



## Springfield School Board Candidate Survey

Kyler J. Sherman-Wilkins, PhD (he/him)

### **Public funds should be reserved for schools that are governed by a publicly accountable and elected board - How much do you agree with this statement?**

Public dollars belong in public schools. Moreover, I believe that we must increase funding for public schools so that they are better equipped to prepare students for lifelong success. Funneling public dollars into charter or private schools (through voucher programs), diverts finite resources from public schools, thus threatening their positioning as a bedrock institution of our society. As a board member, I will reject any and all attempts to undermine our public schools, including allowing public funds to be used for charter and/or private schools.

### **Every school should be equipped with the resources to deliver quality education that prepares every child for the future, no matter their color, their background, or their zip code. - How much do you agree with this statement?**

I agree wholeheartedly with this sentiment. Public education has the awesome power to transform lives, and no one should be denied access to a robust, holistic, and quality education because of their background. When asked to make a decision on any policy, I will assess whether said policy will make a quality education more accessible for EVERY child. If the answer is 'no,' than I will reject that policy.

### **School district employees and students should be safe, respected, appreciated, heard, and have the resources they need to succeed. - How much do you agree with this statement?**

Respect, appreciation, sense of safety, and a belief that one is heard are required for any individual to thrive. With regards to employees, ensuring these conditions allows the district to recruit and retain the best and brightest, while for students, these conditions provide the foundation on which academic success can be built upon. Moreover, we must prioritize providing adequate resources to employees (through higher wages/salaries, benefits, educational opportunities, and funding for professional development) and students (through up-to-date technology, books, equipment, etc.). As a board member, I will work diligently with my fellow board members, the superintendent, teachers, parents, students, and other community stakeholders to foster and maintain a culture where all feel seen, heard, and valued.

### **The right of workers to join unions to negotiate fair wages, benefits, and working conditions without employer interference should be protected. - How much do you agree with this statement?**

100%. I believe in strong, healthy unions, and will oppose any efforts to weaken their ability to bargain collectively. As a proud union organizer during my graduate school days, I am fully aware of how employers abuse their power and attempt to interfere with their workers' ability to organize and advocate for themselves. That behavior is inexcusable. I stand squarely with the worker, and my policy positions and votes will reflect that stance.

### **All workers should earn a living wage of at least \$15 per hour. - How much do you agree with this statement**

I strongly believe in providing a living wage of at least \$15 per hour to all workers. Going further, I believe that future minimum wage increases should be tied to inflation to ensure consistency in one's buying power over the course of time and to prevent stagnant wages as a result of political non-action.

**Workers should have access to earned sick time and family leave to care for themselves and loved ones in times of crisis. - How much do you agree with this statement?**

Fully agree. PAID sick time and family leave not only help to retain employees, but it is also the right thing to do. Folks' entire livelihood should not be in jeopardy due to an unplanned illness or crisis.

**Every Springfield resident should have a safe, accessible, and truly affordable place to call home. - How much do you agree with this statement?**

I agree. The existence of homelessness in our society is a choice. Not a choice by homeless individuals, mind you, but rather a choice by a power elite that has deemed it necessary to treat basic human needs like food, shelter, healthcare, and water as a commodity.

**Springfield Public Schools should prioritize contracts with businesses who pay at or above prevailing wage rates and have a proven track record of respecting and protecting workers on the job. The district should prioritize contracts with businesses that employ local workers who have access to apprenticeship training. - How much do you agree with this statement?**

SPS has a responsibility to invest in and help to grow our local economy by ensuring that local dollars stay local. One way to ensure that is by prioritizing contracts with businesses that employ local workers. I also agree we should prioritize supporting businesses that have apprenticeship training opportunities and those that treat workers well (in terms of pay and other support). As a board member, I would support efforts to ensure that local labor leaders have a seat at the table when bond and facility maintenance issues are being discussed, and that their voices are heard throughout the decision making process.

**School district leaders should champion policies that eliminate racial disparities/injustices in hiring and employment practices, educational opportunities, curriculum, and discipline, as well as in income, public health and safety. - How much do you agree with this statement?**

I have dedicated my life to dismantling systems of oppression and will carry this mission with me if I am so fortunate to serve on the board of education. My work with organizations such as NAACP, GLO, PROMO, Missouri Foundation for Health, and Missouri Council on Aging serves as a testament to my passion and my track record of service through an equity lens. I will advocate for and support district efforts to identify and eliminate disparities across social groups.

**Is there anything else you would like for us to know?**

Thanks for this opportunity to share my perspectives. I believe in the mission of Missouri Jobs with Justice and stand in solidarity with you and your efforts.