



Board of Education Candidate Survey 2021 Birmingham Municipal Election

Greater Birmingham Ministries invites you to complete this candidate survey. Your responses will inform our non-partisan 2021 Birmingham Municipal Election Guide, which will reach over 20,000 Birmingham residents. Please return your completed candidate survey to electionguide@gbm.org by July 2.

Name: Susan Diane Mitchell

District: 9

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1. Please provide a 2-3 sentence biography.

Susan Diane Mitchell is a candidate for Birmingham City Schools Board Of Education for District 9. A community focused educator for over 40 years holding an MA in English and American Literature from UAB, and mother of nine children, Susan offers new energy, transformative ideas, and a deep commitment to community service

2. Please name any endorsements you have received. N/A

3. What do you see as the board's roles and responsibilities? The Board of Education has as part of its work approving the operational budget. Board members have to see to the implementation of the programming and policies of

the school system, support the strategic plan of the Superintendent, oversee accountability, and advocate for students. I believe we must also introduce ideas that will assist in improving student performance and success.

4. What are the biggest issues for students and families in your district and how would you address those issues in your role as a Board Member?

The key issues for students and families include the poverty levels many families face. The schools are a second home to the students, and many support services help the whole family. Moreover, poverty leads to inadequate food and nutrition. As school nutrition programs provide the bulk of the nutrition many low income students receive, as a Board Member I want to develop a land based experiential curriculum which improves school nutrition and a deep cultivation of critical thinking skills for BCS students.

5. What role, if any, does the Birmingham Board of Education and Birmingham City Schools play in community and public safety? The safety of our children is tied to their well being, the Board of Education and Birmingham City Schools.

As many children ride school buses to and back from school, the greatest safety, care and certification of drivers must continue to be a priority, as well as investment in the state of the art buses. BOE can use their position to advocate for greater safety in transportation, and greater awareness of school bus safety for working in conjunction with peer support services drivers in the general public.

Additionally, restorative justice policies and practices can deeply transform conflict resolution and maladaptive behavior, and reduce student dropout rates, improve graduation rates. Gaining emotional intelligence and peer support counseling techniques can improve interpersonal skills, and prepare students to better handle an adult world.

6. As a Board Member, will you advocate for policies that protect queer and transgender youth? If so, how?

Yes, as a BOE member I will advocate for policies that advocate for LGBTQ students by providing quality peer support counseling training and workshops for any students in need. These peer support group sessions can be valuable safe places for expression and greater feelings of acceptance.

7. What is your position on charter schools?

I am theoretically not in favor of charter schools because they can disrupt the flow of tax revenue funding to public schools and create bubble-like privatized institutions for special interest groups, even going as far as resegregating schools based on race and/or class.

8. There is a national conversation on teaching Critical Race Theory in public schools to make public education more equitable. Do you believe the BCS curriculum should be changed to be more equitable? If so, how?

I believe the BCS curriculum has made great inroads in the last 20 years to become more inclusive and representative of the many peoples that have made up this land. In terms of CRT, this is a timely debate, as the theory itself must transform so that those trained do not become calcified in their thinking. What remains important to consider is how race impacts equity in education, and that would include a critical examination of the curriculum. Critical race theory discussions call for close study of curriculum for equity, and this is beneficial for transformation from a past of inequity to one of justice and liberation for everyone.