

## USD 232 Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire: September 2023

Name: Ashley Spaulding

Position: 2

1. Please list any previous elected or appointed offices you have held.

USD 232 Board of Education President, July 2022 - present

USD 232 Board of Education Vice President, July 2021 - July 2022

USD 232 Board of Education, November 2019 - present

University of Kansas Medical Center Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Cabinet, July 2020 - July 2023

Kansas City Area Delta Gamma Alumnae Chapter Board of Directors, 2004 - 2006

2. What is your current occupation and where are you currently employed?

Executive Communications Manager, outreach division of The University of Kansas Cancer Center

3. Please list the school(s) where you completed your secondary and any post-secondary education.

I attended secondary school in Virginia. I attended the University of Virginia for part of my undergraduate studies and finished my undergraduate and graduate education at the University of Kansas.

4. What degree(s) do you hold?

I earned a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Communication Studies from the University of Kansas.

5. How long have you lived in the district? Do you have school-aged children living at home? If so, what school(s) do they attend?

My family and I have lived in the De Soto school district for 15 years. Our daughter, Chaley, is a senior at Mill Valley, and our son, Benton, is a freshman at Mill Valley.

6. Please describe your community involvement and activities.

I served on the USD 232 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Parent Advisory Committee and the USD 232 Real World Learning Committee. I am the Board of Education representative to the USD 232 Special Services Advisory Committee as well as to the USD 232 Education Foundation. I've volunteered for the USD 232 Education Foundation golf tournament the past two years and have been a perennial member of the USD 232 Education Foundation Community Giving Circle the past two years as well. I brought the 'Let Me Run' program to Riverview Elementary and enjoyed leading the program before it ended due to COVID. I was the communications chair for the Riverview PTA for two years. I served on Riverview's Site Council for three years and served on Mill Creek's Site Council for a little more than two years. I also served on the USD



232 district Site Council before becoming a School Board member. I was a summer camp unit leader for Girl Scouts of Northeast Kansas and Northwest Missouri for five years and a summer camp unit leader for Boy Scouts of America – Heart of America Council for two years. I am a volunteer photographer for the Make-a-Wish Foundation and for The Gold Hope Project, which gifts photo sessions to families of kids who have been diagnosed with cancer, an organization that's near and dear to my heart as a cancer survivor myself.

7. Why have you chosen to run for the USD 232 Board of Education?

I have loved and been an active part of USD 232 for the past 12 years. As much love as I had for the district before I was elected to my first term on the Board, I have even more appreciation for USD 232 after serving as a Board member the past three-plus years. I joined the Board in January 2020, right before what ended up becoming the most challenging time anyone had ever seen in education. As difficult as 2020, 2021 and parts of 2022 were, I was so proud of how our district navigated COVID and came through the challenges we faced. I learned so much during those years, and while I'm thankful for all the learning opportunities I've had as a Board member, I've enjoyed the "calmer" times we've seen since COVID. The Board is finally back to doing the kind of work that drew me to being a Board member in the first place, and I would truly love to have a term that's (knock on wood!) more "normal" than a large portion of my first term has been.

One of the highlights of my first term has been hiring our new superintendent. The Board put so much thought, energy, and time into hiring Dr. Gibson, and while his predecessor was amazing and highly valued in USD 232, I'm equally eager and excited to work with Dr. Gibson and to help him build on the excellence of our district. I appreciate and value the positive relationship between the Board and district staff, and I want to help ensure that that relationship is maintained and enhanced. I want USD 232 to maintain its fantastic reputation so that we continue to attract and employ phenomenal teachers and staff who truly care about the kids in our district – teachers and staff who genuinely want to help prepare our kids to succeed in the world they'll enter once they leave USD 232.

8. What will you do as a board member to ensure you have adequate knowledge and information on which to base your decisions?

I've had no trouble these past several years as a Board member asking district administrators for clarification or additional information when needed. I'm an engaged Board member during meetings, and I spend quite a bit of time communicating with our superintendent and administrators outside of Board meetings to make sure I'm always prepared to vote on action items, respond to patrons/staff/students, and ask thoughtful questions during discussion items. I've tried to get out to most of our school buildings during my first term as a Board member. While I know spending five minutes in a classroom doesn't give me an adequate picture of a day in the life of an educator, it has helped me have a better understanding of what's happening in our buildings and just how much goes into being in education right now. That kind of firsthand observation has helped inform a lot of my decisions these past several years.



9. How would you foster collaboration between the board, parents/guardians, school staff, and community members to ensure everyone's input is considered in decision-making processes? I try to make sure USD 232 patrons - parents, students, employees, and community members - know that I'm always happy to engage in conversation, in person or by phone. Over the past three-plus years, I've met with numerous patrons in person to hear their concerns. I've spent time in our buildings and at events, talking with and getting to know our staff. I know how essential it is to take the time to hear differing perspectives and to make people know their voices are heard. It's not possible to make 100 percent of our patrons 100 percent happy 100 percent of the time... but, as Board members, we can listen, learn and collaborate to find common ground, keeping our students front of mind in every conversation we have and in every decision we make.

10. When funding becomes critical, what do you see as priorities for our school district?

Staffing / Teacher and staff retention  
Safety of students and staff  
Resources essential to student learning

11. If funding becomes more abundant, what do you see as priorities for our school district?

Staff retention incentives  
Recruiting additional staff, particularly in areas of high need  
Resources for special education  
Enhanced arts programming (e.g., orchestra program)

12. What do you view as opportunities for improvement in USD 232?

As the city of De Soto and surrounding areas grow with the building of the Panasonic plant, USD 232 needs to continue to strategically plan for how that growth will impact our district. We particularly need to stay competitive in terms of classified positions once Panasonic opens.

With the open enrollment Kansas House Bill going into effect the 2024-2025 school year, USD 232 needs to make sure we're properly supporting all of our students, teachers, and staff. Given that open enrollment will be mandatory, we need to adequately prepare for the impact an amazing and desirable district like USD 232 could feel as a result of the policy.

Our students with special needs deserve the best education possible, and USD 232 is well-known for its high quality special education services. However, special education continues to be underfunded at the state level. Our district, along with other districts in Johnson County and



across the state, needs to seek out opportunities to advocate for increased funding for special education and continue to push the state to fully fund special education.

13. What do you view as USD 232's main areas of strength?

Staff: As a parent in the district for 12 years now, I have encountered the absolute best educators in USD 232. Hands down. Our staff is comprised of individuals who genuinely care about students and have a true passion and calling for education. They keep their "why" in mind all the time, which isn't always easy to do with the shifts in public education the past several years. I could not be more grateful that both my children will spend their entire K-12 years in USD 232.

Community: We have a community of families that steps up for anything and everything. We have great partnerships with local businesses, which has given our district such an advantage in terms of real world learning. Our district has such a great reputation throughout Johnson County, and the support that follows our reputation is felt throughout our community.

14. Is there anything else that you would like to share with our members?

I appreciate the opportunity to share information about myself. During my first term on the Board, I've been a vocal and consistent advocate in areas that help our students have the best possible learning experience and that help set our teachers and staff up for success. If I have the opportunity to serve a second term as a USD 232 Board of Education member, I will continue to be such an advocate. I'm excited about where our district is headed and grateful to play a small role in USD 232's continued excellence and advancement.