



# Candidate Questionnaire 2024

## Side-by-Side Comparison, Place 1

*Posted in ballot order*

Michelle Newsom*	Matthew Herzberg
<b>1. Have you taught in a public school? If so, explain. If not, what experience qualifies you to hold this position?</b>	
<p>As President of Surepoint Emergency Centers, I bring a forward-thinking leadership style, honed from roles in healthcare management. This experience, combined with my active involvement as a PTA member and MISD volunteer, equips me with a deep understanding of complex operational challenges, including budget management. Mostly, my time serving on the board of trustees in MISD gives me true experience with the decisions and accountability needed for this position.</p>	<p>Yes, I was a band director from 2008-2012 at Lillard Intermediate in Mansfield ISD. After that, I was an assistant principal at T.A. Howard Middle School from 2012-2016, and a principal at Lillard Intermediate 2016-2021 and then was hired to open McKinzey Middle School. I was there from 2021-2022.</p>
<b>2. If you have children, where do/did they attend school in public school, private school, charter school, or homeschool?</b>	
<p>My daughters, Madison and Raegan, have attended MISD schools and graduated from Mansfield High School, reflecting my family's commitment to public education and the community. Their experiences in MISD schools have given me valuable insights into the district's strengths and areas needing improvement.</p>	<p>My kids are current MISD students, at Martinez Intermediate and Perry Elementary.</p>
<b>3. What is your vision for education in our district/community?</b>	
<p>My vision for MISD centers on academic excellence, safety, and fiscal responsibility. I aim to ensure our schools foster an environment where students are not only academically successful</p>	<p>My vision for education in the Mansfield ISD community is centered around a strong partnership between the school district, parents, and the community. When we are all working together toward a singular mission: educating our students to be productive citizens,</p>

<p>but also life-ready, equipping them with practical skills for their future careers.</p>	<p>our district thrives, and our community thrives. One of my favorite things about Mansfield ISD is how diverse our district is – not just by race, ethnicity, or socioeconomics, but in perspective as well. I believe it’s important to invite people with different points of view to the table so we can provide a solution that is a win for our students. I want our district to be a place where we seek to understand before seeking to be understood so that we can expand our paradigms and have civil discourse. I have done all of this at a campus level and would like to realize this vision for the district. I found that when I invited others to give feedback, we ended up with a better plan, and more investment from all stakeholders. I want our district to reflect the values that are written into Vision 2030 and to show intentional action behind each of them toward our teachers, students, parents, and community. When we all come together for the betterment of our district, our community will continue to be a place that attracts families looking for the best for their kids.</p>
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**4. Incumbents: What accomplishment(s) are you most proud of as a school board member?  
4. Challengers only (non-incumbents): What prompted you to run? What would you specifically like to achieve that would be in your capacity?**

<p>During my tenure there are many accomplishments to be proud of in our district. I believe the one that standouts is our designation as an “A rated district” as this shows all the hard work of our entire team across the entire district. I’m proud to share that MISD was one of the very first Texas schools to prioritize safety and place an officer on all campuses. Our fiscal responsibility is most noted with our decrease in the tax rate by \$.18 this past year.</p>	<p>As a current parent in MISD, I am troubled by the trend that I see of teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals leaving the district or leaving education altogether. I’ve spoken to many teachers who tell me Mansfield ISD doesn’t have the same supportive feeling that it did a few years ago and it’s contributing to their burnout and eventual resignation from the district. I want my kids to have the great teachers that I saw each and every day when I was in the district, and I want the veteran teachers of MISD to stay. I’m running because I see so many needs in the district and I’m seeing gaps between feeder patterns, socioeconomic status, and race. These gaps include achievement, mental health, food security, and opportunity to name a few. I believe the district can be more</p>
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	<p>transparent with the needs the students are facing so we can confidently say we're student's first.</p> <p>The board is limited in the things that it directly controls; however, I believe the board plays a large role in influencing the direction of the district. I would like to achieve a lower teacher and paraprofessional turnover rate, and this starts by deciding that it's a problem. There needs to be action coming out of the many morale committees and surveys and I would like to be accountable to staff to make this happen. I'm also unique in that I understand district governance at a deeper level than most because of my previous roles, so I can ask questions that will hopefully lead to greater transparency and a renewed effort to closing all of the gaps discussed earlier.</p>
<p><b>5. MISD contributes \$250/month towards health insurance. We rank #39 out of 45 school districts in our area. Would you support compensating teachers more in the coming years either through bigger raises and/or through increasing monthly contributions to healthcare costs?</b></p>	
<p>Recognizing the importance of attracting and retaining quality educators, I advocate for competitive teacher compensation. This involves exploring ways to increase salaries and benefits, thereby ensuring that MISD remains a desirable destination for top teaching talent.</p>	<p>I can speak from experience that \$250/month doesn't put a big enough dent in healthcare costs. As soon as you add supplemental insurances, it becomes a large part of your paycheck. I do support increasing the district contribution toward health insurance and support an overhaul of the overall teacher compensation package. MISD used to be in the top 5 in every category of the UEA area compensation comparisons. Now there are several areas where the district is much lower in the rankings, averaging 11th place. We need to go back to top 5 in each category. Achieving this is hard without the state providing additional funding. The first way to combat this is to look hard at any new positions and make sure they directly impact kids. Another way to combat this is advocacy to the state. My doctorate is in educational leadership and policy studies, so I understand how legislation at the state level affects our district. I am an educator educating about education. I can help the entire community understand how to advocate so we are all activists for</p>

public education.

**6. What are your initiatives to combat teacher burnout & to increase teacher retention? In the 2022-2023 school year, MISD’s turnover rate was at 17.80%, which was a 3.8% increase from the prior year.**

To combat teacher burnout, I propose implementing mentorship programs, offering professional development focused on innovative teaching methods, and ensuring a supportive work environment. Additionally, recognizing and rewarding teacher excellence, providing classroom support personnel, and ensuring substitute coverage for teachers can all significantly enhance retention.

I am proud to say that while I was a principal, teacher satisfaction surveys at my schools were well above average, and the turnover rate was between 1-5%. I had no control over how much staff got paid, so I had to find other ways to make teachers want to stay. Some of the specific things my leadership team did were:

- Support staff by building trust, being transparent, having integrity, and listening. These qualities go a long way, but they have to be genuine. I would listen to teacher and staff concerns. I would help find solutions. I would commit resources to the solution so the staff could focus on their job with their kids. To do this on a district level, all leaders must commit to genuinely acting with these values in mind.
- If something has to get added to a teacher’s or paraprofessional’s plate, take something off their plate. I was very cautious what I would add to staff. For example, we started doing PLC’s (before it was districtwide) and to help leadership pulled all of the data that would be used for PLCs. We would run copies of formative assessment, so teachers didn’t have to. These small things help staff feel like leadership is part of the team and we all have the same purpose of teaching kids.

**7. How will you support more hiring for the campus level (e.g., teachers, administration, cafeteria personnel, custodial crew, and mental health professionals)?**

I support empowering campus-level leaders to make hiring decisions that best fit their specific needs. This involves providing them with adequate resources and flexibility, and ensuring they have access to a diverse pool of highly qualified candidates. MISD supports

The first step to supporting more hiring for the campus level is to make sure that new positions that the district adds will directly impact students. Most of the time positions that directly impact students are campus-based positions. I would want to have a

<p>bringing these candidates to our district with relationships with universities as well as promoting our district to past graduates. Maintaining the high standards and a strong reputation for a desirable workplace will work toward recruiting great candidates.</p>	<p>thorough understanding of what any new non-campus based position is for before supporting that position. I would also like to work with other board members to take a look at the basic staffing allocations to see where adjustments to number of staff or staff to student ratios can be made to provide more positions that directly impact students.</p>
<p><b>8. We have lost a lot of paraprofessionals, specifically in the Special Education Department. Many paraprofessionals have left the district for higher paying jobs outside of our District, if not education altogether. What would you do to support our students and staff in the Special Education Department?</b></p>	
<p>The Special Education Department is crucial for addressing diverse student needs. I advocate for increasing resources, providing specialized training for staff, and ensuring that these students receive the tailored support they need for a successful educational experience. I feel this is one of the most important places for improvement currently in our district.</p>	<p>Paraprofessionals really prop up the work that teachers and administrators do in the district. Paras are the people that set the tone when you enter a campus. They work with our most vulnerable students. They give 1:1 academic support. They make sure our district gets funded. Paraprofessionals should feel just as valued and supported as any other position in the district. I have the unique perspective of hiring and working with paras at the campus level, and can help the entire board understand how instrumental they are to our district. To support our paraprofessionals in special education I would work with board members and other district officials to support practices that will help recruit and retain them. I can speak from experience that the ratios of students to paraprofessionals in the highest need classrooms is often too high. A FALS classroom, for example, is staffed with a teacher and 2 paraprofessionals. This is adequate when a classroom has no more than 10 students; however, FALS classes have ballooned to 14-15 in many cases, overloading the teacher and paras. Changing the ratio to a manageable number will help attract paras to MISD. Second, as a board and district we will need to look at which pay grade special education paras are assigned. Pay Grade 1 doesn't communicate to special education paras that they are valued for the tough work they do.</p>

**9. Do you think P.E. classes held twice per week is sufficient for elementary students? Would you support more recess time for this age group?**

I support enhancing physical education and increasing recess time in elementary schools. Research shows physical activity is essential for student health and well-being and contributes to their overall academic and social development. I support more recess time.

I do support more structured (PE) and unstructured (Recess) physical activity for elementary students. An incredible amount of learning takes place during recess and other unstructured play activities. Social skills, handling difficult situations, and learning about their environment are all things that will help students have these skills later in life. PE could be increased to 3 days per week while maintaining the 135 minute weekly requirement and still having enough time for the enrichment that the other specials teachers provide such as art, music, and technology. I would also support two recess blocks per day for unstructured play, resulting in the development of the skills previously discussed.

**10. How will you ensure all student populations feel a sense of belonging regardless of a student's economic status, race, color, religion, sexual orientation, & gender identity?**

Creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students is paramount. This includes implementing programs that celebrate diversity, provide equal opportunities, and ensure every student feels valued and supported in their educational journey. This starts with ensuring that teachers and staff value every student and supports them through their challenges and differences.

To help all students feel a sense of belonging, I would examine any new or updated policies that come before the board to ensure that there isn't any explicit or implicit language that would marginalize any groups of people, including race, color, religion, sexual orientation & gender identity. Even policies that may seem harmless to diverse groups could have unintended consequences and those must be removed from any local policy as it violates federal law. As a board we also need to look at all corners of the district to make sure that we as a board and district leadership are showing up and providing needed resources. When I was a principal we had success with Capturing Kids' Hearts, which is at its heart a system for classrooms to become places where kindness, respect, and collaboration thrive through a social contract. The center for helping students feel a sense of belonging is in our classrooms with teachers who make students feel loved and valued as individual humans. As an educator I have always been one that knows I can only see things

	<p>through the paradigm or perspective that I have. I believe the best way to expand my perspectives and to truly have empathy is to listen to stories of people from marginalized or minority groups and believe their experiences. As a principal I would seek out the perspectives of others and have them challenge my thinking and assumptions so that I could learn and expand my paradigm. I may not have experienced the same thing, but hearing the story helps me understand the struggles and this will help me make sure we, as a district, are hearing those stories and putting policy and practices in place that help support these individuals.</p>
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**11. Poor mental health has become a nationwide problem among young people. However, each campus only has one designated student support counselor, who is assigned to service multiple campuses. How can we provide more (or improve) mental health services? What is the role of schools in providing support for students who are struggling with mental health?**

I prioritize improving mental health services in our schools. This includes increasing the number of counselors, providing more comprehensive mental health training for staff, and creating initiatives that support students' emotional and psychological well-being. I support creative measures that could allow additional staff on campus' such as supporting internships for graduate programs as this has been proven effective in other districts. The schools are where we have the most opportunity to catch early signs of mental health struggles to be able to intervene. It is also the ideal place to help students get access to alternative resource options such as telehealth.

I applaud the district for the strides made in the past few years on having a deeper reserve of resources families can draw from. This includes Care Solace, a concierge service to help families get connected with outside counseling based on their insurance; Hope Squad; and other partnerships with outside entities to provide counseling. The district is improving in this area; however, we need to continue to improve. Having student support counselors is important as they can go beyond the role of a school counselor and can provide brief therapy (with parent consent) to students who need it. Our school counselors are an important resource in helping improve mental health. Even though they can't provide ongoing therapy, they are trained in crisis management and can provide a listening ear and resources for students and parents. We need to look at the counselor to student ratios to make sure that we are equitable among schools and striving toward the recommended ratio according to The American School Counselor Association. Our district also has a great need for social workers. A lot of the mental health issues that are surfacing are due to things such as tough family situations, divorce, challenges with peers, food and housing

	<p>insecurity, and not knowing where to turn for answers. Social workers are an important resource as they are specially trained to help students cope with things of everyday life, thus reducing some of the mental health struggles that come with not being able to cope. Schools can be a starting point for addressing mental health, but medical health professionals outside of the schools are really a partner that's needed.</p>
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**12. The 88th Texas Legislature met in regular session in 2023, followed by four special sessions. Given the continued call for parent choice & vouchers for private schools, what are your thoughts on how this would affect Mansfield ISD? What new innovations & initiatives should MISD implement?**

While recognizing the importance of parent choice, my focus is on strengthening MISD's public schools. I support innovative programs that enhance our educational offerings, ensuring that MISD remains a top choice for families. Vouchers would negatively impact MISD and this change on the state level would take funding from our students on every campus. While I support a parents choice, I also support equal standards and financial transparency across public and private schools.

I want to be clear that there is already parent choice when it comes to where a child goes to school. Vouchers are an attempt by some very wealthy individuals to try to profit off of tax dollars with very little oversight. Other states that have put similar voucher laws in place are seeing detrimental effects to the public schools and are seeing huge amounts of fraud (sources below). Mansfield ISD would likely lose some students to private school, but the bigger concern down the road is what will happen when there isn't a state budget surplus and how will they continue to fund the vouchers. This is when large impacts will be seen on MISD's funding. We have to become a community of activists that fights the state and shows through the voting booth that we won't support candidates that don't support our kids in public schools.

Sources:  
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<https://www.epi.org/blog/state-and-local-experience-proves-school-vouchers-are-a-failed-policy-that-must-be-opposed-as-voucher-expansion-bills-gain-momentum-look-to-public-school-advocates-for-guidance/>  
[https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/no-accountability-vouchers-wreak-havoc-states?utm\\_medium=paid-search&utm\\_source=g](https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/no-accountability-vouchers-wreak-havoc-states?utm_medium=paid-search&utm_source=g)



	<a href="https://www.google.com/search?q=arizona+school+vouchers&amp;utm_campaign=Arizona-school-vouchers&amp;utm_content=&amp;ms=ads-arizona-school-vouchers-se&amp;gad_source=1&amp;gclid=CjoKCOjw-mvBhDwARIsAA-QoQ47IoTvS3oEjMU6k1KIhTVcMPdpBfigVs866UDI739db--NtT-NEIwaAiuoEALw_wcB&amp;gclsrc=aw.ds">oogle&amp;utm_campaign=Arizona-school-vouchers&amp;utm_content=&amp;ms=ads-arizona-school-vouchers-se&amp;gad_source=1&amp;gclid=CjoKCOjw-mvBhDwARIsAA-QoQ47IoTvS3oEjMU6k1KIhTVcMPdpBfigVs866UDI739db--NtT-NEIwaAiuoEALw_wcB&amp;gclsrc=aw.ds</a>
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**13. With the \$777 million school bond election, also occurring in May, what are your thoughts on the projects included in the five propositions versus projects that were not included.**

<p>Regarding the \$777 million bond, I advocate for responsible financial management, ensuring that every dollar is spent effectively to improve and support our schools. This bond will focus on critical infrastructure needs and resources that directly enhance student learning. When over 90 community members, staff, parents, and administrators come together and spend countless hours reviewing every project presented I find great comfort in the decisions made regarding the projects to be included in the bond. I believe the best decisions were made with the resources available. These propositions will touch every student in MISD today and for years to come.</p>	<p>I attended the board meeting where this was discussed and have looked into it in some detail by attending other events where the bond was discussed. MISD has done a good job of refinancing their debt when interest rates were low so that there would be huge savings on interest. That is what is allowing this bond to be called without increasing tax rates on all of us. I believe that to keep our buildings maintained and well-functioning we must invest in the maintenance and update items that are on the bond. We need safe campuses, safe buses, and the infrastructure to support a district of our size. Many of these things have been needed for years but overcrowding of our schools necessitated new schools. It is ultimately the failure of the state to equitably fund MISD that is causing taxpayers to have to fund a lot of the facility maintenance items that should be able to be funded by regular budget. I applaud that the bond is split into five separate propositions so voters can vote for some, but not all of the items if voters choose. It aids transparency and helps voters understand each item.</p>
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<p><i>* Mrs. Newsom’s response was received on the evening of April 2, 2024, after two candidate responses had already been published to the MOVE Facebook page and website. Though her questionnaire was scheduled to be posted first, per ballot order, her responses were posted last in the series of candidate responses.</i></p>	
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<i>For the 2021 School Board Elections, Michelle Newsom did not respond to the questionnaire nor make an appearance at the in-person Meet &amp; Greet Forum.</i>	
<b>Campaign contacts</b>	
website: <a href="http://www.newsom4misd.net">www.newsom4misd.net</a> fb: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/Newsom4SchoolBoard">@Newsom4SchoolBoard</a> Michelle Newsom for MISD School Board Trustee	website: <a href="http://www.mattformisd.com">www.mattformisd.com</a> fb: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/MattforMISD">@MattforMISD</a> insta: <a href="https://www.instagram.com/matt_for_misd">@matt_for_misd</a>

School Board Elections  
 Early Voting: April 22-30  
 Election Day: May 4, 2024



email: [VotingEducators@gmail.com](mailto:VotingEducators@gmail.com)  
 website: <https://VotingEducators.weebly.com/>  
 facebook: [@MansfieldOrganizationOfVotingEducators](https://www.facebook.com/MansfieldOrganizationOfVotingEducators)