

Name: Jill Anderson

Occupation: Manager of Project Group

What issues caused you to run for the school board?

There is not one specific issue which has caused me to run for the board, but more of an overall commitment to ensure the community has a board member who is actively engaged with the educators, the public and students and represents their concerns. As a District 15 resident since 1997 and also having a child attend school in the District, I have been involved in the schools he has attended. I have also been an active member of the ISD #15 Special Education Advisory Committee. I believe giving back to your community is important and have continually done so throughout my life.

Do you currently have any children enrolled in ISD #15 schools?

Yes, I have one son, Colton Teetzel who is currently a Junior at St. Francis High School. Colton's entire educational experience has been in ISD #15 schools – Early Childhood, Cedar Creek, East Bethel, St. Francis Middle School and now St. Francis High School.

What are your strengths or qualifications for school board?

I have a Masters of Public Administration degree and have worked full-time for over 21 years in the public sector. Currently I manage a project management group. Some of my previous positions were in city government as a city administrator, office manager and records management specialist. I have extensive experience as a project team member, writing strategic plans, managing human resources and overseeing budgets of all sizes. I have participated in many different boards and commissions and understand the role of a board member and the engagement required from the staff and public to be successful.

How do you perceive the role of school board members?

The responsibility of the school board members is to the students of ISD #15 and their education. School board members are charged with representing what is best for all of the students. Sometimes this conflicts with what we personally want for our own children. As a board member, we need to be to look out for the greater good. Board members have an obligation to ensure the teachers, educational assistants, support and maintenance staff, are receiving the support and tools they need to be successful. ISD #15 staff should feel they have commitment and support of the school board.

How do you feel we could improve the public education system in our district?

Invest in our staff, improve and/or increase programming options and support of extracurricular activities. Investing in staff training is extremely important, but we also need to ensure the leadership in the District is also receiving training on how to grow and develop their staff. Having an open environment where continuous learning is encouraged will improve the education system in our District. At the same time we are investing in our staff, we need to invest in the students. We need to improve and/or increase programming options. Lastly, our District needs to actively support extracurricular activities offered for our students. ~~These activities offer our students the opportunity to hone the following skills: time management, prioritization, motivation, responsibility and~~

~~leadership. They also teach them about working in a team. All of these skills are important to their future success.~~

In the event the district is lacking financial resources, what would you recommend? (Levy referendum? Cuts in staff? Program changes?)

Dependent on the financial resources needed, I would recommend a combination of levy referendum and programming changes. Cutting staff is not an option unless the District has a significant decrease in the amount of students in the District.

As a member of the school board, what class size would you be committed to maintain for children in grades K-5? 6-8? 9-12?

I would be committed to not increasing the current class sizes and would support decreasing all three categories sizes. Ideally all three categories would be 20 students per teacher.

Are there any areas in the curriculum that you feel need to be changed, improved, or see increased emphasis? If so, what are they?

As a mother of a special needs student, I believe there are areas which can be improved in this arena. That is the reason I became involved in the ISD #15 Special Education Advisory Committee. One area which has always been an issue for my son and other children I know, is transition from one school to another. This is something that affects all of our students, not just special education students. You may not view this as curriculum, but this does affect the student being able to transition effectively and be successful in their new environment. ~~As a board member, I am committed to working with our educators, students and the public to ensure our curriculum provides what our students need.~~

Which do you think is more important to a school district, increasing fund balance or increasing programming? Why?

It is important to have a solid fund balance, which over the course of the past few years ISD #15 has done. Now I believe it is time to increase programming while keeping a robust fund balance. We should be including all the stakeholders in the decision on increasing program from educators to students. I believe our responsibility is to the students of ISD #15 and their education. We should be providing the students the opportunity to be more involved in their education, and create choices over their programming to reach their goals.

What role do you think educators should play in the decisions made at the local schools?

Educators should be actively involved in the decision making at the local schools. Participatory decision-making is extremely important. Everyone will benefit from this approach, from the school itself, to the educators and most importantly the students. When employees participate in decision-making process they improve understanding and perceptions among colleagues, superiors and stakeholders and enhance personnel value in the organization. This also allows the educators to take ownership in the decisions which will affect them.

In the next five years, what are the greatest challenges facing public education in Minnesota? In our district?

I believe there are a number of challenges facing public education in Minnesota and our District over the next five years. They include technology, space, resources and student behavior. Technology is ever changing and is costly to keep up with. Space is always an issue as programming and student population is ever changing. Resources from finding and keeping good educators to finances can be challenging. It is important to our District to have both. Lastly, student behavior is a great challenge. Having educators trained and specialized in behavior, is extremely important to the safety of our educators and students.

Do you have any other thoughts that you would like to share?

I fully appreciate that the children in our community are our ultimate focus. I will work with other board members to create a shared vision for work and learning; build strategic partnerships; maintain strong ethical standards; and objectively seek answers to questions and challenges as they arise.

Name: Peter Onstad

Occupation: VP - Director of Retail Banking

What issues caused you to run for the school board?

I have lived in the district for over five years and realize the time is here and we need some change. I grew up in a district where we had great facilities for our students. With the growing class sizes throughout ISD 15, we need to provide them with the necessary framework to ensure a positive educational experience. If we don't provide these opportunities we could risk losing students and faculty to surrounding areas. I want to help create change within the district that will lead to more economic development in the Saint Francis community.

Do you currently have any children enrolled in ISD #15 schools?

Yes, I have a daughter who is a first grader and a son who will be entering preschool next year.

What are your strengths or qualifications for school board?

Two of my greatest strengths are leadership and development. I have been in Management within the banking industry for over 13 years. I can bring creative ideas and will help make proper financial decisions to ensure a positive experience for our students. These strengths will help me make sound decisions for the students and staff of ISD 15.

How do you perceive the role of school board members?

I believe school board members are perceived as people who are trying to create a positive experience for students. These positive experiences result from innovative ideas and local decision making.

How do you feel we could improve the public education system in our district?

I strongly believe we could improve our educational system with new facilities. We need to create a new buzz for the students and staff within the district. It's easy to notice that our facilities are outdated and that we are outgrowing our current schools. Building new facilities will help improve our system and help attract new families to ISD 15.

In the event the district is lacking financial resources, what would you recommend? (Levy referendum? Cuts in staff? Program changes?)

I would carefully look at the budget and consider a levy referendum for additional funding. I would even propose to make program changes if needed assuming it would have a positive impact on the students within the district.

As a member of the school board, what class size would you be committed to maintain for children in grades K-5? 6-8? 9-12?

A district our size should have the capability to accommodate up to 400-500 students per class. With those overlying class sizes in mind, there shouldn't be any individual classes greater than 30

students. Anything more than 30 students to a class could result in a negative impact for our students.

Are there any areas in the curriculum that you feel need to be changed, improved, or see increased emphasis? If so, what are they?

I feel strongly that the district is offering the proper curriculum to our students. However, I will always have an open mind and be ready to make additions and curriculum changes if needed to create a more positive educational experience for our students.

Which do you think is more important to a school district, increasing fund balance or increasing programming? Why?

Increasing fund balance. If an organization has the funding in place, it's easier to make sound financial decisions to help improve our district. Without proper fund balances districts may be faced with difficult decisions to cut programs. These decisions could ultimately lead to a negative impact on our students.

What role do you think educators should play in the decisions made at the local schools?

Educators should always have a huge voice. They are the faces with our students and therefore will always have great ideas and opinions. As a school board member, it's important for these teachers to be heard. It's important that a school board encourages educators to bring forth new ideas. As a school board member, I would always be committed by listening to new ideas from educators that help improve our educational system.

In the next five years, what are the greatest challenges facing public education in Minnesota? In our district?

I think the biggest challenges we will face in both ISD 15 and the state of MN is the safety for our students. We need to provide better systems and safer facilities within the district where parents, faculty, and students feel safe every minute of every day.

Do you have any other thoughts that you would like to share?

I am very thankful for the opportunity to run for school board. If elected, I will be committed to the entire ISD 15 district. I will adhere by the districts strategic plan and bring forth new ideas to help create a positive impact on our students.

Name: Scott Schwarz

Occupation: Assistant Manager Walmart

What issues caused you to run for the school board?

I believe I can help find a balance of government funding and student needs

Do you currently have any children enrolled in ISD #15 schools?

None at this time. 4 children graduated from St. Francis High School

What are your strengths or qualifications for school board?

Father of 4 children, Adjunct professor at Concordia University, common sense to business issues with various positions I have held

How do you perceive the role of school board members?

Hire the correct leadership staff so they can perform their jobs effectively. Monitor expenditures and funding to provide all around education for the students

How do you feel we could improve the public education system in our district?

Spend the funding we receive in the best way possible to give our students the best education with those funds

In the event the district is lacking financial resources, what would you recommend? (Levy referendum? Cuts in staff? Program changes?)

Unfortunately, depending on the size of the budget shortfalls because of decreased enrollment, all options will need to be on the table

As a member of the school board, what class size would you be committed to maintain for children in grades K-5? 6-8? 9-12?

Research in many parts of the world show no downward trend to learning when class room sizes of 25, 6-12 grade. K-5 would like to be held about 20

Are there any areas in the curriculum that you feel need to be changed, improved, or see increased emphasis? If so, what are they?

For the older students, College in the classroom and also working with the Technical schools on professions that deal with the trades. Younger students need the basics of reading, writing, and math, so they are ready for their next steps

Which do you think is more important to a school district, increasing fund balance or increasing programming? Why?

Depends on what type of programming there is available and how much needs to be in the fund balance. Maybe neither.

What role do you think educators should play in the decisions made at the local schools?

Depending on how many educators support specific ideas/solutions, they should go to their principals. If a large number support a specific idea/solution bring it up to Superintendent and also schedule time at the school board meetings to present them

In the next five years, what are the greatest challenges facing public education in Minnesota? In our district?

Decreased enrollment=decreased funding. Special education requirements for students, what guidelines the legislature structures. If the governor mandates preschool education without funding it, there will be some large funding issues

Do you have any other thoughts that you would like to share?