

Candidates highlight their positions

Hopefuls address role of a board member, other key topics



Where do the candidates stand on the issues?

Ken Knutson compiled these responses from personal interviews and questionnaires.



Jennifer Burns



John Czerwiec



Richard Giltner



Leslie Gray



Amy McCurry



Marty Turek

Top three responsibilities of a board member

Top three responsibilities of a board member
 1. Be fiscally responsible and accountable. 2. Determine the district's strategic direction and ensure that is consistent with community expectations. 3. Hire, give direction to and evaluate the performance of the superintendent.

Top three responsibilities of a board member
 1. Set clear policies that enable most appropriate education for each student. 2. Be responsive and accountable to the whole community. 3. Treat the funds district collects carefully and take a frugal approach to spending.

Top three responsibilities of a board member
 1. Oversight and approval of the annual budget, the tax levy and staff compensation agreements. 2. Be a communications link between the community and the superintendent and his staff. 3. Hire the superintendent, whose job is to oversee day-to-day operations.

Top three responsibilities of a board member
 1. Be a mindful steward of the district's finances, balancing fiscal conservatism with student learning. 2. Oversee district policy and manage the board's one employee: the superintendent. 3. Represent the needs and desires of the community through transparent, collaborative action.

Top three responsibilities of a board member
 1. To respect, genuinely hear and represent all stakeholders. 2. Listen to and work amicably with administrators so they are able to carry out their jobs. 3. Evaluate administrators' performance to ensure they exemplify the professionalism expected by residents.

Top three responsibilities of a board member
 1. Oversight of the superintendent, whose job is to set the vision of district learning. 2. Fiscal responsibility to the community, district and parents through proper budgeting. 3. Support the best and safest environment for all kids to learn.

Goal(s) as a financial steward

Actively solicit community's input about spending and develop a long-term strategic plan to better identify future spending needs, making sure district is positioned to respond to potential pension and state funding reform

Ensure that spending does not continue to increase faster than the consumer price index without shifting resources from the classroom. The board should respect residents who do not have school-age children but still pay taxes to the district.

Keep a balanced budget in the face of teacher contract negotiations, the potential loss of state funding, the shortfall in pension funding and facility needs while maintaining or improving the educational opportunities and performance in the district.

Address the potential budget constraints due to reduced state funding, teacher salaries and benefits, and Hinsdale Middle School facility needs in a fiscally responsible manner, while being respectful to all stakeholders and also maintaining the academic excellence of the schools.

To work within the budget to provide resources needed to implement curriculum and services, keeping in mind that they are investments in the enrichment of children.

1. Proper budgeting based on need versus want. 2. Fair labor contracts between the district and the teachers union. 3. Proper bond structuring.

District's greatest asset/liability

- asset — the community of students, parents and district residents
- liability — the absence of a comprehensive strategic plan

- asset — the expertise, enthusiasm and generosity of parents and community members
- liability — the temptation for district officials to hide negative information, thereby eroding community support needed to move district forward

- asset — the district's teachers, parents and students
- liability — the structural concerns at Hinsdale Middle School and the challenge of getting community backing for the significant financial outlay that may be required in a solution

- asset — the parents and the teachers
- liability — the pervasive lack of consistency across the schools, creating inequitable learning opportunities

- asset — the teachers
- liability — not having immediate access to the tools the teachers need to the put best practices in place

- asset — the families and kids that the district teaches
- liability — the current Hinsdale Middle School building

Single most important step board must take

Developing a strategic plan to operate more efficiently and provide a clear vision for stakeholders to rally around. A three- to five-year plan would reduce reactive behavior and allow district to be more flexible when unforeseen events occur.

Connect to the community and do not assume that residents are always in tune with the board. Instead of an overly legalistic approach to matters — such as with Freedom of Information Act requests — answer concerns forthrightly before emotions take over.

Implementing the Learning for All plan and a method of selecting the right curriculum along with providing assessment data that shows the district is heading in the right direction. Have fewer monologues and more dialogues to build unity.

Figure out curriculum issues and seek community consensus regarding the future of the Learning for All plan. Decisions must be based on data and clear guidelines or there's a sense of unfairness.

Making sure that the resources being used in the classroom are used optimally and consistently within the various school buildings. Classrooms currently function very differently from one building to another.

There are several important steps: making sure stakeholder groups reach a comfort level with the Learning for All plan, finding resolution on the future of Hinsdale Middle School, approving the annual levy and negotiating the next contract with teachers