

**Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce
Candidate Questionnaire**

Spring Election 2021 – Board of Education, Oshkosh Area School District

Please provide some personal background information.

- Name **Jim Evans**
- Occupation **Business owner**
- List any community activities you are involved with **Four the past seven years I have been a board member of the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) I'm very involved in the arts including creating and running the monthly Gallery Walks for numerous years. Charter member of Art Space Collective Inc.**

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? **Board members by state statute have three responsibilities. We hire the superintendent, we set the tax levy and we set policy. If elected to the board my main objective going forward will be continuing the work we started with our Capital improvement referendum.**
2. A University of Pennsylvania study estimates that each month of school closures costs students between \$12,000 - \$15,000 in future earnings. Now that the OASD is returning to in-person learning, do you believe the Board of Education remote learning plan was an appropriate response, especially in the current school year, to the Covid-19 situation? Please discuss your answer. **Yes, I believe that the districts virtual learning was absolutely appropriate. With no guidance from the federal or state levels, each of the 400 plus school districts in Wisconsin were forced to figure out 400 plus plans of operation. We consulted with the Winnebago Health Department and other medical professionals and using their input, we came up with our plan for operating school during a pandemic. to plan out our response because a pandemic should not be taken lightly or ignored.**
3. Long Range Planning - There has been a shortfall of long-range planning and some might say crisis management by planning in three-year strategic plans. With more than a few of our schools at 75+ years, please describe how you plan to completely change the steering process as a member of the OASD so that we are looking and communicating out 20+ years for facilities, preventative annual maintenance and mid- to large-capital needs. **Our strategic plan that we have know is a 5 year plan. We currently plan out a 10 year plan for our facilities. Larger capital improvements to our buildings are not intended to be part of our annual budget, rather they are meant to be funded through referenda. If we were to plan on doing a major project with our current number of schools every 5 years it would take 100 years to rotate through our 20 schools. This is one reason why we are looking at consolidation with the hope of getting down to 14 schools 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? I think there will always be a need for Tech Education, now called Technology and Engineering (TE). The district has been working on curriculum improvements, partnering with local businesses and facility and equipment upgrades like the new Fab Lab at ONHS to address declining enrollment in this area. Hiring and retaining high quality staff remains a major obstacle when other districts that are not operating under our constraining spending caps, can offer more in salary than we can. Also people with these skills are highly coveted in the private sector. Having a passionate teacher in the number one reason programs grow and we have struggled to retain our top TE teachers

4. OASD Fund 10 expenditures have grown **\$20,905,000 (a 20.3% increase)** from ~ \$102,919,000 in 2015 to \$123,824,000 in the current budget while student enrollment declined by 638 students (6.4% decrease). What measures will you suggest to lower expenses during a period of declining enrollment? First off the enrollment is based on a three year average expressly to avoid huge fluctuations like this year. What also is never mentioned when people talk about the 638, the latest number is 601 students that open enrolled in other districts is the 217 students that open enrolled into the OASD. Another part of this is the number of parents that chose to not enroll their children in 4K. our estimate of the actual number is closer to 300 net loss. Still concerning but what we won't know until later is hoe many will come back.
5. Ten years ago, Wisconsin school districts were in dire financial situations. ACT 10 gave local districts the tools to better manage their operations. It addressed the root of Wisconsin's budget problem – unchecked labor costs. It limited collective bargaining for public sector unions to just base salary and wages. Act 10 didn't just fix the state's financial problems. It also gave school districts the tools they needed to keep their budgets balanced. Previously, most school districts were required to buy health insurance through the state teachers union. After Act 10, they were allowed to shop for the best deal. In the past 10 years, Act 10 saved Wisconsin Public schools over \$5.2 billion in retirement and health care cost. In your opinion, has the OASD fully utilized these provisions? Are there areas that you would suggest the OASD could further cost savings? Do you support maintaining these provisions? Please discuss. Since the State of Wisconsin is constitutionally required to have a balanced budget I still fail to see how we were broke (the reasoning for enacting Act 10) with that being said I think that the OASD has utilized what ever "Tools" Act 10 gave us as much as we could and still keep a workforce. As for additional savings we are moving towards a self funded insurance model that is expected to generate savings. We have recently been examining our staffing levels in comparison to like sized districts finding where we are overstaffed and being able to alter these areas for budget savings.
6. What reforms, if any, would you support to fund public school operations? I have been and will always be a believer in STEAM education. I will continue working towards making the OASD the first district in Wisconsin to fully embrace STEAM Education.

7. The OASD lost student enrollment due to the Covid-19 situation. How do you plan to stop the exodus of children from our district either going to private schools or surrounding districts? How do you plan make up for the lost dollars from all of the students who have left the district in the last 12 months? I talked some on the decline in students in a previous question. To further elaborate This issue really needs to be looked at through the lens of COVID-19. The unknowns are how many of these students will come back to the OASD? Many students chose to enroll in a online school that was not run by the OASD but uses the same platform as we do. We will be reaching out to those students that want to remain online to enroll in our E-Academy. New schools transforms neighborhoods, new families move in and student numbers increases and we have two new schools in the process of being built. I feel that the future of the OASD is bright if we continue in the direction we are going.