



Questionnaire Response 2021

Candidate: Desiree Thomas for Place 2

Q1. Have you ever worked in a school? If so, in what capacity and for how long?

Yes, 3 yrs as a substitute teacher in Elementary, Intermediate and Middle. Had to stop when elected to school board

Q2. Do you currently have children in school? Are they in public school or private school or charter school? For those with children who are no longer of school-age, which of the above did they attend?

Yes, Public school

Q3. What experience do you have that qualifies you to hold this position?

I have been volunteering and involved in the Mansfield ISD for 20yrs, served on countless committees, 14 years on Mansfield Council of PTAs, worked in Bond office, Payroll office, & Benefits office as well as a substitute in the district. Supervised and ran the Mansfield ISD Clothes Closet.

Q4. Incumbents: What are your individual accomplishments as a school board member?

Voted to place police officers at everone of our school campuses, voted to make sure funding and resources are available for programs like Social Emotional Learning, Restorative Practices and Help Squad. Voted to give the teachers a stipen this year along with a 1% raise,

Q5. Are you more likely to listen to the community, district leaders or campus staff, when it comes to what is best for students? (whether it's curriculum related, COVID related, etc.)

Campus Staff, building relationships with our staff is very important to me and I make a point to go and help at as many campuses as I can. I like to reach out and check in with staff when we have items on the agenda that will impact them as well as the students. I value the feed back our staff provides.

Q6. How do you think teachers should be evaluated?

Student growth, many times a teacher will have a student enroll in their classroom who is not on grade level. I feel if we look at growth and see where the student is at the beging of year and then see where they are at the end of the year and if there is growth that is success.

Q7. Health insurance was up 5.7% in 2018-2019 and another 3% in 2019-2020 but raises for teachers were 1% in 2018-2019 and 3% at the midpoint in 2019-2020 which caused many teachers to make less money than the previous year. MISD contributes \$250/month towards health insurance but this is #36 in school districts in North Texas out of 43. Would you support compensating teachers more in the coming years either through bigger raises and/or through increasing monthly contributions to healthcare costs?

Yes, I would support compensating the teachers more and we are currently looking into this to see what our District can do.

Q8. What are your thoughts and priorities in focusing on attracting new teachers and retaining experienced/master teachers?

Mansfield tries to stay very competitive in pay for our teachers, we have been in the top 5 but have dropped to 7 but still remain in the the top 10. We need to stay in the top, pay and teacher incentives are a great way to attract new teachers. We have a great retention rate, once our teachers get here they stay. I do feel with Covid we need to really take a hard look at these things because this year we have asked a lot of our teachers. I feel we also need to look at what else we can do to better support them.

Q9. Numerous Special Education teachers in the district have told us that they are short staffed.. When they ask about additional staff to help with case loads, they are always told there is no money. What would you do to help our Special Education students and teachers in regards to this pressing problem?

I would like to dig deeper into our Diversity, Inclusion, and equality audit to see exactly where and what the needs are. I would difently support additional resources and staff to help in this area. The audit pin-pointed several areas where the district needs to imporve, and this was one of those areas. I spent about 1/2 the time subbing in Special Education Classrooms and I truly believe the distrct could provide more support here.

Q10. Are you an advocate for fine arts for all students? If so, how are you/will be?

Yes, I am an advocate for all our students in the fine arts. I am excited with our current hire of the new Director and I am looking forward to seeing what he will bring to the district. I have advocated for the Summer Production, it brings all our High Schools together to preform in a musical. This production pulls from our band students, choir students, theater students from across the district and I want to see this continue. I am also on the board of the Mainstage Classic Theater here in Mansfield.

Q11. The state doesn't require technology as a requirement for high school graduation. Do you think that MISD should make technology a requirement for graduation?

I feel I need a little more explanation here but I will attempt to answer. I do not feel it should be a requirement for graduation, however I would like to see an introduction course offered in 7th grade for all our students. My vision of this course would be to show the students how to navigate google classroom and google docs and how to download and attach assignments and types of activites like this. We are so technology driven by they time our students are in high school it is just expected our students know how to do all of these types of things. I feel a class in Middle School would be helpful

Q12. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, “Optimal cognitive processing in a child necessitates a period of interruption after a period of concentrated instruction.” Additionally they find that elementary age students “develop intellectual constructs and cognitive understanding through interactive, manipulative experiences. This type of exploratory experience is a feature of play in an UNSTRUCTURED social environment.” For this reason many DFW schools have switched over to four 15-minute recesses per day at the elementary level. Teachers report better attentiveness, fewer behavior issues, and improved learning. Given this information, do you think P.E. twice a week sufficient for elementary students? Would you support more recess time for this age group?

Yes, I would support more PE type activities. Many of our elementary schools have combined P E type activities into their music programs.

Q13. What are your views on STAAR/EOC testing and other standardized testing?

I do not particularly care for them, I do understand why we need some type of testing to make sure School Districts are doing what they are charged to do and that is to educate students. In the next coming years we are really going to need to focus on the growth because the gaps are big.

Q14. How will you work to improve diversity and equity issues in MISD?

I will continue to support and make sure we have resources to continue programs like our Social Emotional Learning, Restorative Practices and our Diversity, Equality and Inclusion committee. I feel these programs are extremely important.

Q15. Why do you believe that, even before Covid-19, mental health has been declining rapidly in children and the broader U.S. population? What is the role of schools in responding to this?

We take the mental health and well being very seriously in MISD and have started several programs already and looking to expand on these to help our students.

Q16. With an increasing dependence on technology, how much should students use technology every day in the classroom from the elementary level through high school level? Does it concern you that students as young as Kindergarteners have been given iPads to use in the classroom and at home?

The time our students spend on their devices will vary from elementary to high school of course limited time in the lower grades and the upper levels should be able to handle more screen time especially high school. I do not believe it is healthy to have elementary aged students working on iPads for all their classes. However, with Covid and the choices we had to give our parents we did not have much control here. Going forward the screen time should be minimal at the elementary level.