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Grantsburg School Board profiles



Russ Erickson

Russ Erickson-incumbent

I've lived in the Grantsburg School District most of my life; a Grantsburg graduate; currently work as a Sentinel courier, usher at the Metro Dome, and serve on the Grantsburg Dollars-for-Scholars Committee.

I graduated from Polk County Teacher's College; earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees from UW – Superior; taught in Grantsburg Schools for 36 years.

My goal is to ensure that Grantsburg continues to be the best district in the area by hiring the best teachers; develop them; use the best research-based instruction and curriculum available; provide teachers the resources they need; integrate character education; encourage critical thinking; provide ample technology, and enrich our students with co-curricular activities. I visit our schools to hear suggestions and observe. I attend most events and programs.

The five most important issues facing the district and my plans to address them:

- Declining Enrollment/less state aid - Less available funds require creative and frugal budget decisions. Grantsburg has one of the lowest cost-per-pupil of the surrounding school districts, and yet we have high achievement academically and in co-curricular events. Aware of the current economic situation, our board voted to under-levy the revenue cap this year.
- Fair Compensation for Teachers and Support Staff - We need to take a hard look at health program costs and staff cost sharing.
- Continuing Growth of Insight School of Wisconsin – This program continues to provide additional funds for our District.
- Staying on the Cutting Edge in Technology – Rod Kleiss recently said: "The math and science Teachers in Grantsburg are unusually gifted teachers. I have rarely found this caliber of teacher in any school!"
- Maintain Quality Staff and Administration – We need to ensure that we continue to hire top-notch staff, when Teachers and Support Staff retire.

Niki Denn-Olson-challenger

My name is Niki Denn-Olson and I am a candidate for the Grantsburg School Board. Raised in Grantsburg, I attended elementary school here and am an alumnus of Grantsburg High School.

After attending college at the University of Wisconsin in Superior, I married my husband, Josh Olson, and we settled in Frederic. We subsequently had four children and when our oldest child reached school age, we moved to Grantsburg because of its excellent school district and education system. I am a stay-at-home mom, the co-director of Education at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church and the director of the Miss Grantsburg Pageant. All four of our children are students in the Grantsburg schools. I have been very active in the district for the past six years, volunteering in classrooms, chaperoning field trips and assisting with special events. I have also worked in the school district as a teacher's assistant in the music department.

Education is a high priority for me. All students need to have a strong educational foundation to start their life. Because each student is different, I believe individualized instruction is necessary for every student to reach their full potential as well as challenge our top students.

Due to budget cuts and potential enrollment issues from the stalling economy, I believe we need to continuously look for more ways to save energy, money, and operating costs. Open communication between the community and school board is essential.

I am well qualified for the school board because of my experience volunteering and working in the school system, my active role in the Grantsburg community, and because I am a mother of four Grantsburg students. I am an open, honest person who is willing to listen to teachers, parents, and the community to make sure our school system thrives in these difficult times.

Jim Sundquist-incumbent

I grew up in Grantsburg. My wife Caren and I raised our daughters, Amy, Sara and Rebecca here. We have four grandchildren, two are in Grantsburg schools. I graduated GHS Class of 1968.

Our children must receive an education that will prepare them for future employment. We have shrinking resources and limited funds to educate. I am deeply concerned about the fact that the students of today, locally and nationally, will be paying the price for all of the uncontrolled government spending.

Our elected officials apparently are unwilling to stop spending money that our citizens don't have, thus our national debt keeps growing.

One Important issue we are facing is a lack of funding. We have declining property values, loss of jobs, less state and federal aid, property taxpayers on fixed or declining incomes who will receive no raises in the near future, and politicians who are increasing our national debt at an alarming rate.

We have contract issues with staff that must be settled to get them a fair and equitable wage and benefit package and a need for more technology. Our staff does a wonderful job of educating and our students receive a great education here if they choose to take advantage of it

I hope that we can continue to give each and every child the opportunity to get a great education here in a community that strongly supports our schools.

Dave Dahlberg-incumbent

My name is Dave Dahlberg. My wife Julie and I and our two adult children are all Grantsburg school alumni. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with youth as a Scoutmaster, church Youth Leader, and on the Grantsburg School Board for the last six years.

I have strived to make Grantsburg schools the best they can be. As a Board, we are doing this by only hiring the best teachers and staff, providing training in the most effective teaching methods, involving the community, working with

local businesses and technical schools on School-to-Work programs, and creating an environment where students learn to think critically.

The District has many issues to challenge us. The most important is declining enrollment, which translates into reduced school aid from the state. This means less money for programs, staff, and technology upgrades. We have been fortunate to partner with Insight schools, which has helped to offset this drop in state aid.

It is critical to make the best use of every dollar available, to tap into sources of grants, and to maintain a quality school that will encourage families to enroll in our District.

Another challenge we have is the state formula for school aid and levying taxes. Wisconsin penalizes every District that does not collect the maximum taxes allowed by reducing the allowed levy every year thereafter. This discourages Districts from trying to reduce their budget because they cannot raise the levy again in the future when they need to.

Despite these rules, last year the Board voted to reduce the tax levy by \$169,459 for a reduction of 4.13 percent in our taxes. We need to change the state aid formula and not penalize the District for trying to save money and reduce taxes.

I would be honored to continue serving our school and community.