



2020 School Board Candidate Questionnaire

Please return written responses on or before **FRIDAY 9/25** via email to stcroixvalley@mcgt.net. If you choose to respond directly in email, please number your responses to correspond with each question. You also may type responses in this document and return it by email as an attachment. Where relevant, questions include live links to supporting information. St. Croix Valley Gifted will publish your responses in entirety with direct links to your campaign website and/or social media page on **Sunday, 9/27** at www.stcroixvalleygifted.net

Candidate Name – Katie Hockert

Please confirm, adjust, or provide link(s) to your candidate website and/or social media page -

- www.katiehockertfor834schools.com
- www.facebook.com/Katiefor834

1) *How has the presence or absence of good governance, illustrated by the MSBA leadership standards, had an effect on community impressions of the school board since the last board election? What approaches to governance do you believe the incoming school board should prioritize? Refer to www.mnmsba.org/Standards.*

To be perfectly honest, I am not a fan of the management model our school board is currently operating under. I see a school board as more of a facilitator between the community and district needs, not an agenda setter. The result of a management board has been division and loss of focus on what is most important, the education of all students in the district. Ultimately the board's only direct employee is the Superintendent. It is the board's role to ensure the vision for the district is being pursued effectively and to hold them accountable if it is not. If elected to the board, I understand it is important for us to figure out a clear vision for the district and then select the best candidate to pursue that vision as we hire a new Superintendent. We have a unique opportunity to align our goals and get our district moving in a new direction that is focused on giving all students a world class education and reaffirm our reputation as one of the best districts in Minnesota.

2) *Where do Educator, Student, Community, and Administration voices each fit into the decision-making that is core to serving on the school board? What should the new board stop, start, and continue doing in order to fully hear and consider each of these voices?*

All focus of board decision making should stem from the impact on students' education. We must listen to those tasked with implementing policy, curriculum, and environmental maintenance as part of an efficient chain of communication to review our decisions and make adjustments when necessary. The board must also serve as a conduit to the community, advocating for the district's needs while also listening to the community's desires. The board must take a broader stance in representing the whole district and stop allowing small special interests to dominate the agenda which has led to wasted tax dollars spent on litigation and buyouts. They must start seeking out underrepresented voices and meet them in their communities with translators and cultural

liaisons to find out how our district is addressing their needs. And finally the board must continue educating the community about the incredible value our tax dollars are providing to sustain and build on programming for our students.

3) The role of district ambassador is a key part of school board responsibilities. What should prospective families, local business leaders, and/or voting community members who don't have enrolled students know about Stillwater Area Public Schools? What should the community expect elected school board members to model through representation, action, and leadership?

The community should expect elected board members to represent the district with the utmost integrity and respect for the institution they represent. Our school board must demonstrate forward thinking and engage in insightful discussions around the services our district provides to the community while also being responsible fiscal stewards of the money invested by taxpayers. They must seek input and reflection from local business leaders regarding the desired skills and essential attributes graduates of our district must embody before their time in the district concludes. Most importantly, board members must remember that it is as much of an honor as it is a challenge to serve this district. Our community cares deeply about our schools and ultimately we are all on the same team. Public schools with a strong reputation for excellence benefit every member of our community. Our board must work to encourage our community to demonstrate their commitment to excellence while the board ensures careful management of public funds and wise investment. We all believe our district's financial stability is essential to providing high quality education for generations to come.

4) Where should district administrators – including a new superintendent once hired – and the school board focus local and legislative outreach? Why would you start there and what about your own insight, background, and skills can contribute to achieving those goals?

Our district administrators and school board members need to prioritize engaging and improving communications with BIPOC parents in the district. Outreach efforts should both solicit feedback and promote available programming, like the GATE program as well as AVID, that might address some immediate needs expressed. If there is not programming or support for issues raised, the board and administration must work together to fill the gap. This priority comes from talking to parents who are unaware of available resources and programs. It also reflects my commitment to make an effort in seeking feedback that reflects the diverse needs throughout our district. Recently our district has reached a threshold in BIPOC student population that grants us access funding for a district cultural liaison. The board must make an effort to understand all legislative opportunities like this to access funding for our schools and follow through as advocates of our district in accessing that aid. They must also be prudent in understanding the legal mandates tied to funding to ensure new revenue streams are maintained so that we can sustain programs for the long term.

5) With the understanding that other district priorities received focus in the recent four years, what role can the school board play to ensure students can equitably access GT services at elementary and secondary buildings; administrators and building principals can provide supports for classroom teachers and district-wide continuity of gifted services; and local families can apply clear guidance about district GT practices and supports when making decisions for their students? Please refer to context information provided below.

Like so much programming in public school districts, the community must choose to support and invest to maintain proper funding and access to opportunities like the GATE program since it is not state or federally mandated. The school board must be attuned to those desires when asking voters to approve a levy and in balancing the budget. Once sustainable funding is established, then administrators will have the resources to build out the program and promote it to families with certainty. Over my career, I taught either TAG (talented and gifted) or honors sections of all required high school history classes and have developed an appreciation for the challenges and needs of gifted students. I have also experienced the frustration of funding constraints and the changing opportunities that result. I would be open to exploring the strengths and challenges of our district's program so that we can continue to support every student identified as GT.

Thank you for still organizing this opportunity to highlight the school board candidates despite this crazy year.

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Context for Question 5

Using 2018-2019 enrollment and identification data, St. Croix Valley Gifted calculated [20 percent](#) (see slide 6 at [link](#)) of Stillwater Area Public Schools students in grades 4 – 12 qualify for some form of Gifted & Talented (GT) services, whether clustering in elementary classrooms, GATE, or other supports.

Giftedness *is not* a measure of who is more important or more valued, nor a predictor of future success. The term describes learners whose natural cognitive abilities and development, when measured using various methods, look notably different relative to what's considered typical for their age-based grade. Just as athletes have vastly different coaching needs, the same is true for gifted learners. Kids may exhibit giftedness **and** other learning differences, which can make it difficult to determine how best to meet their mix of needs. Giftedness from one student to the next sometimes shows in specific subject areas vs. across the board.

Giftedness exists in all socio-economic and diverse groups. English Language learners and students of color historically are underserved GT populations in Minnesota and across the United States. St. Croix Valley Gifted began in 2012 as a chapter affiliate of Minnesota Council for the Gifted and Talented (MCGT). Minnesota Department of Education ([MDE](#)), [MCGT](#) and the National Association for Gifted Children ([NAGC](#)) each recognize a critical need for stronger, more equitable access to gifted services among students of color.

Gifted programs in the U.S. public school system do not receive any federal funding; Minnesota categorical funding (\$13ppu) only stretches so far. Minnesota school districts must develop and include plans for this student population as part of [World's Best Workforce \(WBWF\)](#). Responsibility for district GT services changed hands several times over the past eight years; Spring 2013 budget cuts included a GT coordinator (.4 FTE).

St. Croix Valley Gifted's 2017-2018 Community Feedback Initiative gathered local input about access and availability of GT supports at area schools. Local thinking appears in this statement from the [resulting report](#):

Broadly speaking, local access to GT services in K-12 is unpredictable and inconsistent; identification offers no promise of supports, services, or programs.

Community concerns around local gifted services center on the following topics: student access to and continuity of GT services and supports (academic and socio-emotional learning) across K-12; whether promises about the type(s) of GT services to be delivered are kept or broken; and whether classroom instruction and

related decisions (procedures, personalized learning, acceleration, etc.) rely on evidence-based practices and reflect deep understanding of GT needs and attributes vs. being based in casual belief or stereotype.