

**Please provide some personal background information: Name, Occupation, Community activities.**

Paul Molitor; Retired see below; Attend church regularly, in the past have coached middle school football and First Lego League teams.

**1. What do you see as the Board's primary responsibility? If elected, what will be your most important objective in your first year?**

The Board's primary responsibility is setting policy and over-site of the superintendent and his administration of the district.

The primary task of the schools is education, most important are the basic skills of literacy and basic math. As a repair technician, when faced with a device that isn't functioning correctly the first thing to do is to fully analyze the system. The proficiency numbers have been poor for a long time. Has anyone done a deep dive into why? It looks like the attempts have been to listen to education "experts", who judging by proficiency scores nation wide have not produced any solutions, and buying whatever they are selling which hasn't work to date. Maybe we just need another year or two of implementation, or not.

**2. What distinguishes your experience and candidacy from your opponents?**

I have wide range of experiences, and successes, in both education and the "Mike Rowe" world:

- years of work at Miller Electric Mfg Co, Appleton
- a BS in education (sec ed/Chemistry and Math) followed by substitute teaching
- a PhD in chemistry
- teaching college chemistry, 3 years, Creighton U and South Dakota State
- 12 years at U of IL-Urbana as NMR spectroscopist
- 8 years teaching chemistry and physical science courses Marnatha Baptist University
- 2 years Oshkosh Defense General Assembler repro department
- 7 years United Rentals Service Tech.

**3. The Department of Public Instruction releases annual school and district report cards measuring student achievement and engagement. Although the Oshkosh Area School District improved its overall score from 69.7 to 71.3—placing it in the "Exceeds Expectations" category—our Advanced and Proficient levels in English Language Arts and Mathematics still fall behind**

**state averages. As a member of the Board of Education, what steps would you take to raise performance in these two subject areas?**

The DPI report cards are an imperfect measure as they too often have changed their criteria. The Forward exam scores and I-Ready results are a better measure, although just one number and not perfect, but they are not meaningless. To better assess student's proficiency would be individual testing which is not practical.

Judging by recent board meetings, the administration is on the right path by concentrating on the classroom with professional development, coaching and observations. The classroom is where learning happens and students either fail or succeed.

**4. What are the most pressing literacy challenges you see (early reading, adolescent literacy, interventions, materials, professional learning, etc.) and how would you address them?**

Early reading is fundamental to everything else. If we fail here we are continually trying to catch up. Adolescent literacy follows early reading if not individual interventions are required, but the number of interventions are reduced as early reading improves. According to a recent Board meeting, the district is implementing a plan that includes classroom observations to ensure the effectiveness of the instruction. This is good and it will be interesting to see if the Forward exam results at the end of this school year show significant improvement (the I-Ready results are not fantastic, but at least ok). Materials and professional learning are always important. Maybe we need to take a look at some advances made by other states (Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama for example) to implement some of what has worked there.

**5. What does College, Career and Community Ready (CCCR) mean to you? Where is OASD performing well, where are the gaps, and how would you help the system improve?**

It means that upon graduation students have the basic skills needed to succeed in an entry level job, trade school or college as well as an understanding of what is required to be a contributing member of a well functioning society (hopefully more than what was learned in kindergarten although kindergarten lessons are essential). I would also think that the Chamber members would have valuable insight into what graduates are lacking and what is important.

**6. OASD is working to address a projected budget deficit for the 2026–27 school year (approximately \$5.5M). What principles will guide your decisions (e.g., priorities, efficiencies, service levels, revenue options), and what steps would you support to address this challenge in the coming years?**

One thing that I have noticed in some of my positions is that people on the “front line” often have suggestions on some policies and/or procedures that can be made more efficient. Surveying people in all areas may be fruitful in finding some savings. Likewise, the entire system needs to be examined to find places where saving can be had through things like elimination of duplicate services or spending on things that make very little contribution to the success of the district.

**7. OASD has recently completed major facility upgrades, including the opening of Vel Phillips Middle School in 2023 and Menominee Elementary School in 2024. In addition, voters approved a \$197.8 million referendum to build a consolidated middle school on the Shapiro site, resulting in the closure of South Park and Perry Tipler and reducing the number of west side middle schools from three to two. Looking ahead, long range planning includes constructing a new West High School and making improvements to North High as we move into the 2030s. What is your position on these facility improvements and school consolidations?**

This last referendum passed by less than 500 votes. While many are happy with the schools there are nearly as many voters who are reluctant to spend more money on a system whose enrollment is declining and barely meeting expectations. All major improvement projects need to be better researched ahead of time to make sure that all options have been considered and things like runway proximity are noted.

**8. What role should Tech Ed/hands-on learning play in OASD? How much emphasis would you place on CTE in policy and budgeting, and how would you ensure accountability for results?**

For over decades, I have wanted to shout (not in a good way) every time I heard of a politician or education expert make a statement that we need to see more kids go to college. My experience is that we currently have many college students who should not be in college for a variety of reasons, from ability to nature to readiness. I’m not against college, but for many students college is not effective in dollars or time spent. We need to make sure that a student who decides on a career without college is not stigmatized by teachers, staff or other students. Schools have tremendous opportunities to equip graduates not only in the basics of reading and math skills but other basic technical and trade skills that will give them a leg up when entering a career or vocational education after high school. Truthfully, I’m not sure of the current emphasis on CTE is but feel that while not as flashy as having tons of students go to college it is vitally important and worthy of budgeting.

**9. What reforms, if any, would you support to fund public school operations? What is your view of school choice?**

The state needs to tie funding to mandates. Some of the local district's budget woes would be reduced if the state would fully fund the services that are required to be provided by state statute.

Educational choice for parents is a great idea. Basically move to a more capitalistic model away from the monopoly of public schools. Today, many parents see that the public schools are not meeting the needs of their children for one reason or another. It may be lack of academic rigor or often conflicting values and worldview or safety concerns that are perceived to be present in public schools. For these families, a private/voucher school is the better choice. The public schools need to change in order to make the choice to stay a more attractive choice.

With that said, the state government should fund school choice with state funds instead of the "current "shell game" where costs are buried in a maze of local finance factors—property values, enrollment shifts, and levy decisions—that obscure who is actually responsible" per Will Flanders of will-law.org

**10. How would you help recruit, develop, and retain educators and staff (e.g., compensation, workload, mentorship, career pathways, culture)?**

Like fixing anything that doesn't work as it should, the first step to make sure that you know how it is supposed to work then where is the failure. This is different than fixing a piece of equipment as it involves people and thus messier. Because people are involved, communicating is the first and most important step. My experience is that the best way is through honest, informal conversations where all parties are relaxed and open. The "management" needs to talk to "employees" and get to know them and their struggles, triumphs and concerns. Then, a workplace can be adjusted to support and retain employees and this will help with recruitment. I have seen very few improvements in workplaces that have instituted satisfaction surveys, I'm not sure why but know that many filling out those surveys do not take them very seriously.

**11. The Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce is working with local businesses and the school district on programming to help create employable students through programs such as Youth Apprenticeships, Career Fairs, Youth Leadership Oshkosh, Career Pathways and Job Shadows. How will you build partnerships with the business community? Would you consider alternative models (e.g., industry-led academies like Fond du Lac's ACE) if supported by local partners?**

All of these are very important. The programs listed need to continue to get support. As a board member, I will make sure to find out as much as I can about current programs and others such as you've mentioned to see what can be added to increase the job readiness of you graduates. It's important to have programs in place that speak to the students who are not college, but career bound.

**12. A major challenge for leadership in any school system is navigating community perception, misinformation, and misunderstandings about how the district operates. Where do you obtain reliable information about the district's performance, needs, and priorities? How do you ensure that the information you rely on is accurate? (Include Board meetings attended, classroom visits, and your approach to communicating with all stakeholders.)**

I try to read through the board meeting agenda material before each board meeting. I have attended some board meetings on late and have viewed the meetings that I couldn't attend on the Oshkosh Media/Youtube stream. In addition, I know some teachers and parents of students in the district and have had in-depth conversations dealing with details of the policies and operations of the district. I have also reached out to current board members with comments and questions. If on the board, my intentions are to make regular classroom visits and promptly reply to stakeholders who have questions or concerns.

**13. As a Board member, how will you foster ongoing, accurate communication and engagement with families, educators, and community members—including those with differing views?**

The first step is to reply to concerns and questions from stakeholders. I have heard comments from parents that they didn't always receive responses from board members. There is no communication without a response.

People who know me will agree that I listen more than I speak. In all dialogue. It is vital that the other person's viewpoint is understood well. So that is where I try to begin. My experience has lead me to see that our culture is increasingly bipolar. The public schools are to serve all in the district. A major reason that I am a candidate is that last phrase, differing views. Currently, there is some diversity of viewpoint on the board, but often discussions do not include all viewpoints.

**14. Have you participated in the OASD School Academy? If yes, when and what did you learn? If not, how will you get up to speed?**

Until the question, I was not aware of the OASD School Academy. It appears to be a valid means of education concerned citizens about the details of the district.

To be informed, I have viewed or attended most of the board meeting for the last few years so am familiar with the meetings, how the board operates and the issues that come before the board. The board also does do on-boarding for new members so that will be appreciated.