Langston Verdin

Candidate for Citywide (at-large) MPS School Board of Directors

WHY AM I RUNNING?

I'm running because I truly love this city and the people who call it home. I was raised believing that loving your community means showing up for it, especially when people need someone in their corner.

I come from a family of power-to-the-people fighters, generations of union-strong Milwaukeeans who put in the work to fight for bargaining rights, civil rights, voter rights, farmworker and immigrant rights, and an end to apartheid. My parents knew that making sure everyone has equal rights and resources isn't just common sense; it's common decency. We made sure our neighbors had food, clothes and, if needed, a place to sleep, even if we couldn't always afford to keep the lights on ourselves.

I learned early on that equal access to high-quality education is essential for individuals and communities to thrive. My grandma was an MPS secretary for more than 30 years, and my dad taught in the district for almost as long. My mom was a Milwaukee public defender and my very first protest (while still in the womb) was to fight de facto segregation at North Division High School.

I grew up in Harambee, went to my neighborhood school, O.W. Holmes Elementary, and I'm a proud Riverside Tiger. I was captain of our 0–9 football team, so you can imagine that my best high school memory had nothing to do with sports. Instead, it was leading more than 300 fellow MPS high schoolers on a March on Madison to fight back against then-Governor Tommy Thompson's war on public schools. After graduating from Riverside, I earned a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in public health from UW-Milwaukee, and I've been working for our community ever since.



Langston (back row under statue) and fellow Riverside Student Council members after our meeting with Gov. Thompson. Sadly, he did not sign our pledge to support public schools. (March 20, 1998)

For 17 years I worked at Children's Wisconsin, pushing our health care and child welfare systems to think about how to prioritize preventative care over crisis care for kids and their families. During the pandemic, I worked with fellow public servants at the City of Milwaukee Health Department to accomplish incredible things. And I also saw first hand how hard it can be to move quickly in a system that isn't built for modern challenges.

In 2019, I founded MKE FreshAir Collective, an organization that monitors air quality in nearly every Milwaukee neighborhood. Not only does our network keep kids and adults with asthma, COPD, and other respiratory issues safe during pollution dangers like wildfire smoke, it also helps groups advocate for policies to improve air quality in black and brown communities that are most negatively impacted by air pollution.

Over the last four years, I've worked at the Greater Milwaukee Committee, where I lead people from across sectors to tackle some of Milwaukee's biggest challenges, like housing, taxes, public safety, and education. I know how to bring people together around tough issues, and I'll use that experience to bring city leaders, health care providers, and neighborhood organizations to the table with MPS. I'll fight to ensure the district does its part, starting with fairly funding our teachers and properly resourcing our schools to serve every kid who walks through our doors.

And let's be real, generations of policy choices have hamstrung our city's ability to create the world-class education system our kids deserve. For years, MPS has had to put Band-Aids on bad policies. It's time for our kids to stop taking the hits for those choices. Our kids deserve a fighter in their corner, and I'm ready to be that fighter.

I understand the many challenges MPS faces. I know how those challenges impact our kids and I'll bring a lifetime of experience to every school board vote to help our kids and schools thrive. We need a school board that puts kids first. Always. That means supporting their teachers and school staff, investing in community schools, and fighting for the funding our public schools are owed. It also means making sure you can see how MPS spends your tax dollars and holding district leadership accountable for those choices.

I understand the challenge in front of us and I'm ready to show up for our kids. I hope you'll show up and vote for me in the primary on February 16 and general election April 6, 2027.

Donate to support our people-powered campaign.

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PLATFORM PRIORITIES

Put Kids First. Always.

Every kid deserves a world-class education. That's my north star. Putting kids first means looking at every budget, policy, and decision through the eyes of the students it will affect. I'll prioritize strong literacy instruction, address barriers to attendance, and support opportunities that help kids discover their strengths. Our responsibility is to give every student the support they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

Invest in Community Schools

Strong schools and strong communities go together. I support community schools that bring families, educators, health care providers, and neighborhood organizations together to support students inside and outside the classroom. That means connecting families with resources, expanding learning and enrichment opportunities, and giving the school community a meaningful voice in decisions. I'll bring my experience building partnerships to this work while making sure MPS meets its own responsibilities to students.

Transparency and Accountability

You deserve to see how MPS spends your tax dollars and what those investments accomplish. I'll push for clear, accessible budgets, understandable explanations of major decisions, and public follow-through on audit findings. District leadership must be held accountable for its choices, and the school board must be accountable to the community. That means asking hard questions, listening to concerns, and reporting back on what's being done.

Fully Fund Our Public Schools

Our kids deserve schools with the resources to meet their needs. I'll fight for the funding our public schools are owed and advocate for a fairer state funding system that recognizes the real costs of educating every child. Public education dollars should strengthen publicly accountable schools that serve every kid. Those investments should support qualified staff, manageable class sizes, and access to libraries, arts, music, and other opportunities that make an education complete.

Stand With Teachers and School Staff

Putting kids first means supporting the people who show up for them every day. Teachers and school staff deserve fair pay, respect, and the resources to do their jobs well. I'll stand up for workers' rights and collective bargaining, support efforts to recruit and retain experienced educators, and push for staffing and workloads that allow adults to give students the attention they need. Educators' experience should help shape district decisions.

Healthy Schools, Healthy Kids

As a public health professional, I know health and learning are connected. Kids should be able to learn in buildings with clean air, safe drinking water, and protection from lead and other hazards. I'll push for preventive maintenance, prompt action when risks are identified, and clear communication with families and staff. Access to nurses, mental health services, and other student supports should be part of how we plan and resource our schools.

Support Every Learner

Every student deserves an education that recognizes their strengths and meets their needs. I'll push for the staffing, services, and follow-through needed to support students with disabilities and make sure the services outlined in their education plans are actually delivered. Families deserve clear communication and timely answers. Supporting every learner also means respecting students' languages, cultures, and identities and making sure every child feels welcome in our schools.

Police Out of Milwaukee Public Schools

I support removing police from Milwaukee Public Schools and investing in counselors, social workers, restorative practices, and trained school staff who can prevent and de-escalate conflict. Kids need adults who know them and have the time and resources to support them.

State law currently requires school resource officers in MPS. I'll advocate for repeal of that mandate while pushing for clear limits on officers' roles, protection of students' rights, and routine school discipline handled by staff.