

JOHN MARK FEILMEYER

Des Moines IA, 50321 | jmfeilmeyer@gmail.com

Board of Directors
Des Moines Independent School District
2100 Fleur Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50321

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

March 24, 2024

Dear Directors:

My name is John Mark Feilmeyer, and I live in District 4. I would like to request your consideration for the seat vacated by Teree Caldwell Johnson.

I am a single, gay father living on the south side of Des Moines with two children who have special needs - William and Kate. My ex-husband and I adopted them from foster care, and I have made it my mission to advocate for them as they begin their academic adventure at Jefferson Elementary School. I have seen my advocacy bear fruit, and I believe that every time I speak up for my kids, I speak up for all the kids in the district.

Though Mrs. Caldwell Johnson leaves impossible shoes to fill, my strategic skill sets and my background as a Peace Corps Volunteer, a non-profit founder, and a human-centered strategist set me uniquely apart for this role. Here's a quick glimpse of my career:

- 2008 - After completing my M.A. degree, I joined the Peace Corps. I was sent to a small town in Benin, West Africa. I taught classes of 50+ English students, created clubs for English learners, and created camps for girls' development. I learned how to do a lot with a little and helped my students to excel.
- 2010 - I was tasked with starting a Center for Art and Music in Ouidah, Benin. I worked with education professionals to integrate traditional art and music into the elementary school curriculum.
- 2013 - I returned to my home state of Iowa to serve as the founder and first executive director of ArtForcelowa in Des Moines. With a small, two-year grant, we kicked off activities, and by the time I left in 2016, we had completed every strategic goal we had set to achieve and had a diverse revenue stream of grants and program income.
- 2017 - I spent the year in Bamako, Mali, leading a team of 100+ individuals to deliver seed and fertilizer to 20,000 small-holder farmers. These hard-to-access products increased incomes and climate resilience.
- 2018 - I began a career in human-centered design at Principal. Through my work at Principal, the Principal Foundation, Root Insurance, and now J.P. Morgan Chase, I have become a research leader and corporate strategist. My job is to execute generative research that produces business strategies that help everyday consumers manage, protect, and improve their finances.

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committed to the 4th district - the teachers and administration serving our children and the families I would represent as a Board Member. The schools' progress on goals is concerning. Our schools are underperforming. I want to help. With required budget cuts and shifting demographics, the schools must figure out how to accomplish the significant milestones listed below with fewer resources. As a strategist, non-profit founder, and human-centered researcher, I have made a career of doing more with less. I can bring my listening and collaboration to DMPS to lift the voices of diverse students, parents, and teachers in District 4 to create a once-in-a-generation pivot in school success at DMPS. As I follow my children through the next 12 years of education, I look forward to seeing the school grow with them.

Goal 1 – Literacy: The percent of 4th grade students scoring proficient or advanced on the ISASP ELA assessment will increase from X% in June 2023 to Y%* in June of 2027.

Over the past two years, I have witnessed the miracle of my kids learning how to read, and it reminds me of how precious literacy education is for our society. I've also taught in countries with low literacy rates and have seen how detrimental that could be for my students who seek to advance in life. I empathize with my fellow parents' long and sometimes back-breaking workdays, and I understand how challenging it is to support our children's growth while putting food on the table. Many parents, just like my co-parent, are learning English themselves, making supporting kids' literacy even more difficult. Beyond learning English, many of these parents are also learning how Des Moines educates its children.

To advance this goal, I advocate for more precise strategic planning. The Board should understand ISASP performance more by demographic, socioeconomic status, and school-level data. This shouldn't be just one metric but a scorecard of research-based key results leading to the success of that overarching goal. After watching the previous board meeting and studying the associated materials, it is apparent that there needs to be a clear throughline to success for existing goals.

In talking to teachers, I have learned that the language arts curriculum is overcomplicated and difficult for teachers to consume. They need more time to prepare and understand the dense and arduous documentation and more support to be responsive to behavior in the classroom. This feedback should inform strategies and the supporting metrics we track as a community, like attendance, behavior referrals, and preparation time. If our board is tracking the correct data, we should be able to improve the school holistically while focusing on solutions for the hot spots where students are struggling the most.

Goal 2 – Career and College Ready: The percent of DMPS Seniors by the end of their fourth year of high school who have achieved four or more of the DMPS Future Ready indicators as measured by the DMPS framework of Enroll/Employ/Enlist will increase from X% in June 2024 to Y% in June of 2027.

I took a path typical for my generation - a college education was an obligation, not an option for me. Though college is still valuable and highly relevant, there are many other ways to obtain that grit and

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resilience needed for success. As someone who has fallen into a tech career, I see now that today's world is radically different. A computer coding boot camp or technical training in welding might yield a better-paying career than a \$100,000 college degree. My hope is for my kids to find a career path that is personally fulfilling and that provides for their independence. This requires much more than a high school degree!

With over 70% of students in the 4th district receiving free and reduced lunch, we know there is an urgent need for effective programs to break our students' poverty cycle. I will support Dr. Roberts and his team as they continue to investigate the adoption of additional future-ready indicators, assuring that we continue to expand opportunities for our youth. I will also advocate for additional post-secondary follow-up and research so that we can gauge and understand our long-term impact on students' success.

Guardrail 1 – Equity: The Superintendent shall not allow inequitable treatment or reduced access to educational opportunities of students, or the continuation of systems that allow for it.

I began my youth afraid to be myself. Even though closeted, I was marginalized and often mocked for being on an untraditional course. As I gained the courage to come out, I realized how starkly the system was against me. I feared losing my job at a religious organization. I thought I might never get married or have kids. Over my lifetime, much has changed, but there is still significant risk. As our state house attempts to re-marginalize many minority groups, we must stand firm and do what's best for our students within the law's limits.

In my work at ArtForcelowa with juvenile court-involved youth, I saw how easily the justice system casts minority youth aside. I focused my work and mentorship on creating opportunities for them to develop work skills and be successful in school. We saw our youth recidivate less and graduate more during my time there. Creating a supportive and inclusive environment where even struggling students have room to succeed is critical to success for our literacy and future-ready goals. As a board member, I will seek new ways to show our students that their identities are honored and advocate for our most marginalized students to get special attention and support for their academic success.

Guardrail 2 – Social and Emotional Learning: The Superintendent shall not allow the social emotional learning needs of adults and all students to be unaddressed.

As a father of children who endured adverse childhood experiences, I have to advocate for a trauma-informed approach constantly. My advocacy and insistence with the team drastically dropped my son's reportable restraints at Jefferson Elementary. It's easy to look at our students' behaviors and point fingers. However, like my son, many DMPS students have survived unspeakable trauma. The school should honor each individual's unique background and ensure they have the support and care to learn. As a board member, my priorities will be promoting training in Adverse Childhood Experiences and trauma-informed education and monitoring behavior referrals and disciplinary

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tactics such as restraints to ensure that our teams see them as a last resort after more positive measures have been attempted.

Guardrail 3 – DEI: The Superintendent shall not allow the composition of the teaching and learning staff to diverge from the diverse demographics of the student population while utilizing equitable and inclusive hiring practices conducted in accordance with cultural responsibility.

As a gay father of two children who are also Ivorian by adoption, this guardrail is especially important to me. With over 83 languages spoken and only 40% of students being white, we should celebrate DMPS' diversity. It's one of the many reasons I chose to raise my children in this school district. I want my children to see teachers who are black like their other dad!

I will advocate for an administrative team to recruit on the ground, especially in immigrant communities. With only 20% of the Des Moines population having a 4-year degree, one meaningful way to hire a diverse staff is to offer more opportunities for higher education. I will also advocate for additional pathways to further education for staff, including partnering with local colleges and universities. As one of the largest employers in the city, we owe it to our community to hire and retain more inclusively.

Guardrail 4 – Safety: The Superintendent shall not allow an environment for both students and staff that is psychologically and physically unsafe and unwelcome.

In our modern era, fear guides our thoughts around school safety. Unable to control rampant gun ownership, we must focus on and make sure our students feel safe 100% of the time. I will advocate for continuing anti-bullying training for all teachers and students and the ongoing practice of restorative justice with students and teachers. I will also advocate for more regular audits and reviews of the district's safety and security plans. This guardrail is close to that of social-emotional learning. The more we strive to meet the unique unmet needs of the most struggling students, the safer our school will be.

Guardrail 5 – Engagement: The superintendent shall not allow an environment that allows families and viable community partners to be excluded, uninvited, and unwelcome into the district's activities and endeavors.

Being a single parent is hard, especially when you're already part of a marginalized group. That lived experience helps me understand firsthand how necessary the guardrail for engagement is. I also see my English-learning co-parent needing enormous guidance on how we educate in the US and how he should be involved. I will advocate for the school to participate actively in its diverse population's cultural celebrations and events. I will advocate for a more individualized approach with harder-to-reach families. I will advocate for childcare support at school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and school board meetings.

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I'm proud to live in Des Moines and send my children to DMPS. The obstacles are serious, but even as our schools figure out how to do less with more, I believe success is on the horizon. I hope you consider me to be a significant support along that journey!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JMF'.

John Mark Feilmeyer

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888-427-5632

MidAmericanEnergy.com

Date Billed: 03/21/24

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Total Amount Due by 04/12/24

\$220.00

Recurring payment will be processed on due date

A late payment charge of \$3.30 will be assessed if recurring payment is canceled and payment is received after 04/12/24.

Service For:

JOHN-MARK R FEILMEYER

DES MOINES IA 50321

Current Charges Summary

Payments and Credits Applied to Your Account

New Charges This Month

You Used



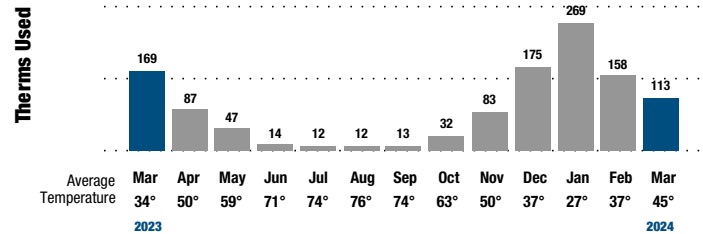
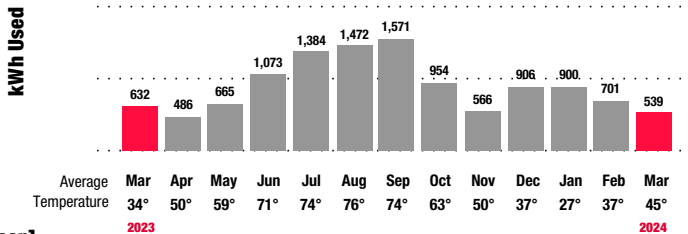
Electric Usage

	Last Year	Current
Monthly kWh Usage	632	539
Number of Days	30	29
Average Temperature	34°	45°
Average Cost per Day	\$2.49	\$2.16
Average Usage per Day	21	19



Gas Usage

	Last Year	Current
Monthly Therm Usage	169	113
Number of Days	30	29
Average Temperature	34°	45°
Average Cost per Day	\$4.24	\$3.16
Average Usage per Day	6	4



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JOHN-MARK R FEILMEYER

DES MOINES IA 50321-2235

MidAmerican Energy Company
PO Box 8020
Davenport IA 52808-8020

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JOHN MARK FEILMEYER

Portfolio: johnmarkrobert.com – PW johnmark515

Researcher, Design Thinker, and Strategist with skills in:

participatory design

human-centered design

market research

behavioral design

product and program design

test and learn strategy

strategic planning

user experience

organizational design

JP Morgan Chase, Remote from Des Moines, IA

September 2022 - Present

Vice President, UX Research Lead, Payments

- Facilitates major mixed-methods research projects and cross-functional workshops, leading to the evolution of design and product strategy on essential payment products for the Consumer bank.
- Produces holistic design strategy to influence product prioritization and inspire deeper considerations of horizontal integration.
- Hired and managed a team of 3 researchers, supporting their professional development and helping them develop meaningful work.

Drake University, Des Moines, IA

September 2019 - Present

Adjunct Professor, Design Thinking and Experience Strategy

- Developed and taught an experiential seminar in Design Thinking and Experience Strategy for MBA, Pharm D., and MPA students, now in its 4th semester.
- Guided participants through a human-centered design sprint on the epidemic of loneliness among remote students, requiring them to gather insight, ideate, prototype, and test.

Updater, Remote from Des Moines, IA

February 2022 - August 2022

Design Lead for Design and UX Research

- Built new research practices, procured platforms, and supported research recruiting.
- Led mixed-methods customer understanding and design research processes to inform iterative testing strategy for increasing conversion rates and improving UX metrics.

Root Insurance, Remote from Des Moines, IA

December 2020 – January 2022

Senior Manager, UX Research and Strategy

- Built UX research practice and strategy from the ground up, helping a mobile-first insurtech company change perspectives and establish new product direction.
- Conducted and coached mixed-method user research on all product areas, including growth, service design, and retention.
- Designed foundational archetypal research and shared it company-wide via C-suite, product, and design presentations.

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Principal Financial Group, Des Moines, IA

December 2017 – December 2020

Senior Design Research Program Manager, May 2019 – September 2020.

- Built out a pilot design research and product development team for the Foundation, including hiring, training, supervising, coaching, and completing performance reviews.
- Led YouthCan initiative to encourage young people to earn and save, including directing [a major study of young people and their finances](#).

Customer Experience Storyteller (Short-term assignment), May 2020 – December 2020

- Developed a system for transforming unstructured VOC feedback into actionable insight for improving the customer experience.

Senior Experience Researcher and Strategist, December 2017– May 2019

- Facilitated cross-functional user research process to glean deep customer understanding of key segments (individuals, employers, financial professionals) to influence product strategy.

MYAGRO, Bamako, Mali

November 2016 – June 2017

Senior Program Director, June 2017 – October 2017

Program Manager, November 2016 – June 2017.

- Employed a human-centered design approach to improve sales efforts, field strategy, and employee communications.
- Led the 100+ field team - ultimately delivering seed and fertilizer to 20,000 farmers
- Led experience innovation team of 6 to improve offerings and processes.

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

Executive Director - **ArtForcelowa**, Des Moines, IA

2013-2016

Built arts outreach program from the ground up, including grant writing, program design, and staff training. Work focussed on marginalized communities, including juvenile delinquents, court-involved young adults, and youth refugees.

Director - **International Center of Art and Music of Ouidah**, Ouidah, Benin

2010-2013

Built an arts center from the ground up, including developing curricula, training teachers, and writing grants.

Community Development Specialist, **PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER**, Benin, West Africa

2008-2010

Taught English to high school students and supported training for English professors.

EDUCATION

Master's in Public Administration (MPA), Leadership - Drake University, Des Moines, IA

Master's in Arts (MA) - St. John's University, Collegeville, MN

Bachelor of Music (BM), Music, Vocal Performance - Catholic University of America, Washington, DC

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