the need for culturally appropriate sportswear, empowering our girls to participate in physical activities without compromising their identities. Through ASIYA, a social impact initiative I helped create, we have educated the community about the importance of sports hijabs, which led to increased awareness and options for young Muslim athletes. Partnering with major sports companies to introduce sports hijabs to the U.S. market not only addressed a critical need but also provided young girls with greater opportunities to compete.

My background in Health and Human Service Administration has given me insight into policy analysis, program development, and resource management. I understand how to design and implement effective programs that cater to the needs of students and their families. My experience in navigating complex systems, whether in government or non-profit sectors, equips me to advocate for policies that foster educational equity, mental health support, and community engagement.

I am a strong proponent of collaboration. I believe that effective change comes from working together with students, parents, educators, and community members. I have experience building coalitions that bring together diverse stakeholders to tackle pressing issues in our schools. My ability to facilitate dialogue and foster partnerships ensures that all voices are heard, promoting a collaborative approach to problem-solving.

### **Why do you want to be appointed to the School Board?**

I am seeking an appointment to the Minneapolis Public Schools School Board because I love Minneapolis public schools and am passionate about advancing student achievement and addressing the opportunity gap in our schools. My commitment to ensuring that every child in our community receives a high-quality education is rooted in my belief that education

empowers individuals to excel and shape their futures. In today's rapidly changing world, our students need unwavering support, strong advocacy, and the assurance that their community stands firmly behind them, committed to their success.

If given the opportunity, I will serve our community with joy and a commitment to ensure that all students—regardless of their backgrounds—have equal access to opportunities that will enable them to succeed. This belief is not merely a goal; it is a core value that guides my vision for our schools. I am motivated by the need to close the opportunity gap and create an educational community where every child can thrive. This requires intentional action, effective policies, and a collaborative approach that involves students, educators, families, and community stakeholders.

Growing up, my parents instilled in me the importance of knowledge through a Somali proverb: "Aqoon la'aani waa iftiin la'aani," which translates to "To be without knowledge is to be without light." This powerful saying underscores my belief that education is the bedrock upon which our students build their futures. It reminds me that we must strive to create an individualized path for every student, providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate the complexities of life.

Education is not just a personal value; it is a communal responsibility. I am dedicated to serving as a voice for all students, families, educators and the broader community. I believe it is necessary for our children to have advocates who listen to their needs, support their aspirations, and empower them to express themselves. As a member of the School Board, I would work tirelessly to ensure that every student feels valued and heard.

I am incredibly passionate about community engagement and strongly believe that quality education requires the inclusion of diverse voices in

conversations and decision-making processes. The perspectives of students, families, educators, and community members are vital in shaping policies that truly reflect the needs of our students.

I envision a School Board that fosters genuine and impactful conversations, where community ownership is not just a phrase but a practice. By involving parents, students, and local organizations in the decision-making process, we can cultivate stronger, more resilient communities and schools. I am committed to building partnerships that will enrich our educational programs and create a support network that uplifts our students.

Advocacy is at the heart of my mission. I believe in standing up for the rights of our students and ensuring they have access to resources that promote their academic and personal growth. This includes advocating for mental health services, equitable funding, and comprehensive support systems that address the unique challenges faced by our diverse student population.

Through my work as a Licensed Graduate Social Worker (LGSW), I have developed skills in advocacy, policy development, and program implementation. I have seen the direct impact of supportive interventions on student outcomes, and I am committed to translating this knowledge into actionable strategies on the School Board. My experience in both non-profit and government sectors has equipped me with the tools needed to navigate complex systems and effect meaningful change.

Education is a powerful tool for social change, and I hold a strong conviction that it is key to uplifting everyone in our community. By providing our children with the best education possible, we are effectively preparing them to become engaged citizens and future leaders. This commitment extends beyond the classroom; it encompasses the social, emotional, and cultural dimensions of education that contribute to a holistic learning experience.

I believe that our schools should reflect the diversity of our community and provide culturally relevant curricula that resonate with all students. It is essential that our education system not only acknowledges but celebrates the rich tapestry of experiences and backgrounds that our students bring. By fostering an inclusive environment, we can empower all students to excel academically and develop a strong sense of identity.

As I seek this appointment to the School Board in District 3, I do so with a deep sense of responsibility and a clear vision for our educational future. I am dedicated to contributing my skills and experiences to enhance our education system, ensuring that every student has access to high-quality learning opportunities.

In this role, I will work tirelessly to advocate for the needs of our [End of Submission]

**Do you plan to run for the seat in the 2026 election?**

Undecided

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**Name:** Kowsar Mohamed

## **What experiences and skills would you bring to the School Board?**

Greetings,

My name is Kowsar (ko-saar) Mohamed (she/her/ayada) and I'm a social scientist, educator, culture bearer, and inclusive economic development practitioner in the Minneapolis-St.Paul region. I'm also a direct product of District 3. From K-12, I was enrolled in District 3 schools, starting at Cooper Elementary, where I experienced my first district-led school consolidation. I then joined Longfellow Elementary, which would also face closure years later. I also witnessed the unique space consolidation merger between Anne Sullivan School (Sullivan STEAM) and Anishinabe Academy. Despite these various changes, my family and I remained committed to the district and completed my MPS journey at South High School's Liberal Art program.

My experiences in the district supercharged my ability to interrogate systems, work towards identifying localized solutions, and work across differences. With much of my formative years shaped by uncertainty, my peers and I chose the path of resiliency. Amid shifts in district zoning and the overall lack of youth-centered development in the South Minneapolis neighborhood of Cedar Riverside, where we grew up, we formed the first youth-led neighborhood council. Through the council, we broke our silence to address rising gun violence, deferred public improvements, and nonexistent youth workforce development. As a cofounder of the council, I was able to create career pathways, educational resources, and direct connections to public service-related initiatives for youth in the neighborhood. One example was a youth-led enterprise for the community, built and founded by the council, called Triple C Café. It was intentionally designed to train and employ youth in Cedar Riverside, ensuring they had the skills and equitable wages to become active members of our economy. These pinnacle moments of my upbringing

have kept me rooted in community and serving across sectors to push for more inclusive, future-forward solutions to our grandest challenges.

For the last decade, I've been an active contributor and leader in areas related to public policy, finance, and resource management in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region. I've had the unique privilege to lead and serve transformative collaborative efforts (e.g. City of Minneapolis Southside Green Zones, City of St. Paul MSP TechHire, City of St. Paul Cultural Destination Areas, Brookings Metro and the Center for Economic Inclusion Regional Inclusive Growth Network) with multiple public-private partners working together to move the bar on technological, social, environmental and governance strategies. Serving as an economic development professional in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul region, I've also garnered the tools, relationships, and insight to identify existing system gaps and organizational management challenges, and solutions to solve for incongruent social impact strategies, or the lack thereof.

I've utilized a multitude of tools to reconfigure, stabilize, and at times deconstruct systems so they can be assembled to work in a more efficient and resilient form. I've overseen public and private-sector projects ranging from \$50k to \$1.5M all working to identify solutions to economic, workforce, transportation, and environmental inequities. I lean on knowledge from my ancestors and contemporary tools gained from institutional settings to diagnose challenges and identify aligned solutions in shared learning and understanding. A few of the tools I utilize are equity diagnostic assessments, inclusive risk forecasting and management, economic modeling, and systems change thinking and management. With these tools, I've overseen processes that have led to the bold and pragmatic reconstruction of programs, practices, and policies that once resulted in inequitable outcomes and disparities for underresourced communities.

In tandem with my work as an inclusive economic development practitioner, I'm a PhD student at the University of Minnesota in Natural Resources Science Management and serve as an Adjunct Instructor at the College of Liberal Arts. When teaching, I ensure my classroom is a space for discovery, self-actualization, and healing. I work to show up in ways that my Minneapolis Public School teachers did for me and that was leading with love and showing up continuously. In this role, it's my duty to instill the importance of collective stewardship in our learning objectives, materials, and discussions, to build a generation of learners who are committed to societal improvements and recovery.

With the myriad of skills, tools, and relationships I nurture, I want to become an active contributor to the Minneapolis School Board as the District 3 board member. I believe the collective vision I have will complement the ongoing efforts of the board and support advancing more resilient solutions for our families, staff, students, and overall surrounding communities.

### **Why do you want to be appointed to the School Board?**

I'm seeking this opportunity to be appointed to the Minneapolis School Board because I am uniquely positioned to serve as a bridge between the community and the institution, drawing on my lived experience as a first-generation Black, Somali, Muslim woman and my expertise in public policy, finance, and inclusive economic development. Having grown up in District 3 and witnessing school consolidations and closures firsthand, I understand the gravity of the decisions the School Board faces, particularly those affecting students, families, staff, and our surrounding communities. My background enables me to contribute actively by offering nuanced, equity-focused, and culturally responsive insights into the challenges and opportunities our district must navigate.

My expertise in public policy and finance equips me to critically analyze and contribute to discussions around the school district's budget, including advocating for the financial sustainability of Minneapolis Public Schools. I can play a vital role in the School Board's budgetary decision-making processes by applying my knowledge of systems change and resource management. With experience overseeing multimillion-dollar projects, I am adept at identifying gaps in funding strategies and advocating for solutions that work within current ecosystem constraints while pushing for systemic change. I will work in partnership with members of the board and our community to ensure that resources are allocated in a way that intentionally recognizes the needs of historically underfunded schools and students, making fiscal responsibility align with equity goals.

One immediate priority I plan to champion is rallying our legislative partners to secure more robust investments and support for MPS. By engaging with policymakers and utilizing relationships fostered across public-private partnerships, I will continue to advocate for legislative actions that sustain and expand investments in our schools. I want to speak hope into the Vote YES for Kids ballot initiative, believing that when it passes this November, it will create a wave of momentum for Minneapolis Public Schools, enabling us to garner even greater investments. However, if the ballot were not to pass, I am prepared to partner deeply with my fellow board members, other policymakers, institutional partners, and the community to reimagine other opportunities for resource allocation and financial sustainability that we can explore.

Navigating the complexities of district finances and operational challenges requires more than just technical expertise. As a member of the School Board, I will bring the insights of someone who understands the socio-economic determinants that impact our schools and communities. My experience working at the intersection of policy, finance, and equity, coupled with my



lived experiences, gives me the lens to identify and advocate for solutions that will benefit all of our students. I will also ensure that the voices of families in District 3 are not only heard but centered in decisions around resource allocation, school closures, and program funding.

My desire to join the School Board stems from a commitment to deepen my service to the community and the district that raised me. I'm committed to sharing the skills, resources, and insights I have in a space that has the capacity to enact greater change, alongside other staunch champions of Minneapolis Public Schools. I am ready to partner with other members of the board to help advance the district toward financial resiliency, educational excellence, and a brighter future for all our students #Onward

**Do you plan to run for the seat in the 2026 election?**

Undecided

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**Name:** Michael Dueñas

**What experiences and skills would you bring to the School Board?**

I am a policy expert with many years of experience creating, implementing, and working with complex budgets. I understand how to write, read, interpret, and explain budgets to people. I have worked as a student organizer, professor, and college dean who is collaborative, maintains clear lines of communication, and involves all stakeholders in decision making. I also have a successful track record of greatly reducing racial educational disparities in my work in higher education.

As a third generation Mexican American, I have never forgotten my own or my parents struggles in education. My father has an 8th grade education and my mother, who attended Minneapolis public schools in District 3, was unable to graduate from high school. I graduated from Harding High School on St. Paul's Eastside. I was the first person in my family to earn a four-year college degree and did so at Macalester College. I also earned a Ph.D. in political science from The University of Michigan. My parents deeply value education but they had nobody to advocate for them in the system when they were K-12 students. MPS students, families, and educators need a board member who wants to build relationships with them and advocate for them. I am invested in doing this as well as making MPS a district that families flock to, rather than leave.

In addition to my experience in complex budgets, I am a Spanish speaking Latino parent who invested in MPS by having my own child attend District 3 MPS K-12 schools. Last year, he graduated from South High and is now a freshman in college. Students from Latin America are increasing enrollment across MPS. They have a multitude of complex needs. It is a priority for me to collaboratively work with families and educators to work with them so that they stay in MPS. In addition, I would like to work with, and advocate for, all of

the diverse communities that make up District 3 and I have a track record of doing this successfully and collaboratively in my work.

**Why do you want to be appointed to the School Board?**

Currently, 42% of children residing in Minneapolis attend schools somewhere other than MPS. This is unconscionable. I know that there are complex reasons for this and I believe that it is vital that we work in the short and long term to keep our current students, bring back students who have left, and attract new students to our schools in every neighborhood in Minneapolis. This is a major reason why I ran for school board in 2020 and it continues to be a major priority for me. I have not given up on MPS and know that we can be successful in this.

I have also been frustrated with the lack of cohesive representation from District 3 for many years on the school board. This has led to a lack of community outreach and engagement with the many diverse communities in District 3's schools and neighborhoods. I would like to build consistent representation and relationships in this District as this is a community I am deeply a part of and care about. Because of this, I am committed to put in the work by showing up to board meetings regularly as well as working with and for my constituents.

**Do you plan to run for the seat in the 2026 election?**

Yes

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**Name:** Christin Crabtree

**What experiences and skills would you bring to the School Board?**

Over the past 24 years I have had the privilege to be part of the Minneapolis Public Schools community in a multitude of ways; as an educator, parent, and an organizer. Since 2000, I've had the opportunity to spend time in many of our schools across the city shadowing educators, spending consistent time volunteering, and engaging in advocacy. Our family has attended a range of MPS schools – magnet, community, and alternative schools. I began organizing in the district as my eldest child entered Kindergarten, and have been able to be part of a range of activities, such as serving in leadership roles with school based PTA/PTO's, grant writing to bring supplementary social emotional learning and art activities into our schools, and conducting supply drives to supplement MPS contract alternative high schools with educational materials and period products. These experiences, coupled with an interest in education policy and deep belief that public education is foundational to strong communities and a functioning democracy, lead me to advocacy on a systemic level. In 2023, I joined alongside other parents to found Minneapolis Families for Public Schools (MFPS), a grassroots group with a mission to engage Minneapolis families in collective and collaborative action to create the public schools that our children, educators, and city both needs and deserves. Our approach is to work to strengthen our schools, and work together with our educators to bring to fruition a vision of fully funded and well-resourced Minneapolis Public Schools that meet the diverse needs of our students, supports and respects our educators, and is publicly funded, governed, and accountable. Together we have worked to bring together policy makers across jurisdictions, supported organizing around the Gender Inclusion Policy, and built partnerships with other groups across the city (such as COPAL, Colectiva Bilingue, New Justice Project, and TakeAction MN).

My professional background includes working as an Education Support Professional and teacher in elementary Special Education, as well as teaching high school social studies. I began my career as an educator in a charter school, so I bring firsthand experience both with serving families who left traditional public school districts – and with bringing them back to MPS. I understand the impact of the privatization movement upon education. These experiences have driven my desire to bring to light and further educate our community about what privatization means and why it is so important for education (as well as other public goods such as libraries and parks) to remain public.

In addition to my background in education, I bring successful leadership experience to MPS. My professional expertise includes working in community-based organizing, the nonprofit sector, and corporate roles. I have experience with government relations, communications, compliance, and supply chain, bringing a unique combination of skills to Minneapolis Public Schools that are well-suited to serve our families, Board, and District in this moment. In my career, I have collaborated on award winning initiatives to improve quality, efficiency, and agility, successfully spearheading continuous improvement projects resulting in measurable cost and time savings. For six years I served on the Board of Directors with the Domestic Abuse Project, where I held a variety of roles including Vice Chair of the Board and Chair of the Development Committee. Other roles I have held include serving on the Board of the StepUP Program at Augsburg University (a program for students in recovery from substance use disorders), where I worked with key legislators in the state of MN and US Congress members to allocate funding for the Augsburg College Capital Campaign.

I am committed to transforming conditions away from scarcity, strategic exclusion, and disinvestment, and towards building life affirming investment with our communities. Most recently, I have been serving as an organizer with

Nenookaasi, a collective of city residents dedicated to presence and care with Minneapolis' most vulnerable unhoused populations by facilitating access to services, affirming cultural practices, and relationship building. In the past year we have been able to:

- Maintain connections between government and non profit outreach service providers and unhoused residents by facilitating access and communications
- Bring peer recovery support specialists to serve our neighbors on a daily basis
- Facilitate access to healthcare, treatment, detox, housing, community support, and mental health services
- Build a responsive, organized, and dynamic ecosystem of care and services through collective efforts of existing nonprofit partners and mutual aid groups
- Through our work, we have been able to assist over 200 individuals to access housing, and an additional 70 people to access treatment/recovery services.

### **Why do you want to be appointed to the School Board?**

When I learned that there was a vacancy on the school board, I felt called to apply. I bring a unique range of skills, talents, and experiences that can bring constructive perspective to our Board in this critical moment in Minneapolis. Minneapolis Public Schools are on the forefront of a moment of transition – the unknown can create fear, but it is also an opportunity to build the world we envision.

My passion for Public Education is rooted in a deep commitment to build the kind of community we are all worthy of – one that affirms, uplifts, and empowers. Through collaborative and collective work with families, educators, students, staff, and policymakers across jurisdictions, we can stabilize Minneapolis Public Schools, retain families and educators in our district, and

bring the 42% of eligible students in our city who are currently choosing schools outside of our district back to Minneapolis Public Schools. I am excited to bring accountability and transparency to the district, to deep dive into our finances, and to actively engage with our community.

Public education is the foundation of a thriving democracy, and as such, schools should be fully resourced and publicly funded, controlled, and accountable. Every child has a right to a high-quality public education; a strong public school system is both a liberatory and antiracist project. It is through a well-rounded and accessible education system that Minneapolis develops informed, engaged, and responsible citizens with the knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary to make informed decisions. The significance of public education extends far beyond individual achievement; it is central to the fabric of our communities, serving as a cornerstone for social interaction and mutual understanding. Schools are the hubs around which community life revolves, bringing together students, parents, teachers, and local residents. They provide a space where diverse groups can converge, engage in constructive dialogue, and foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Public education supports community development by offering resources and opportunities that extend beyond the classroom. From adult education programs to community events hosted at school facilities, public education plays a vital role in lifelong learning and community engagement. MPS creates a network of support that benefits not only students but also families and the wider community. Ultimately, public education is a communal investment in the collective well-being, and I am passionate to both build and maintain MPS as a public good in Minneapolis. MPS strengthens social bonds, promotes economic development, and enhances the quality of life for all members of the community. As such, maintaining robust public education systems is essential for fostering connected, vibrant, and resilient communities capable of facing future challenges together.

**Do you plan to run for the seat in the 2026 election?**

Undecided

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