

Dane County Democratic Party Candidate Questionnaire

Mia Croyle

Stoughton Area School District Board of Education

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Professional Experience:

My background is as a clinical mental health counselor. For the past 10+ years I have worked on projects focused on implementing best practices and improving quality of behavioral health screening and intervention in general healthcare settings.

Political/Service Experience:

Fox Prairie Working for Kids (PTO) Secretary 2016-2020

Member of Stoughton Area School District Community Relations Board 2020

Appointed to Stoughton Area School District Board of Education 2020

Why Are You Running In This Election?

I am running, first and foremost, because I believe in the power and promise of public schools. I am a child of hard-working public school educators, a graduate of Stoughton Area School District and a proud parent of two children currently enrolled in Stoughton Area School District schools. In a time of ever-increasing concern about the emotional health of our students, I bring a wealth of subject matter expertise on the issue. In a time of ardent focus on issues of equity, I bring the lived experience of a parent of two Black children in our schools.

Our schools face looming budget shortfalls and we must work to actively engage with teachers, families, and community stakeholders. Our schools belong to the community and vice versa. As we seek solutions to coming challenges, our north star must be achieving excellence grounded in equity. We must invest where it matters most and I want to be part of leading the conversation to make sure that happens.

What Are The Three Most Important Issues In Your Race?

One of the most important issues will be recovery from the pandemic. In the coming years, our schools will need to address the significant emotional health issues that have arisen from the practices we, rightfully, put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19. Our students will also have gaps in their social and academic development that will need to be addressed. Our district has also experienced a decrease in enrollment due to virtual learning. We will need to try to bring as many of those students back into our schools as possible, and address the financial implications of the decline in enrollment. It will also be key that we not lose sight of the innovations that we discovered in the midst of this crisis and find ways to turn them into permanent practices.

Advancing the equity work within our district is another key issue. The work is already underway, but we must communicate our expectation that the district keep its foot on the gas. We need to insist that our educators demonstrate cultural competence. We must examine our curriculum to make sure it is relevant and inclusive of all our learners. We must partner with community organizations that can help us embrace our Black and Latinx learners and families and surround them with support. We should create pathways for our diverse students to return to our schools

to teach and lead, and work to create a community that our diverse students want to come home to.

Declining enrollment and finances will be an important issue this year. Our district has had declining enrollment for several years. The problem is two-fold: there is a lack of affordable housing for young families to move into the district and we are not attracting enough students from other districts through open-enrollment. We must advocate for more intentional housing development in our city, and we have been working with the city do just that. We also must figure out how to make our schools more desirable for more balanced open enrollment counts. We must also take a hard look at how we spend our money and make sure that our expenditures align with our priorities.

What Are The Largest Environmental Concerns You Aim To Deal With In Office?

Making sure that as we address buildings and facility concerns, environmental impact is front and center in our decision-making process. In the next ten years our district will need to address aging buildings and changing needs in regards to educational space. It is also vital that we assure opportunities for our learners of all ages to learn about and actively engage in the creation of solutions for our environmental crisis.

How Will You Use Your Position To Create More Equitable Opportunities And Help Those Living In Poverty?

Our community has an affordable housing issue. It is vital that the Board of Education continue its partnerships with city government to address this issue. We also must make sure that our educational, extracurricular and sports opportunities are never "pay to play." We can do that by keeping fees low, embracing policies that promote equitable access, and partnering with

community organizations for funding to support indirect costs of participation for those living in poverty.

How Do We Address Racial Inequality?

We need to relentlessly work towards becoming anti-racist in our policies, practices, curriculum, and personnel. We need to build on the work already underway, and work to accelerate it. We need to diversify our workforce, but that is not the only answer. We should create pathways for our diverse students to return to teach and lead, and work to create a community that our diverse students want to come home to. We should prepare our school educators and leaders to facilitate challenging conversations in the classroom and across the school community. If we do not teach our students how to be in dialogue across differences we will not be adequately preparing them to address the challenges our communities face now, and will face throughout their lifetimes. We also need teams of powerful advocates – counselors, teachers, and mentors who not only enforce rules but also work to adapt them to fit the needs of our diverse community of learners.

How will you promote restorative justice and address abusive and racist practices by the police force?

Our district has cancelled its contract with the School Resource Officer (SRO). This decision was primarily driven by virtual learning, but the board has committed to not engaging in a new contract without re-imagining the position as a whole. It is my position that any SRO must be part of a well-established and supported restorative justice program and the SRO should only exist as a resource for that program and not to police our students.

Due to the ongoing economic impact of Coronavirus, many local governments are expecting unprecedented budget shortfalls. What would you prioritize in the budget? Where would you make cuts?

Achieving excellence grounded in equity should be our highest priority. Teacher support, educational programs, social services, and cultural climate initiatives must be protected. We should also continue to encourage innovation, and partner with community organizations and stakeholders to create unique opportunities for partnerships. The budget is complex and multifaceted. I don't feel like I have a solid enough grasp of the whole picture yet to propose areas where cuts should be made. As we move forward, de-mystifying the budget for citizens who want to engage in making our district better should be a priority of the board.

How have you elevated diverse voices in government and public discourse? How would you continue to do so if elected to this office?

I had not held elected office before my appointment to the Board of Education in November 2020. In my years as part of the leadership of our parent organization I have steadfastly worked to draw in more diverse voices. One of the things I have done was assure that our meeting location was one where adults were welcome to bring students along. I also insisted that every event we hosted had a no-cost option for participation, even the fundraisers.

If elected to the board I would like to establish an advisory council of diverse students and parents. We must be more proactive about seeking diverse voices and not wait for them to come to us. Outreach and accessibility are key, and I am very interested in establishing policies and practices that support both.

What Are The Largest Transportation Issues You Wish To Work On And How Will You Address Them?

Transportation for our district is a major expense. However, as a suburban district with a sizeable rural student population we must provide transportation for our students. I would like to see us look into improvements in efficiencies and the environmental impact of our transportation.

Any Other Issues/Topics You Wish To Discuss?