

**Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce
Candidate Questionnaire**

Spring Election 2024 – Board of Education, Oshkosh Area School District

Please provide some personal background information.

- Name – Beth Wyman
- Occupation- Community Volunteer
- List any community activities you are involved with. – Currently I am the president of the OASD School Board, attend all OASD committee meetings and chair of the Oshkosh Yacht Club youth sailing program.

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?

There are four primary board responsibilities – 1. Setting policy which drives every board decision. 2. Community Leadership - Advocating for our district through community engagement and legislation. 3. Along with the superintendent, set the budget (always considering the impact that it will have on taxpayers and to serve as good financial stewards), vision, and expectations that will move the district forward. 4. Evaluate the superintendent to ensure that strategic goals are being met. The most important objective is to be visible and available to every constituent to ensure their voices are being heard.

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

Those items which distinguish me are my extensive leadership positions for not-for-profit boards and my volunteer involvement in the OASD.

Community Volunteer and Roles: I have been honored to serve as board president of the Paine Art Center, Oshkosh Public Museum, Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, UWO Foundation, Oshkosh Yacht Club, Oshkosh Yacht Club Sailing School, Inland Lakes Yachting Association.

Oshkosh Area School District Volunteer Roles:

Washington School: PTO President, Box Top For Education Promoter, Counter and Enthusiast. Along with Sara Kroll (now at Oakwood) raised enough money to replace the playground when it was taken away.

Webster Stanley – Helped complete the fundraising efforts for the auditorium chairs

Oshkosh North – Member of the redistricting committee, co-chair of the Bill Van Lieshout tennis court refurbishment and Light the Lights (court light project), Post prom chair and committee member

OASD – One of the founding members and chair for many years of Oshkosh4Education, a program to connect our school district with our community. Co-chair of the inaugural OASD Gala 2023 to benefit the arts/music. We were able to raise over \$106,000 which

directly impacted students. The accomplishment I am most proud of was the district's Curb Appeal project. A one-day community event where school and community members came together to beautify and enhance each school's curb appeal. I still get shivers when I think of everything, we accomplished that day.

3. The Department of Public Instruction produces annual report cards that show overall student achievement and engagement. While the Oshkosh Area School District received an overall score of 68.4, 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?

Our plans for every grade need to be consistent with built in content areas in literacy including phonetical concepts. By using rapid cycles of improvement and continuing to monitor intermittent iReady test results given in the classroom three times a year, we will ensure that similar concepts are being understood and are applicable. It is imperative that we recognize if a student is not at grade level so an individual plan can be developed at once. We will be adopting a K-5 new core curriculum for the 2025-2026 school year. A committee of teachers, administrators and community members has been formed to evaluate the proposed curriculum. They are looking at proposals which will include the Science of Reading foundation which is based on phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and phonics.

4. OASD is committed to ensuring all students graduate College, Career and Community Ready (CCCR). What qualities do you feel a student graduating College, Career and Community Ready possesses? Do you feel that OASD is currently succeeding in creating CCCR graduates? If not, what areas need improvement, and how would you help facilitate that as a member of the Board of Education?

We need to educate the whole student, meaning that each child has a passion that can be nurtured. The qualities of a successful student are one that is involved, empowered, and engaged in every aspect of school life. One area that we can continue to improve is by offering extracurricular activities and providing classes that allow a student to explore their passions and learn what interests them for the future. Improving reading and math scores for all students will provide a larger pool of students ready to be more successful after high school in college, careers, and community

5. Tech Education - the old Industrial Arts programs - has been slowly disappearing 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.

The CTE program continues to thrive and grow in the OASD. Recently a district wide program audit was completed. From this information the internship program director has developed Career Path Program Improvement plans in Manufacturing, Construction, Education, Healthcare and Business. These five areas account for nearly 70% of our labor

market. The district has made great strides in overhauling the school to work program as a manufacturing capstone experience for seniors. From a policy perspective, we have partnered with FVTC to ensure our students can participate in dual credit options and are more likely to be hired after graduation. As a district understand the need to educate many of our students in the trades. We need to continue to support our efforts to recruit, retain, and train licensed CTE staff and find business partners willing to work with our district on CTE initiatives, including curriculum facility upgrades and youth apprenticeship employers. These are all elements which are the hallmark of the ACE Program in Fond du Lac. The programs we are offering are making substantial inroads and partnerships with many local businesses. Any time we can bring in a professional into a classroom it has a positive impact, but we need to do so much more. I'm so pleased to see the increased CTE exposure in the Vel Phillips middle school. This year's annual OASD Gala is focusing on our CTE pathways and providing much needed equipment upgrades at our schools.

Here is more information about the 2024 Gala

<https://www.oshkosh.k12.wi.us/district/oshkosh-education-foundation/gala>

6. Long-Range Planning – Oshkosh has made significant progress regarding facility improvement, and current examples are the opening of the new Vel Phillips Middle School in the fall of 2023 and the new Menominee Elementary School, which is currently under construction. However, Oshkosh area residents have seen their annual OASD tax bills increase by over 30% since 2020. With an updated 10-year Facility Plan in place, please describe how you will stabilize and prioritize this expenditure growth 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, specifically our high schools.

The increased tax levy in 2020 was put into place to help the district financially fit Phases 2 and 3 of the Long-Range Facilities Plan, adopted by the Board in January 2020, into a future budget. We knew we needed to prepay debt to reduce the debt in future phases. By stepping up the tax levy the past three years and prepaying debt, we will be set up to move into phases 2 and 3 with a lower need for overall tax levy increases. Because of the pre-work payments we would be able to move into Phase 2 (South Park, North auditorium, expansion to Franklin, Oakwood, and Traeger Middle, close Roosevelt) with an increase potentially less than 1% next year. This means that we have gotten to the point where we can pass the next referendum with minimal tax impact for property owners. The method allows the district to flatten the tax impact and allows a small amount of prepayment so Phase 3 (new West High School) will also have a minimal impact on taxpayers. Phase 4 will address North High School renovations and updates. West High will be 64 years old, and North will be 52 years old this year. In the future we should not wait as long as we have to renovate and build schools. If we continue with our current financial plan, we should be able to touch a building at least once in a 90-year period.

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

One area that I would continue to support is additional state funding for special education. This area continues to grow, and the current funding model is not sustainable. Currently the state reimburses us at 33%. Many legislators requested 60% reimbursement. You can see the discrepancy. Many of our paraprofessionals work with our special ed students. We have recently modified their job descriptions and pay brackets to reflect their current responsibilities. They certainly have changed in the past 15 years.

I have no problem with school choice; however, it is important that community taxpayers fully understand the funding that is given to the voucher program. Currently the voucher program for parochial schools receives more per pupil than the public schools. Why? Currently our two parochial schools are 53% and 35% funded by the voucher program. However, our public schools (taxpayers) pay for the bussing for voucher school students and often provide special education services to the students there. Special education students in the voucher program receive 100% funding. There is talk that in two years our parochial schools may be 100% funded. That would mean that we have two educational systems. If the parochial schools are accepting that amount of funding what makes them a private school? This is a state issue that needs to be addressed.

8. WDPI studies report concerning trends within the current education workforce, including declining teacher retention rates on new teachers within their first five years, education program enrollment still below levels seen in 2008-09, and only 67% of possible new teachers entering the public education system along with high numbers of unfilled K-12 education positions. As a member of the Board of Education, what will you do to ensure improved retention rates among educators?

There are three areas:

1. **Creating and promoting a positive and engaged culture.** It has been shown that those that are involved in their workplace and enjoy coming to work every day (most days) tend to exude a positive learning culture. The staff engagement survey that is conducted twice a year tells us that we are meeting the mark. The new emphasis on principals being the leader of the building, both educationally and culturally, shows how important teacher and staff involvement is. We need to scream from the mountain tops of our successes. How exciting that our two high schools placed 1 and 3 in our athletic conference for the state report card. That rating says important things about every level of our education and most importantly that the longer the student is with us the more successful they are as a student and contributing member to society.
2. **Community Engagement.** We saw at the Vel Phillips open house the number of community members that want to help. With 80% of our voters not having children in school, it is critical that to give them the opportunity to be included in the positive impacts our schools have on our neighborhoods and the local work force. Volunteers can be a tremendous asset in aiding our staff and most importantly our students.
3. **Community.** The school district and the Chamber have reignited the partnership program between individual schools and business/organizations. These relationships will give students even more opportunities to be college, career, and community ready. There have been and will continue to be improvements to our community that will encourage community development which leads to an improved quality of life for all

Oshkosh residents. We are all in this together. One thing we learned from Oshkosh4Education is that businesses, employees, and their families come to communities that have a rock star public education. We are there and getting better.

9. The Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce is working with local businesses and the school district on programming to help create employable students. Some surrounding communities have created alternative/untraditional programming, such as the ACE Academy in Fond du Lac, that allows industry professionals to teach their skilled trade specialties directly to as many as 300 students within the existing school year using hands-on applications. With teacher shortages and upcoming building construction already in consideration, would you consider adding alternative education options into strategic planning conversations if supported by the local business population?

Absolutely, the ACE Academy in FdL has been extremely successful in engaging students in the fields of architecture, construction and engineering. Providing relevant education about each one of these fields allows students the opportunity to explore careers, get firsthand experiences, and gain industry specific knowledge. This year the OASD Gala held on May 3, 2024, will focus on fundraising opportunities to make our CTE experiences more relevant and industry focused. I would most definitely support discussions about adding alternative education options into the strategic plan. Here is the link with more information about the gala.

<https://www.oshkosh.k12.wi.us/district/oshkosh-education-foundation/gala>

10. What are the literacy challenges students face, and how would you address them?

The biggest hurdle students face is being left behind. We need to meet each student where they are and develop an individual plan to get them to grade level and challenge them even more to excel above grade level. As a board we need to ensure that there are adequate resources for extra help for struggling students. The curriculum needs to be rigorous and challenging. All of this is especially complex in achieving our goals given the 61 languages which are spoken in our district. Increasing our literacy rates is our number one priority because we know that an increase in literacy attracts the workforce, draws talent, and provides workers to the community. Students need to be proficient in reading, writing, and speaking to take advantage of the opportunities that await.

Hers is a link to the 2024 strategic plan. On page 5 you will find the KPIs for reading.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C-fi8NfiddE0xvaShUmO6f7XsG_ltx2U/view

Thank you to the Chamber for giving me the opportunity to tell you a bit more about myself and why I would like to serve again for another term.