

Des Moines Public Schools
2100 Fleur Dr
Des Moines IA 50321

March 23, 2024

When I saw that there was an opportunity to serve on the Des Moines Independent School District Board of Directors, I immediately recalled the importance of education in my life, and the impact of the teachers I met along the way. Some of the individuals who played the most important roles in my life and who helped me figure out who I was or wanted to be were teachers. They saw things in me that no one else did. My English teacher who recognized my love of reading and some talent for writing. My social studies teacher who saw my curiosity about people, places, and things far beyond the place where I grew up and encouraged me to explore. Most importantly, there were people who taught me to question and to think for myself. My education has never once failed me.

Unfortunately, today I observe how public education is being challenged from so many different directions. I'm concerned the Mrs. DeVecchios, Mr. Rigsbys, and Dr. Bellers might not be here to help children learn and grow. This is why I want to serve on the School Board.

The years I spent in the community development field taught me the importance of engaging with communities in a transparent and meaningful way. My focus was to help community members improve their towns and to build upon things for which they were proud.

I hope you'll forgive me for being somewhat repetitive in discussing goals and guardrails because I believe that there are at least three types of actors necessary to address each of them in a meaningful way. These are school staff, students and their families and the community.

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.

It is important to recognize early if a child has fallen behind in the classroom and to intervene immediately. To be impactful, the intervention should be a partnership including the educator(s) and the student's parents. Accountability for the student's success should be a shared responsibility and the goals of the ISASP assessments need to be clearly communicated with the parents.

Resources, both internal and external, should be readily available to classroom teachers and to families. Understanding that not all parents are able to access external learning resources, the district should make every reasonable attempt to equip families with the information on how to access those resources, and when necessary, assist families with the means to do so.

The goal is not only to be proficient in literacy, but hopefully to excel. This may be an opportunity to introduce classrooms to neighborhood mentors who can reinforce the importance of education and share their stories of success with students.

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.

The ability to pass tests and meet benchmarks is vitally important to the success of our students. However, I believe that it's also important that as students are reaching high school, they are

engaging in conversations about options to extend their education. Many students may not see themselves continuing to a post-secondary education.

Apprenticeships are great opportunities for students to acquire skills which are personally fulfilling and can be financially rewarding without incurring student loan debt or without facing some of the prohibitive costs of a post-secondary education. Likewise, many students may find that the military has much to offer them from the opportunity to travel, build a solid career, or simply to use the GI bill to get their education rather than accruing debt that often accompanies post-secondary education. Representatives from trade unions and military should be equally present with college recruiters are on campus on career days and any discussions on life after high school.

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.

Some students come from homes where male children are valued more highly than females. Others experience reduced access to education due to socio-economic status. Whatever the reason, within the walls of their school, each student should know that they are important and that they can attain their goals.

At the beginning of the school year, each student should, with the help of their teacher and family, set some goals for themselves and throughout the school year their progress, however big or small, should be noted and celebrated. Involving each student and their family in the process creates a sense of ownership and pride of the goals and also an incentive to help if the student is struggling. Community mentors can also be incorporated, particularly if family members have limited ability to participate.

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

Every student should know that they are important and that they matter. From something as simple as making use of family volunteers to greet young children at the doors with a smile and an inquiry about how they were doing to making sure that nobody is going hungry to having certified volunteer victim advocates for them to speak with if they are experiencing abuse.

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 responsiveness.

I would make particular effort to make people living in the community where the school is located aware that positions are open and encourage them to apply. Send notices home in student's backpacks directing them the human resources site and post notices in community gathering places

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

It will be incumbent upon the superintendent to engage every resource available to make sure that within the walls of the school, all persons, regardless of race, culture, gender, or gender expression feel welcome and safe. I would include diversity appreciation days or other ways to send the message that every person in the school is valued and should be treated with dignity and respect. Bullying should be reacted to rapidly and appropriately in a way that teaches the person doing the bullying why such actions are harmful rather than shaming or otherwise

harming the person who is bullying. Violence is not acceptable, should not be tolerated and should be handled according to district policy.

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.

Given the way we've seen public education chipped away at legislatively and otherwise, I believe that families and community partners must be key players in our schools. If families are included in conversations about what is happening in their children's schools, they are more likely to take ownership for the best interest of the school. Family involvement leads to volunteerism which lightens the load for hardworking teachers and other school staff. I think it's also important to begin to have conversations with local businesses about the schools in their communities. Students' families already patronize their businesses and today's students are tomorrow's employees and shoppers. It is in their best interest to support local schools both monetarily and by providing whatever other resources they can.

I hope you will find value in my approach to addressing your goals and guardrails, recognizing that they are fluid and changing with the needs of the students and the district. I have done a great deal of outreach into communities, from *Community Conversations* with senior citizens in Polk County to community town hall meetings to help small, rural communities recognize the potential that exists in their hometowns, I believe in communities. I would welcome the opportunity to interview with your board and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ruth Thompson

Ruth Burgess Thompson

Des Moines, IA 50321

RBurgessThompson@gmail.com

Professional Experience

Polk County Community and Family Services, Crisis and Advocacy Services April 2021-Present
Program Specialist

Develop curriculum for volunteer and intern training
Recruit, train and supervise volunteers and interns
Provide Title IX counseling at Drake University and Simpson College
Provide outreach activities to Polk and Warren Counties
Collaborate with other county and community agencies to create awareness
and build relationships in the community
Conduct surveys and focus groups to identify service gaps or opportunities for outreach
Facilitate/lead support groups

Polk County Auditor April 2020 – April 2021
Accounting Clerk

Performed Accounts Payable functions
Maintained all journal entries

Mercer July 2018-April 2019
Benefits Counselor

- Facilitation of selection and enrollment in employer-sponsored health and life insurance
- Initiate claims
- Licensed Agent in 26 states

McCoy for County Supervisor Campaign April 2018-June 2018
Campaign Staff

- Analyzed election data
- Compiled and analyzed voter data
- Engaged in voter outreach
- Assisted in event planning and fundraising

Iowa Senate January 2018-April 2018
Legislative Assistant

- Provided policy analysis
- Managed logistics for my Senator
- Provided constituent services and outreach

Iowa Department on Aging April 2013 – August 2017
Executive Officer

- Program Manager for:
- BIP No Wrong Door project
 - LifeLong Links Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC)
 - Lifespan Respite project
 - Case Management for Frail Elderly program
 - Veterans Directed Home and Community Based Services Project

- Engaged in program development for statewide network of LifeLong Links Aging and Disability Resource Centers
- Provided oversight and technical assistance to statewide network of Area Agencies on Aging and LifeLong Links partners
- Developed curriculum and implemented training for LifeLong Links partners
- Monitored and provided policy analysis

Special Projects Researcher:

- Overview of Best Practices for AAAs and ADRCs
- Third Party Reimbursement Systems for Not for Profit Organizations
- Aging in Iowa: A Chart Book and Report
- Veterans Directed Home and Community Based Supports and Services Program

Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities in Illinois

June 2010 – April 2013

Executive Director

- Managed day-to-day operations of a statewide grassroots cross-disability advocacy organization
- Supervised a staff of four professionals
- Monitored General Assembly and relevant committees and
- Registered as lobbyist, wrote position papers, provided testimony to General Assembly and committees and provided policy analysis
- Worked with Governor's office and other disability organizations to close two institutions for persons with developmental disabilities and successfully integrate people into their communities
- Collaborated with other disability organizations to move toward a more united message to policymakers at an extremely challenging fiscal and political time.
- Procured, successfully obtained and managed federal grants through Illinois Department of Rehabilitation Services and Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- Provided accessibility audits to, and created remediation plans with organizations that provide services to low income Illinoisans to ensure access to those programs for people with disabilities.
- Performed accessibility audits and provided technical assistance on ADA compliance to local governments and community action agencies
- Led trainings on disability awareness, ADA compliance and employment of people with disabilities

Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs at Western Illinois University

February 2007 – June 2010

Health and Housing Outreach Specialist

- Provided technical assistance to rural communities in the areas of health and housing
- Developed curriculum and led trainings
- Assigned duties to and supervised four graduate assistants
- Planned and implemented research (data collection and analysis)
- Prepared quarterly reports for funding source (USDA Rural Development)
- Monitored and provided policy analysis

Southern Illinois University School of Medicine

June 2006 – January 2007

Social Epidemiologist

- Designed and implemented qualitative social research pertaining to health care utilization between urban and rural communities
- Recommended policy to improve access and utilization of health care in rural settings

Center for Excellence in Disabilities at West Virginia University

November 2004 – May 2006

Policy and Research Specialist

- Developed, implemented and evaluated activities for West Virginia Quality Assurance and Improvement Project (addressing Medicaid home and community based service programs)

- Conducted data mapping/gap analysis on target populations (elderly, adults with physical disabilities, persons with cognitive and developmental disabilities)
- Provided technical assistance to state agency staff and WV Quality Councils
- Aided in development and implementation of data collection strategy of real-time and retrospective information for assessing the performance of home and community based services in West Virginia
- Planned, administered and analyzed Participant Experience Surveys to recipients of Medicaid home and community-based services

West Virginia Bureau of Senior Services

January 2000 – October 2004

Senior Services Specialist

- Developed and managed the Medicaid Aged and Disabled Waiver Self Directed Program
- Developed, secured funding, and managed the West Virginia Personal Options Program
- Convened and chaired the Personal Options Design and Management Team (multiagency initiative)
- Developed, secured funding, and managed the AoA/CMS funded Aging and Disabilities Resource Center project
- Developed, secured funding, and managed the Expanding Consumer Direction in Aging Programs project
- Convened the Consumer Direction Advisory Council to involve stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the Medicaid Aged and Disabled Waiver
- Performed data analysis and conducted research pertaining to target populations
- Organized communications with consumer groups, disability organizations, advocacy groups and advisory boards

Grants, Publications & Presentations

- Surrogate for Sen, Amy Klobuchar at Disability Round Table, DC Center for Independent Living, January, 2020
- Health Care Systems Around the World – Presented to AIO Conference, November, 2019
- Medicare for All – Policy Analysis – Presented to 1st Congressional District, Iowa Democratic Party. November, 2019
- *Veterans Directed Home and Community Based Supports and Services Program – an Overview.* May, 2017
- *Aging and Disability Resource Centers: An Overview.* April, 2017
- *Aging in Iowa* Presented to the Iowa Commission on Aging, 2016
- *Disability Rights are Human Rights.* Presented to the International Conference on Human Rights, 2016
- *What is LifeLong Links Aging and Disability Resource Network?* Presented frequently throughout Iowa 2013 - 2016
- *What to Expect from your Accessibility Audit.* Presented for the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Winter Energy Conference, 2011
- *ADA for Small Towns.* Training curriculum. 2011 - 2013
- *ADA for Non-profits.* Training curriculum. 2011 - 2013

Community Affiliations

- Chair, Iowa Democratic Party Development and Training Committee October 2018 -2020
- Vice Chair, City of Des Moines Access Advisory Council June 2018 – present
- Chair, Senior Caucus, Iowa Democratic Party June 2018 - 2020
- Vice Chair, South Side Des Moines Democrats March 2018 - 2020
- Chair, Board of Directors, Central Iowa Center for Independent Living February 2016 - 2023
- Volunteer, Planned Parenthood of the Heartland October 2015 – 2020

Education

Marshall University School of Graduate Studies 2003
 Master of Arts, Sociology

West Virginia State University 1999
 Bachelor of Science, Sociology and Political Science

References

Upon request

Date of Birth:
Party:
Reg. Date:
Issue Date:



Iowa Voter Identification Card

RUTH A THOMPSON
4400 PARK AVE APT 25
DES MOINES, IA 50321

General/Primary Polling Place:

060 WAKONDA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
3938 FLEUR DR.
DSM, IA 50321

Regular City/School Polling Place:

060 WAKONDA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
3938 FLEUR DR.
DSM IA 50321

For special elections, check with your county auditor for polling place information.

X Ruth Thompson
Signature (Must be signed to be valid)



U.S. Congressional Dist.	3
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State and Local District Information		
Precinct	Senate Dist.	House Dist.
060 DSM	15	030
Supervisor	City/Twsp.	City Ward
CS-01	DES MOINES	DSM-3
School Dist.	School Dir.	College Dir.
DSM-SD	DSD-4	AD-07

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