

**Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce
Candidate Questionnaire**

Spring Election 2023 – Board of Education, Oshkosh Area School District

Please provide some personal background information.

- Name: Adam BellCorelli
- Occupation: Regional Transportation Planner
- List any community activities you are involved with: City of Oshkosh Long Range Finance Committee, City of Oshkosh Redevelopment Authority, City of Oshkosh Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Committee, FIRST Lego League, Heroes of Oshkosh, Read Elementary PTO/Read Playground Remodel, Oshkosh Food Co-op Food Justice Team, Bentwoods Neighborhood Association, TedX Oshkosh Speaker

1. What do you believe is your primary responsibility as a board member? What will be your most important objective if you are elected to the board?

a. I believe the primary responsibility of an Oshkosh Area School Board Member is to guide the OASD Administration in continual improvement of our schools, working to create environments where students, teachers, and staff feel supported, challenged, and safe. My responsibility as a School Board member is to serve students, families, teachers, and staff by creating environments that affirm each person’s worth and build sturdy foundations. School Board members help to set policy that guides the district, in operations and in personnel, bringing our experiences as community leaders to help each student receive the guidance and support they need and each staff member the training, tools, and encouragement they need. My most important objective will be to assess the current state of the schools, supported by data, to see where greater attention and efforts are needed to be sure we are serving each student and staff member in the ways they need it. My role is to listen to the community and the teachers/staff to better understand what they identify as their needs.

2. There are distinct differences between each of the three candidates that are seeking positions on the Board of Education. Please outline what distinguishes your candidacy and qualifications from those of your opponents.

a. My education, experience, and involvement give me a unique perspective as a school board candidate. My philosophy degree and Masters in Public Administration give me the tools to have discussions about large, broad topics like cultural shifts in our community and philosophical underpinnings of curriculum and specific discussions such as developing long range plans to cope with demographic changes and budgetary constraints.

b. I am a wheelchair user, and have long been an advocate for access and ADA compliance. My experience with physical barriers has taught me compassion for anyone experiencing challenges or who are outside the “normal course of things”. I often use my wheelchair (a barrier that others are able to see and understand) as a metaphor to talk with people about their privilege and the social barriers that they may not know of or fully appreciate the impact of.

c. I led the Food Justice Team at the Oshkosh Food Co-op and worked to create a welcoming space and programs for all marginalized people. I have been an advocate for formerly incarcerated individuals and those with disabilities looking for employment opportunities. I

started a nonprofit that does motivational speaking and professional development for young people and those looking to overcome challenges.

3. The Department of Public Instruction produces annual report cards that are an indicator of overall student achievement and engagement. While the Oshkosh Area School District received an overall score of 68.7 which puts the district in the “Meets Expectations” category, there are still opportunities for improvement when compared to the rest of the state in Advanced and Proficiency ratings such as English, Language Arts & Mathematics. As a member of the Board of Education, what will you do to ensure improved scores in these two areas?

a. The district has already begun to see improvements in these areas, as teachers and staff get a better handle on where students are at following the Covid pandemic disruptions, and as teachers and staff re-establish routines for themselves as well. One driver of these improvements is being able to implement Science of Reading and other frameworks that were purchased pre-Covid and not able to be learned by teachers or implemented in classrooms during virtual learning. And now that these tools are able to be put into practice they appear to be working. To build on these successes, the Board will need to listen to feedback from teachers about what is working and what has not yet been successful, and adjust course accordingly.

4. In a recent state-wide survey, employers have indicated that school districts are not placing enough emphasis on core subjects like reading, writing, mathematics and other STEM programming. As a member of the Board of Education, what are you going to do to ensure that the District invests educational dollars in these areas?

a. I believe this perception is mistaken and out-dated, as initiatives resources such as the Oshkosh North FabLab, the First Robotics Team, Lego League and partnerships with Oshkosh Corporation have demonstrated that our schools do a great job of emphasizing not only basic academics but also future-focused STEM skills, combined with teamwork-oriented projects that match the skills sets future manufacturers are looking for.

5. Tech Education - the old Industrial Arts programs - has been slowly going away for many years for various reasons. Please describe your thoughts as to the need for these programs. Describe how much emphasis/weight you personally would put on this in your decision-making process as well as from a policy, expectations, and accountability stance?

a. I understand the nostalgia folks have for shop class and Tech Education, because I loved using the lathe, table saw, and welding torches as much as anyone. However, it is important to resist the urge to think of K-12 education as strictly vocational. Our schools are building foundations for each student to be able to learn and think and act as a responsible citizen, and it is on top of that foundation that vocational skills and training get applied. It is also important to remember that the jobs most of today’s students will be undertaking do not exist today, and many of the “old Industrial Arts” tools simply do not apply to solving those problems.

b. I will also refer back to the previous question and point out the partnerships within the OASD that are directly producing the technical skills, and people skills, that tomorrow’s manufacturers are looking for.

6. Long Range Planning – Oshkosh has made significant progress as it relates to facility improvement and one example is the construction of Vel Phillips Middle School which is scheduled to open in the fall of 2024. However, Oshkosh residents have seen their annual OASD

tax bills increase almost 30% since 2020. With an updated 10-year Facility Plan in place, please describe how you will stabilize and prioritize this growth in expenditures with more proposed school improvement projects on the horizon. Also discuss your thoughts on how the OASD should address replacement plans and long-term preventative maintenance on its aging facilities and specifically our high schools.

a. In any discussion of public school funding we have to talk about the broader, long-term cuts and restrictions that challenge school budgets; voucher programs skimming public dollars off for private schools, tying funding to property tax, and partisan bickering over the use of federal education funds.

b. The district has already begun the process of consolidating resources and planning for long-term upkeep in ways that have been neglected in past administrations.

7. What reforms, if any, would you support to fund public school operations?

a. I support any and all initiatives that direct funding toward our public schools. Most of these decisions are made at the state level and the district must figure out how to make things work with the hands that are dealt.

8. The OASD has lost student enrollment due to the Covid-19 situation and overall population demographics. How do you plan to stop the departure of children from our district either going to private schools or surrounding districts? How do you plan make up for the lost dollars from students who have left the district?

a. Student enrollment is always in flux, this is not a new situation although it has a renewed focus in recent years. We must continue to highlight the positives of the Oshkosh Schools and celebrate the unique opportunities we are able to provide. Oshkosh is positioned well to thrive in the years to come and the more businesses, large and small, that reach out to the schools, or the School Board, to develop partnerships the better. By harnessing the potential of the students and the real-world experience of business leaders, Oshkosh is becoming a destination that will draw families to our schools. With renewed facilities and strong, supportive communities pushing each student to find their passion and develop the skills to achieve their goals, the dollars will come. By continuing to build a great learning and teaching environment, more and more people will see that value being delivered by a diverse group of passionate professionals who love the work they do and the teammates they work alongside. The dollars are always a lagging indicator, and only by controlling the inputs we can control, can we succeed.