

# **2015 ICCSD School Board Candidate Responses**

**[by Question and last name, alpha]**

## **ICEA School Board Interview Committee**

Alisa Meggitt, Chair

Monique Cottman

Robin Fields

Mitch Gross

Beth Hieronymus

Theresa Juhl

Nathan Kelley

Phil Lala

Brady Shutt

**1- Please share with us why you are running for the Board. Specifically highlight professional or personal experiences that will make you a good Board member as well as your top priorities if elected.**

LaTasha DeLoach

When I looked at the field of candidates that were running—and I'm sure they're all great people—I felt like I didn't see a diversity of candidates that corresponds to the diversity of our district. 34% of our students are minority youth. In 2015, we ought to expect that our school board reflects our students and families.

My graduate school education and professional practice as a social worker focus on mezzo- and macro-level policies and practices, and how they can positively or negatively impact children and families. Through my personal and professional engagement in our community, I am uniquely qualified to be a voice on the board that advocates for careful evaluation of the impact of our board-level decisions on all of our students and their families.

As a board member, I will advocate for equity in our policies and practices in a way that will lead to equity in our student achievement and outcomes. Another piece of this is creating a culture of clearer communication among the board, the administration, the teachers and staff, and our families. Transparency and accessibility are key to creating inclusive schools and community-wide investment.

Shawn Eystone

As I am struggling to type while bouncing around in the back of an RV, I realize that just about everything I do is for kids. That is the short answer to why I am running. I truly care about the kids. Since that sounds incredibly cheesy, I'll give the longer answer as well. In the last couple of years I have seen this district start to make big strides forward. This includes facilities upgrades, the hiring of high quality building administrators and a concerted effort for professional development amongst the teachers. I consider this success to be due in a large part to the ability of the board to simply work well with each other. I am concerned that with such a large turn over with the board this year, the momentum will be stalled with a return to a board that is not able to work well together.

I think my experience as a Manager for several years has given me the ability to communicate effectively with many types of personalities. With each employee I hire, I try to find out how each one best learns new procedures as well as what motivates them to improve.

My years with the District Wide Parents Organization, has given me a chance to visit all of the great schools in our district and meet teachers, parents and students from all across our district. Being on the executive board for the DPO was a rewarding albeit challenging experience. I have also enjoyed my time as the PTO treasurer for Garner Elementary. I have developed a great relationship with all of the staff there.

My number one priority is to work with the board and the rest of the community to put extreme pressure on the state legislature to significantly increase the amount of dollars being spent on education. More money simply means more flexibility. Not just more teachers to reduce class sizes, but adding teaching assistants, more instructional coaching or probably most important, getting the resources to each school that needs it so students don't have to be shipped out to another location to have their needs met.

Second, I am a supporter of the Facilities Master Plan and what it can offer to so many students across the district. In order to see all of these projects come to completion, we will need to show all of our community the positive gains that we will gain with the passing of the bond vote in 2017.

Todd Fanning

I decided to seek a seat on the Board because of my past experience (14 years on previous school board) and thought with my financial background (30 years in banking) I could help. I also love kids and am passionate about them getting the best education.

I am 53 and have lived in North Liberty for the past 3 years, originally from Illinois. I am a CPA and the CFO at the University of Iowa Community Credit Union, serving in the same capacity at a bank in Illinois for 22 years prior. Shortly after I came to the Iowa City area in 2012 I joined the district's Budget Advisory Committee. My wife and I have been married for 31 years and have 4 children.

1. Finances - making the most out of the resources we have, while looking for ways to be even more efficient.
2. Facilities - looking for ways to balance neighborhood schools with the diverse needs of the population in the district.
3. Unity - Helping to create a cohesive school district board that represents the best interests of all students.

#### Phil Hemingway

I want every student in our district to receive a high quality education and to have access to curriculum that will help them gain the skills they will need to excel in the 21st century. I firmly believe that the K-12 public education my daughter Monica received was second to none and it is the duty of the school board to ensure that this tradition of excellence continues. My nearly perfect attendance at board meetings over the last six years allowed me to develop a keen sense of the issues the board has had to deal with along with the processes that must be followed to resolve those issues. Based on what I've observed and on the comments of the many people that I've been privileged to talk to it seems our school board's biggest priorities should be: to provide oversight and stewardship of our district's resources including both financial and physical properties, to hold administration accountable for the decisions they make or don't make and in that way serve as the system of checks and balances, and to make sure that all community members are provided a forum where they can share their concerns without fear of censorship or reprisal. Our community members want a board and an administration that believes in transparency and open dialog.

#### Jason Lewis

I'm running for many reasons, but foremost among them, I want to be a board member that supports teachers and students. In my time as a parent at Mark Twain Elementary I have come to a new appreciation for the work teachers do. Every year, each teacher stands in front of a class of new students and resolves to move those students forward. That work is different for each child. Sometimes that work doesn't show up on test scores. Sometimes that work is not measurable in a spreadsheet. But teachers do that work every day. There have been times when appreciation of that work has not been forthcoming. Teacher morale is low and that needs to change.

As a member of the board, I want to help revitalize our relationship with teachers. As a labor-endorsed candidate, my respect for our teachers and other workers in our district is incredibly high. Teachers perform one of the most important jobs in our community. They pass on knowledge to the coming generation, they shepherd them through difficult times, and they are our partners in raising healthy, knowledgeable, well-adjusted students who are prepared to thrive. A teacher should never feel under appreciated. We have fallen short on that measure in our district and we need make that right. I want to serve on the board to do that work.

When I was young, I needed guidance and a special teacher was there for me. Howard Vollberg was my choir teacher in high school. He recognized talent in me early on, but I know now that he must have also see how much I was struggling. My parents had split and my father was no in my life. Money was tight. I was a sad kid, confused.

Mr. Vollberg was the first person in my life that really made me believe in myself. He made me believe that my talent as a singer was valuable, that I was valuable. He made opportunities for me, creating new choral groups for me and my classmates to perform in. He staged musicals so we could have those opportunities. He was the person who wrote away for college applications and helped me fill them out. He arranged for scholarship auditions and drove me home when practice kept me after school.

I got a scholarship in voice to West Virginia University thanks to him. I went to college almost exclusively at his encouragement.

The year after I graduated, he was shot by a hitchhiker and died a year later. I couldn't bring myself to go to his funeral. I have regretted that every day since. In some way, I offer my service on the school board and in the community as a way to honor the man, the teacher, he was. If I can be part of a system that gives another student the chance to know a teacher like Mr. Vollberg, I will honor his memory as he honored his role as my mentor.

#### Chris Liebig

I suppose I've come at this through an unusual path. When my kids started school, I was very struck by how many school policies seemed to come from the top down in a way that seemed to bear no relationship to what people would want for their kids. I learned that most of these policies were driven by decisions at the federal and state levels that were essentially insulated from any

meaningful democratic control. But I found that even on issues that the district had full control over, this same top-down ethic seemed to prevail, with many decisions seeming to originate with administrators with only minimal input from the board. I was concerned enough about these issues that I began blogging about them, which helped me better develop my understanding of them and also led me to become more active in the local school system.

My main reason for running is to try to help the board fulfill its role as the only democratically accountable element in what would otherwise be a largely closed system. That means trying to protect kids as much as possible from state and federal decisions that are harmful, and trying to ensure that the district's own decisions are responsive to the community and not just driven by the administration's preferences.

I won't compare myself to a K-12 teacher, because I know how challenging that job must be. But I am a teacher – I teach legal analysis, writing, and research to first-year law students at the University of Iowa, full-time – which does give me a good deal of sympathy for the role of rank-and-file teachers who have to actually execute the policies that come down from above. I've been very lucky, because in my workplace teacher autonomy is still valued and, although my group of instructors is not tenure-track, we have been given a great deal of respect and status and treated like valued professionals. It is good policy – that is, it will help give kids a better education – to give K-12 teachers the kind of respect and autonomy that we have traditionally given to post-secondary teachers.

#### Brian Richman

I'm running because I care deeply about the future of our children in the greater Iowa City area. I have two young children who will be in first and third grade this fall, and I believe that they and all of the kids in our community should benefit from the exceptional educational experience that has, for decades, been a hallmark of the Iowa City area schools.

That said, I believe we're standing at a crossroads where the future of our schools depends more than ever on making smart decisions. Coming at us from one direction is the ongoing transformation of our community: our population of school-aged children is growing, the footprints of our cities are expanding, and, as always, our expectations are evolving. From the other direction, political and policy issues are coming toward us: a divided legislature, state limits on school funding, and an increased focus nationally on new curricula, testing, teacher performance, and more.

We need to steer the District across that busy highway and keep moving forward. We can do that by putting leaders in place who are open-minded, ethical, and willing to invest the time to understand complex issues—leaders who are unafraid to ask hard questions of the administration and to push for good decisions.

As for my background, I became a full-time faculty member at the University of Iowa's College of Business in 2008. I teach in the Finance Department and serve as director of the Hawkinson Institute of Business Finance. Prior to coming to Iowa City, I spent a dozen years as a banker and financial advisor to state and local governments, schools, and other public agencies and districts. I was a partner at De La Rosa & Co. in San Francisco, where I spearheaded more than \$2 billion of bond financings for educational facilities. Before that, I was vice president at Public Resources Advisory Group in Los Angeles. I also served on the Iowa City Housing and Community Development Commission for six years, including two years as its chairman.

My experience as an educator and as a public sector advisor has prepared me to serve our schools at a moment in time when, as I said above, the future depends on making smart decisions for our children.

As for my priorities, I'm hoping to foster a board that:

- Is fully transparent in its deliberations and decisions
- Chooses long-term fiscal health over short-term quick fixes
- Builds the trust of the community and values input from stakeholders
- Implements a facilities strategy that both accommodates growth and respects neighborhoods
- Serves as a unifying voice for the community
- And most importantly, ensures that our schools are great places for our kids to learn, explore and grow

### Paul Roesler

I grew up in Iowa City, attending Lucas Elementary, South East Junior High, City High and The University of Iowa. My wife, Brandi, and I have made Iowa City our Home. Brandi, as some of you might know is a teacher at Mark Twain Elementary and also a product of schools in Iowa City (Hoover, South East, City High and The University of Iowa). My daughters, Jaiden and Emerson, currently attend Lemme Elementary. We choose to remain in Iowa City for its quality of life, with the quality of education being a top factor.

I've worked for Scheels for the past 17 years. My current position as the Events and Donations Leader allows me the chance to give back to our community on behalf of Scheels. I have to be creative, balance requests from all over the area, and be fiscally responsible with my money and work with in my allocated budget. I have been able to work with many organizations ranging from the United Way, to the Ronald McDonald House, to the ICCSD. Serving on the Board is another way that I feel I can continue to contribute to this great community.

I have been involved with school activities for many years, serving on the Lemme PTA, the District Parent Organization, and several committees including the hiring of principals for Lemme and South East, the mascot and logo committee for Liberty High School. In the past two years I have attended almost every school board and district committee meeting. I have learned a lot, and my dedication to district issues has helped convince me, and my wife, that seeking a spot on the board at this time is a good idea.

Why the two year spot vs the four year spot? That decision was easy, I am very determined to help get the GO Bond passed in 2017. This seat will lead right up to the 2017 election and the crucial vote. We need to be able to finish what we have started.

### Lori Roetlin

I decided to run for school board for two main reasons:

- 1) I feel I have a skill set that is not represented on the board in the applicant pool, nor the remaining members of the board. I am a social worker with over 20 years of experience working with families and children. I am very familiar with the needs of some of the most disadvantaged families in our district and the barriers that they face to full participation in our district. I want to help the board make decisions that do not negatively impact opportunities for our least advantaged students by erecting barriers. I want to be part of realistic and creative problem solving that makes school more accessible to our low income children and families.
- 2) I feel that for the board to effectively make decisions that are best for the entire district, it is important to have representation from all areas of the district (geographically) as well as include parents of both elementary and secondary school students. I am the only candidate that is from Coralville and I have a child currently in elementary school, two areas that I feel are under-represented in the current board, as well as the current applicant pool.

My top priorities are

- 1) Help the board become more collaborative with each other, with the teachers in our district, and with our district families. There would be great benefit to the ICCSD board and school community in reducing conflict and harnessing all of the creative and dedicated people we have at our disposal. I feel it is critical for the new board to be more collaborative than it has in the past, in order for the community to support passage of the bond issue that will provide the remaining funding needed for the facilities master plan. It is very important that the bond issue pass, and in my opinion, better collaboration is a means to passage.
- 2) Improve educational outcomes at ALL our schools. I believe this needs to be addressed in multiple ways, with one of the tools being redistricting. I want to see redistricting decisions that do NOT require excessive bussing of less fortunate students for the purpose of balance.

### Megan Schwalm

I have been actively engaged in the Iowa City community for over a decade and feel that the time has come for me to seek elected office so that I can work to create change at a more systemic level. I have a desire to help create a district that is fair and equitable. My top priorities include keeping kids first, administrative accountability, and respect for staff.

I work as an independent diversity consultant and trainer, focused on cultural competency, implicit bias, and bystander intervention. In addition, I facilitate sessions at national conferences, camps, and retreats about transracial parenting through adoption, which

focuses on issues such as building community, white privilege, and bystander interventions. I am in the process of completing her Ph.D. (ABD) in Educational Policy and Leadership Studies at the University of Iowa.

Prior to my work as diversity consultant and trainer, I worked in the Chief Diversity Office at the University of Iowa as a Diversity Resources Coordinator where I developed, implemented, and facilitated programs related to women's leadership development and diversity. I also worked at the Women's Resource and Action Center as the Program Coordinator for Iowa NEW Leadership and WRAC's Group Services Coordinator. I have held positions as an Adjunct Faculty member at the University of Iowa and Brown Mackie College, Director of Recreational Therapy at the State of Iowa Mental Health Institute, Child Welfare Specialist at Bethany for Children and Families, and a Lead Youth Counselor for the Family Resources Domestic Violence Shelter in the Quad Cities.

I am an active member of the Iowa City community. I am engaged in a great deal of work around autism and special education. I am currently working on a statewide autism safety task force. I serve on the Johnson County Compensation Commission and am the Social Media Manager for the Grant Wood Neighborhood Association. I am the former co-chair of Iowa City's Coalition for Racial Justice and served on the Board of Directors for the Dream Center. Along with the Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County, I developed a young women's support group, which grew into a mentoring program with the Women's Resource and Action Center. I spearheaded the Million Hoodie March in 2012, which was a large-scale community rally addressing issues of racial profiling

#### Lucas Van Orden

Because I felt it was time for a non-partisan, straightforward individual to step up and run. The past 10-15 years had seen the ICCSD board comprised of individuals who bring to the table a wealth of individual talent, yet lack the impetus to put it to productive use. At this moment we find an astonishing opportunity to bring together a totally fresh gathering of individuals, crafting one voice of progress for our children, and the entire community. I feel that my background as a life-long Iowa City resident, local business owner, and father of three boys in the school district afford me the requisite background. Bringing to the table an articulate voice of reason, but being able to ask questions from the perspective of one who has not been embroiled in the previous wrangling of seeming dysfunction is a profound benefit.

As for my top priorities... I would like to see a ground up reexamination of the roles and responsibility of all the stakeholders in the school district. That begins with the Board, as the public face of the school district. Their role as our visionary and executive entity in the district has faltered over the years. Educating the public as to how the school district BEST functions (from a structural and logistic standpoint) and empowering them to use it to their fullest advantage. Restoring public faith in the school board and administration is of vital importance to move forward. Lastly... It would help us ALL a great deal if those involved would ratchet down the rhetoric, and focus on substance. I am comfortable speaking my mind, and asking ALL participants to dispense with the colorful (and often abusive personal attacks) and get to the point. Our focus should always be on caring for the children and stakeholders today, while building quality substance for those who follow over decades to come.

#### Brianna Wills

I have four small children in our district and I believe in teaching by example. I firmly believe in the idea that education can be the great equalizer in society and any great community must have educated, invested citizens to help guide their thoughts and decisions. Serving a community as a public servant, is how citizen help shape their community values, model the democratic process to our children, and steer public discourse.

In the past four years, I have served this district in multiple avenues including the District Wide Parents' Organization (DPO) in several roles including Co-President, PTA President, ICCSD Foundation Board, several staff hiring committees, PERL Levy Committee, and the Magnet School Committee. I subscribe to the thought that if something isn't right, roll up your sleeves and fix it.

Professionally, I recently coordinated the Johnson County Toys for Tots program and fundraised for a local non-profit. Additional experiences include project management, special events, community relations and public relations. These skills relate directly to communicating more efficiently and effectively with other board member, the administration, students, teachers and the community as a whole.

My top priorities include supporting the implementation of the 10 year master facilities plan, advocating for the GO Bond in 2017, investigating ways for our district to further pursue environmentally sustainable energy options, and enhancing supports surrounding reading literacy to address next year's 3rd grade proficiency retention program.

#### Tom Yates

I am running for the Board because I continue to care about Iowa City schools. I've tried to fully "retire" from education, but I find myself listening to teachers, paying attention to our education issues, and going to Board meetings. As a teacher of 31 years in the district, and ICEA president prior to and even post-retirement, I bring a wealth of personal experience to my candidacy. I was in office when almost all of the current administration came into the district, and that gives me a working knowledge that no other candidate shares.

My top priorities are in order:

1. Support Teachers. When teachers are allowed and encouraged to be the best teachers they can be, the kids will be taken care of. When parents know this, they trust the schools. When the schools are trusted, families become valued stakeholders in their schools.
2. Process: We must develop smart, ongoing and genuine processes for making intelligent decisions. The negotiation teams that produce the Negotiated Agreement, and the Insurance Committee are two examples of successful ongoing processes.
3. Equality: Resources must be allocated appropriately and with parity to ensure that there are no gaps in service. Elementary schools need fulltime librarians and counselors. Class sizes must be held in check.

**2. In the past two years, what do you think the Board's biggest success has been and what do you think it's biggest failure has been?**

#### DeLoach

The board's commitment to strategic planning is key to providing more stability and clarity in the way it functions. How do you 1) know where you're going and 2) work toward sustainable growth without a clear purpose?

The biggest failure has been the long term systemic impacts on the lives of children and families, particularly children of color and low income families. There can be a lack of forethought about how particular decisions might impact our students who need a higher degree of support in order to succeed. Decisions about bussing, special education staffing, and other issues have not been successful or well-received largely because we are missing this piece when we begin discussions.

#### Eyestone

The biggest success by far was the creation and implementation of the Facilities Master Plan. This truly was a concerted effort to involve the community in creating a plan that serves every student.

Since it is still fresh in my mind and I continue to hear complaints about it, the way they decided the change to the start and end times for school day was handled poorly. They had a couple of plans put together and came back with a completely different one with little to no input.

#### Fanning

Having only lived here three years it appears to me that developing a Master Facilities Plan is a huge success. It does appear that trust and communication from the Board are areas that need improvement.

### Hemingway

The biggest success has been the Facilities Master Plan; its biggest failure has been our administrations consistent policy of ignoring community and staff concerns.

### Lewis

The board has had greater success working as a team. I credit much of this progress to board president Chris Lynch, who has done a great job leading the meetings and implementing a process that's fostered better work and clearer expectations. The meetings seem more productive and the demeanor of the board overall has been more positive. This is a much needed change, as the community's relationship with the district and the board has been weakened over the years because of a lack of focus and structure.

The greatest failing of the board, however, lies in its inability to identify and commit to solutions for our toughest challenges. I had the opportunity to serve on the Magnet School Task Force last year. It was very rewarding work and I finished my time with that body more convinced that magnet schools are a potentially powerful option to help offset some of the challenges we face. Our group identified best practices for planning, implementing, funding and sustaining successful magnet programs. We were called together to do this work because there was significant interest in the community regarding these programs. We presented our report, complete with next steps for engaging the community, sourcing needed funds, identifying programs that reflected community values, and how to successfully build and sustain magnets in our community. I feared that would be the last we heard of the work and that the hard for of the 20-plus members that comprised the committee would go for naught. A few days after our presentation, I asked a board member when further discussion would occur regarding magnets. I was told it was unlikely before 2019.

Needless to say, I was disappointed. I don't expect the board to be imprudent and I understand the financial challenges we face, but it's important we continue to grow and adapt if we hope to remain a vibrant, vital district and to find solutions for our challenges, particularly when the solutions we've attempted haven't garnered results. There are times when being risk averse is prudent, and times when we need to step outside the norm and try something new. The board has not been adept at doing this and I hope that changes. I hope to be part of that change, along with the teachers and administrators inside our buildings.

### Liebig

I think we have to give the last two boards a lot of credit for addressing the district's facilities needs with a facilities master plan. Many school buildings were in great need of renovation, and air conditioning in particular was way overdue. We had way too many "temporary" buildings, and some schools just had too many kids for the available space. This situation needed addressing, and the board finally addressed it in a comprehensive way. I don't agree with all the particulars of the facilities plan (for example, I think the Hoover closure is unnecessary and needlessly puts bond approval at risk), but overall the plan has been a very important step forward.

I want to be careful talking about "failures," since (unfortunately) so much of what happens in our school system is driven by federal and state mandates that are beyond our control, and the board is often faced with choosing the lesser of many evils. I do think the board could do a better job distinguishing between policies that we really have no choice about and situations where we can find ways to stay more true to what the ICCSD community wants. I also think the board has been too ready to defer to the administration on issues where community value judgments should come to bear. For example, I don't think the recent change to the bell schedule was adequately explained or justified; I also don't think the continual talk of school closures as a way to save operating expenses reflects what this community wants.

I think the board could do a better job of hearing all sides of the argument before acting on administrative proposals, and should insist that proposals are (1) developed only after consultation with the people who are affected by them, and (2) made with enough lead time that all of the relevant arguments can be heard.

### Richman



The board's biggest success has been getting the Facilities Master Plan passed and actually getting dirt moved, buildings built and classrooms modernized. We're a rapidly growing community with a significant need for new and updated school facilities, and it's heartening to see those needs being addressed.

The board's most notable failure has been losing the trust of a significant number of stakeholders. I've spoken with teachers at multiple schools who feel unable to openly express their views or ideas to their principals or to other administrators. I've also spoken with a significant number of parents who feel they've been disenfranchised by a barrage of inaccurate information, poorly interpreted data and misdirection coming from the board with respect to facilities, budgeting and other issues.

#### Roesler

- Within the past two years the Board has made a lot of decisions and the biggest success, that will impact the most students and teachers, is working with the administration and the community to develop and implement the 10 Year Facility Master Plan. You cannot deny that this really is the first time that we have had a long term vision for the district that is planned out and easily ready for anyone to see. You can see that all schools are being updated; we aren't just building new schools.

- The biggest failure is not completely the Board's fault but one that the Board takes the blame for and that is the growing lack of trust in what the board is deciding and doing. The challenge with the next board, especially with 5 brand new members, is how do we build that trust back up? We need to make sure that we are working just as hard to improve the school district as we are to rebuilding the trust in the district, the board, and the Administration. The most common response I have gotten from people when they found out I decided to run for the Board is "Good, I don't trust the current Board." We can't continue to operate effectively if the public feels that way.

#### Roetlin

I feel the board's biggest success has been the development and implementation (in 2015/16) of the Resource Allocation Model.

I think the biggest failure was the new bell schedule, with secondary students starting earlier and elementary students starting later in the morning. Research shows that secondary students do better with a later start time. Conversely, elementary students need an earlier start time so that quality instructional time isn't lost at the end of the day when they are the most fatigued. This was a decision that affects every student in our district and I think it should have been given more due process.

#### Schwalm

One of the biggest successes is passing the Facilities Master Plan and sticking with it. In the past, one of the main complaints our community had about the School Board was that they would roll out plans, stir the community up, and then retract their plan. Passing and maintaining the Facilities Master Plan was a major accomplishment.

The Board's biggest failure has been a lack of engagement (students, staff, and community) and transparency in decision-making processes like the development of the diversity policy and Facilities Master Plan. It is imperative that those who are most effected by district decisions have a voice at the decision making table. Furthermore, stakeholders should feel confident that the information they are receiving is true, accurate, and that any questions they have will be answered in a transparent and timely manner.

#### Van Orden

Crafting, and passing the Facilities Master Plan.

As for failure... The board lost the public's respect and trust, by allowing itself to lose its focus on the core mission and obligation to the entire process.

### Wills

In the past year, the board has changed the redistricting process in regards to how redistricting maps are created and the public input into that process. The board and administration working through several iterations of maps of redistricting as a team was an efficient and effective way to improve previous processes of redistricting. Although the process wasn't flawless, it is a solid process structure to build upon as the board moves into two separate redistricting rounds (Grant and Hoover East) in the near future.

In general, the administration AND the board are disconnected with the publics they serve---struggling to effectively communicate intentions, decisions and the consequences of those decisions. I believe open communications with parents and teachers can be improved using all the multi-channel media options already available.

### Yates

The Board has had two successes: this year, the Board's approval of a 3% package for teachers was brave in the light of the legislature's failure to approve adequate funding. The other major success was FINALLY getting a compromise agreement to current and future high school attendance boundaries.

Its biggest failure has been its own dysfunction, which current Board members have acknowledged (freely, if not in the public eye). The Board seems to be directed or misdirected by the administration, and that has not helped Board function.

### **3. In your view, what is the appropriate role for ICEA--the teacher's union--to play in the District's decision making process?**

### DeLoach

Teachers are in the classroom every day and know the skills and needs of our students. When there is a committee or group formed to look at a specific issue, we should be able to make sure that an ICEA rep is participating and sharing information back and forth with teachers in all our schools. This responsibility should be shared by the administration--clear communication with teachers throughout the process.

I'm aware of some times when teachers learned of a decision at the same time as the general community. As an employer, the ICCSD has a responsibility to its teachers and staff to improve communication.

### Eyestone

It's important for the ICEA to take an advisory role to both administration and the Board. This input will be critical for the long term success of any decisions made for the District. Changes are always difficult to embrace, but can be made easier and more effective with input and buy-in from all sides.

### Fanning

I think it is important to have the teachers' input and have them as a partner. In my previous experience, when the Board-Teacher relationship is strong it leads to more successful schools. It would be important for me that the Board have an Education or Curriculum committee that meets regularly with ICEA leadership.

### Hemingway

I see the ICEA as being vital to the success of our district. They have helped shaped policies and those policies have resulted in benefits to our district's highly qualified educators and to our students. Because of their diligence we are one of the few "destination" districts for teachers and we have a very high retention rate as compared to other districts in our state. The ICEA's advocacy for teachers and students continues to be a key contributing factor to the success of our schools. As a Board Member I

would want to strengthen the relationship and would urge the Board and Superintendent to provide a permanent chair for a representative from the ICEA at all Board meetings. Only allowing an ICEA representative to speak once a month at board meetings is serious mistake because they are the boots on the ground in our classrooms who truly have their collective fingers on the pulses of our youth. They are highly qualified and their input and expertise should be better utilized. .

#### Lewis

Obviously, the ICEA plays a huge role in collective bargaining for the teachers. That role should be ongoing and strengthened. The ICEA should also be an active part of the decision making process at the district level. As I understand it, teachers are rarely part of district-wide decision making and that needs to change. I'd like to see an advisory committee of teachers from across the district formed to work closely with the administration on changes that will impact the whole district, if such a committee doesn't already exist. If it does, I'd like to make that committee stronger and more visible.

The impression I have is that the administration takes a very top-down approach when making decision about curricular change and other issues. I'd like to see teachers at the table early in these decision making processes so they can feel they play a role in the future of the work they do. I look forward to hearing ideas and facilitating these changes as a board member.

I would like to see teachers feel more comfortable advocating for themselves, their colleagues and the students at the district level. I've heard numerous stories of teachers remaining silent for fear of reprisals and no one should have to work under those conditions. The ICEA could—and I'm sure does—play a pivotal role a voice for teachers who feel they have no voice. I'd like to support that role as a member of the board.

#### Liebig

Teachers are on the front lines and have invaluable information about what is actually happening in the classrooms with the kids, about what is working and what is not working, and about what might need to change. The union is a great vehicle for expressing that information, especially since individual teachers are sometimes reluctant to raise issues on their own. (See question #12, below.) The district should be seeking out teachers' opinions on policies that will affect them or their classrooms.

#### Richman

I've been answering these questions out of order, and in the interest of reducing your reading load, I'm going to refer you to my response to Question 11 below for some of my thinking on this matter. In the context of that answer—which is, essentially, that the teachers should have a voice in change management issues that directly affect the classroom environment and the student experience—I think the ICEA is an appropriate organization to serve as that voice at the District level. There may also be other teacher groups that could or should participate in this role alongside the ICEA.

With regards to areas that are not as directly tied to the classroom experience (development of new facilities, establishing boundaries, legislative and intergovernmental relations, to name just a few), I think the ICEA, as the voice of the teachers, should have the same type of input to the process that other important stakeholders (e.g., parents and the community at large) have.

#### Roesler

- The ICEA needs to be the voice of the teachers as well as the students. Too many times I have been told that teachers don't feel comfortable talking about issues or making their opinions heard. There is a fear of them being targeted in a negative way if they were to engage. That disconnect is where the ICEA can help out. The ICEA has to be able to speak for those that don't want to speak out or find a way to get the teachers to feel comfortable engaging. If the Board is not being made aware of the teachers thoughts on a subject then we aren't getting input from the experts.

#### Roetlin

In my view, the teachers union should make sure that teachers are treated in such a way as to keep their morale up. If teachers do not feel that they are being treated fairly, and are not compensated well, their morale will suffer which will then decrease the level of quality in their instruction, and lead to poor retention. Therefore, I think the district should be looking to ICEA for assistance in determining how to best take care of our teachers. There will not always be agreement on what is able to be funded, but I think the process should be a collaborative positive process, not a contentious one.

#### Schwalm

I strongly believe it is necessary that teachers and paraeducators play a key role in the decision-making processes in the district. The ICEA plays an important role in ensuring that staff have a voice at the table when decisions are being made.

#### Van Orden

The ICEA, and it's members are all part of the process. You represent the teachers and staff that comprise the very core of our existence. Clearly we cannot expect to resolve differences, and craft a forward looking plan if you are not at the table. All participants need to be willing to be open to new and creative solutions. All the stakeholders need to agree that the BEST solution is the one that works with boots on the ground, and provides for the children we serve. The 3<sup>rd</sup> grader sitting in an over-filled classroom, with an over-worked teacher doesn't give a damn why it got that way, they only care that we work to rectify the situation.

#### Wills

Teachers are an integral part of our district. I would like teachers to feel freer to voice concerns within our district and to participate openly in discussion without fear of reprisal. I'm not an educational expert. I have never been a teacher and as a board member, I would value insight into decisions by the experts in the classroom every day.

#### Yates

The ICEA has to be the "go-to" organization for teacher input, and that input needs to be heard and acted upon. Top-down decision-making about curriculum and assessment is wrong-headed. It's really that simple: the ICEA has teachers of every curricular area in its membership, which means that it contains THE experts in actual education of children.

#### **4. There has been considerable debate in our District regarding the role that diversity data should play when making decisions about school boundaries. What is your philosophy on this issue?**

#### DeLoach

Because of the way our communities developed and due to missed opportunities, we have inherited a school district that is economically and racially segregated. A child at any one of our schools should be able to receive an outstanding education. Appreciating and cultivating diversity is a learned skill and it takes time and practice—it's one that our children need in order to be leaders in a global society.

School boundaries aren't the only solution that we should use. Where they make sense and don't create unnecessary barriers, they can be one tool toward greater equity and community-building. There is a need to be more collaborative with our local governments with future plans for our community. Simply using boundaries won't eliminate our disparities.

#### Eyestone

To me diversity can come in many different forms. Using one set of numbers to come to some sort of balance is not the correct approach. We need to work with the municipalities on better city planning for mixed housing as well as creating welcoming

environments to all residents. Obviously we can't change overnight who lives where, so I would much rather look at each student population and ensure that they have what they need in place at the school they should be attending rather than sending them somewhere else.

### Fanning

This is a complex issue that needs more study on my part, but I realize a balance needs to be found between diversity issues and attending neighborhood schools. There will never be a solution that pleases everyone, but my first instinct is that the educational reasons and affect to families should always come first. I am in favor of the current Facilities Master Plan knowing that a District that fails to plan is ultimately planning to fail. That being said, it has to continue to be under review as needs change. I do not have any current changes to the plan other than for the Board to keep an open mind.

### Hemingway

My work in many different countries schooled me and instilled my strong belief in the benefits of a diverse community. Diversity enriches the educational experience by preparing our children for work in an increasingly diverse and varied work force. I also believe the best school for any student is the one closest to their home. Every child's neighborhood school is where their playground is, where they feel most directly supported and comfortable. When I first ran for the board in 2011, I talked about reallocating resources, not relocating students. By the end of that 2011 board race all candidates took my lead and basically parroted my sentiments. However, those same candidates who became board members did not stand by that campaign promise. The reality is our district has schools which have greater needs than others and they necessarily should receive greater resources and assistance to ensure equitable outcomes of our students. Bussing students at great cost to our district from a SINA school to a low FRL school will not stop the achievement gap; allocation of additional resources to SINA School will. We need to start using our imagination and solicit input from our well educated and vested citizens to come up with solutions to our achievement gaps and to stop making claims that redistributing students is the answer. The only thing this proposed solution does is make the coffers at Durham swell. We have a limited amount of financial resources and we need to spend those dollars wisely with the best interest of our students in mind.

### Lewis

Diversity data is incredibly valuable. It can give us the baseline knowledge we need to begin the hard work we need to do. It's widely accepted that more diverse, balanced schools are better teaching and learning environments. I share that belief.

I do feel that diversity data should be used cautiously and in conjunction with other measures. Traditionally, we have filled our schools using one method: drawing lines on a map. This single metric has proved to be insufficient, creating rancor in the community and misperceptions about our schools, who nearly everyone understands that diversity is a valuable goal. We have fantastic schools, amazing teachers and skilled leaders in every building, but every school is different. Boundaries and balance are important, but there has to be a balanced approach to seeking balance. We should be able to celebrate the unique community each school creates while moving toward district-wide balance. We need to explore other tools and other measures to aid in this process. That's one reason why magnet schools are on my radar. I'm sure there are other ways to achieve these goals using more tools than those we have employed in the past. I want to learn more and listen to options as a member of the board. We need to engage teachers and learn from their experience to build plans that take that information into account.

### Liebig

I want to start this answer by saying to students who are members of a racial minority or are from families that are struggling economically or otherwise: You are welcome here, in any of our schools, period. I'm afraid that's not always the message that is conveyed in the discussions of this issue.

My sense is that most families (whether rich, poor, or in between) strongly value being able to attend a nearby school if there is one. I do not think there is sufficient public support for boundary plans that send kids to schools much farther from their homes when

there is a school close by. More importantly, I do not think that such plans are favored even by their primary intended beneficiaries – economically struggling families. (If they were, that would weigh heavily in my evaluation of those plans.)

When there is no nearby school, or when there is more than one nearby school, there can be opportunities to use the redistricting process (which has to occur, since new schools are opening) to prevent a situation where there are some “rich schools” and some “poor schools.” There may also be other creative ideas (sister schools?) toward that end. But I think we need to recognize that there are limits to what redistricting can do to address the problems of poverty and income inequality. We need to find ways to give every kid the best education we can, wherever they are.

Boundary plans are always a matter of choosing the lesser of evils, because we have to work with the schools and locations that we have, not the ones we wish we had. New schools are opening, so boundaries have to be redrawn, and there is no way of making everyone happy. Sometimes capacity constraints alone prevent the district from being able to send everyone to their preferred school.

#### Richman

What the District is presumably endeavoring to accomplish by balancing diversity within the schools is to narrow disparities in achievement among students at different schools. Addressing achievement issues and equalizing learning opportunities for the children of our community is a laudable goal and one I certainly think the District should pursue.

We need to recognize, though, that redrawing boundaries is only one of the tools available to accomplish this goal and that it is a tool with drawbacks. The first drawback is that boundaries designed to equalize demographics mean that, on average, students in the district will attend school farther from their homes. We’re seeing this to some extent at the elementary level and more clearly in the proposed attendance areas for the junior high and high schools. For families who prefer their children attend school closer to home, this creates challenges.

The increased travel distance also means that the District ends up spending significantly more of its limited operating dollars on transportation costs—money that could otherwise be directed to classrooms and extracurricular opportunities.

I recognize that some boundary changes are necessary to address disparities. But I believe that to accomplish its educational goals, the District must also direct more resources for teachers, support staff and programming into schools where there are measurable populations of students who would benefit from enhanced academic resources. This would mean that those schools might in certain instances and at certain grade levels have somewhat smaller class sizes or greater auxiliary support than my kids have at their school, for instance. (This would likely extend beyond existing federal “title” support.) But if the effort is managed properly and if it helps improve educational outcomes District-wide, I believe it’s a reasonable approach to consider.

#### Roesler

- This board, and past boards, has started us down the right path while developing the current Equity Policy. We need to focus on getting the best education for all students in the district. We need diverse schools in our district, kids need to learn in diverse schools and I firmly believe teachers enjoy teaching a diverse group of kids. Drawing boundaries and changing the norm has been a hard issue for this community to deal with. We need to keep making these tough decisions while in the same time making sure that we are getting the positive message out to the community how diverse populations in schools are good for all kids and teachers. We have to look beyond our own backyards and think what is best for the entire district, as we are one district.

#### Roetlin

I will answer this question assuming you are referring to SES, ELL, and Special Needs, when you use the term diversity, since that is how it has been defined most recently in the context of redistricting discussions.

There are great differences in the above listed categories between our elementary schools. I feel that there needs to be more emphasis on balancing those numbers in our elementary schools, since the divergence between the lowest numbers and the highest numbers is much larger at the elementary level (than at the secondary level). Being that we are a public school district (and not private school), I think it is the job of our board members and administration to see that the educational experience from one

building to the next is similar. Currently, there is a tremendous difference in the educational experience with such a large spread between the schools that have the least FRL students (7%), and those with the most (75%). However, I think that boundaries need to be changed in a way that does not lead to bussing kids long distances, and does not involve bussing kids that live extremely close to a school. I think the financial and hardship costs of bussing kids long distances is not an appropriate use of resources, even with the stated purpose being to balance our schools. There are places in our district where there are schools with very high poverty within close geographic proximity to another school with very low poverty. Those are the places that I think need to be targeted for better balance as bussing would be minimal.

#### Schwalm

Diversity data should absolutely be taken into consideration when making decisions about school boundaries. Though not solely the fault of the district, our schools are exceedingly racially segregated. Moving forward, we need to figure out how to desegregate our schools in a way that is reasonable and minimally invasive.

#### Van Orden

All information... regardless of how uncomfortable of a picture it may paint needs to be examined. Like good economic policy, the best solution is seldom found in solely one form. The ICCSD would be well served by sitting with their counterparts in elected government and JCCOG, vowing to examine the situation together.

#### Wills

I feel the two-prong approach that has evolved in the last year is the best match for our community right now. The Weighted Funding Model in addition to the redistricting of parts of the community, as new schools are opened, pair nicely to help us look at ways to balance schools that align to student's needs.

#### Yates

I understand the use of the word "data" above, but every time I hear it, I think, "This is a generic word for real human beings, who happen to be our students." So the question is, what is best for them?

My philosophy is this, and I've come to this recently, to be honest: I'm a believer in neighborhood schools. When resources are appropriately delivered to schools, those schools function well and become an important part of the neighborhood. If this means the district needs to hire qualified minority teachers to be part of those "resources", then that should be done.

The "data" around the country shows that diverse school populations with proper resources close achievement gaps. I'm not in favor of bussing children around to force some broad definition of educational "equality".

One of the Superintendent Directions is that no school should have above a 20% FRL population. This is not going to happen.

**5. Teachers face an ever increasing number of time-consuming requirements from local, state and federal initiatives focusing on math and reading test scores and data collection. What role(s) do you see the Board playing in addressing teacher concerns about this?**

#### DeLoach

The district has to do its best to protect our classrooms from the unintended negative consequences of state and federal initiatives. We need feedback from teachers to understand how these regulations and initiatives impact their ability to educate their students. Some degree of testing and data collection is important and useful, and that has to be balanced with the other important

responsibilities our teachers have. The board can provide leadership and facilitate communication to set priorities and make sure that our teachers have the resources and time needed to do their best work.

### Eyestone

With state and federal laws being what they are, our district, along with many others, has to meet certain expectations to be in compliance. That naturally places focus on whatever metric is needed to comply with the laws. We have to have some sort of measurement, just as the students do, to determine if we are making positive gains. The Board could look into ways of doing separate independent record keeping and assessments to free the teachers up for instruction time as well as professional development.

### Fanning

Again, as mentioned in question 3, having regular communication would be a start. We do need to regularly monitor data to assess improvement but also need to consistently review resources and class sizes to help teachers develop the best learning environment.

### Hemingway

Listen, listen and then listen some more. They are the true experts and their input is vital if we are truly going to create comprehensive learning environments for our students. The classroom teachers know what is and what is not affective and although standardized assessments are useful and required by the state, they do not paint a complete picture of a student's achievement or rate of growth. We need to use curriculum based measures including formative, summative and criterion based assessments along with teacher observation and a student's permanent product so we can truly gauge the progress of our students. Students are not automatons with on/off buttons and they don't learn or acquire information in the same way or at the same rate. We do not want the creative process taken out of teaching, which is what will occur if we start teaching to tests and using scripted curriculum. Our districts administrators and board members must be mindful of the Iowa core and the 21st century skills, but they must also understand that our teachers should be given time to teach and to develop the creative minds of our districts youth.

### Lewis

I'm not a supporter of using test score as the only means for measuring achievement. Standardized tests can give us a broad understanding of student progress, but standardized tests are standardized—students are not.

We live in an era where there's a premium put on measurables. As a product of the humanities and liberal arts education, knowing well that the impact of the humanities on student learning is difficult measure, I'm dubious of black and white, pass/fail measurements. Students grow and achieve at different rates. The art of teaching is providing the foundation for each student to feel safe in their journey. Testing culture does not support that environment. Neither does making teachers focus on data collection instead of on their students.

I want the board to be a friend to teachers, to advocate for lessening these burdens both at the administrative and governmental levels. Should I be elected, I would like to engage teachers further so I can understand better the realities of their situation and how the board might better serve their interests.

### Liebig

I do not believe that a narrow focus on raising standardized test scores is the same as giving kids a good education. I think our country is making a terrible mistake sacrificing so many important values (by, for example, cutting music, art, and free play time) to the reductive goal of raising standardized test scores at any cost.

The district should do everything it can to protect the kids from these harmfully reductive trends and mandates. For one thing, we do not have to build our teacher evaluation processes around them. To the extent that teachers are forced to choose between



giving kids a rich and meaningful school experience on the one hand, and squeezing a few more standardized testing points out of them on the other, we need to make it clear that we want them to choose the former and that they will not be penalized for doing so.

### Richman

This is a very important question, and I appreciate you asking it.

In the abstract, I am certainly a fan of measuring success. I think establishing metrics helps individuals and organizations evaluate whether they're achieving the goals they've set for themselves. When it comes to student and teacher performance, however, I am increasingly uncomfortable with the type of measurements that federal and state initiatives are foisting upon our schools and with what they expect the resulting data to be useful for.

For students, I think school is about so much more than math and reading alone. Those are, to be sure, critical foundational skills. But we also need to ensure that our children are developing their creativity, problem-solving skills, a love of learning and inquiry, critical reasoning abilities, and more for them to be successful in the future. Those are skills that good teachers have always fostered—I know they did for me—but which are difficult to measure.

For teachers, again, I think that being able to evaluate performance is important but that simply looking at changes in math and reading scores is only going to provide insight into a small portion of what we want and expect teachers to accomplish in the classroom.

As a board member, I would expect to approach this issue on several fronts:

- Ensure that the District continues to be able to hire and retain the best, most inspiring teachers.
- Provide them with the resources they need for ongoing professional development.
- Work with the ICEA, the administration and other parties to identify more holistic ways of ensuring that teachers are helping our children to develop all of the skills they will need to succeed over the course of their lives.

### Roesler

- The Board needs to be aware and informed of what all the teachers have to do to accomplish the task in front of them. The Board needs to be able to advocate to the state on behalf of the teachers if there are things that need to be changed or addressed that are above what can be done at the local level. Personally I have heard from my wife that there just isn't enough time to get everything done that needs to be done. If the Board realizes that this is something that is a common problem we need to work with the Administration to address this and figure out how we can help.

- Working together with the Administration and the Teachers to follow through with the Strategic Plan that is in place now. We need to be laser focused on the mission and be able to measure the results. If the goal is to raise reading and math by 5% we need to work on professional development that is focused on that. If the PD doesn't fit into the achieving the Strategic Plan then don't do it.

### Roetlin

I feel that the board needs to look closely at this concern. Our teachers are our experts in evaluating what are necessary assessments, and which are unnecessary. We need to listen closely to what they tell us and trust that they have the best interests of the students in their mind, just as the board does.

And for assessment paperwork that is necessary, but time-consuming, perhaps the district needs to create positions that provide teachers assistance with laborious paperwork, allowing them more time for direct classroom instruction.

### Schwalm

To the extent that these are local requirements that are developed by the ICCSD, I would engage teachers in discussion and the decision-making processes around said requirement. To the extent that the requirements come from the State and Federal government, I would help teachers advocate for more reasonable expectations and requirement. Furthermore, teachers should be given more autonomy in their classrooms when it relates to how to achieve these requirements are achieved.

#### Van Orden

The solution begins by more clearly identifying (and defining) what we are mandated to perform, and what the district has chosen to perform as an elective initiative. The entire district is faced with limited resources of time and money, yet seemingly endless wants and needs. The resolution begins by determining what is required to meet mandated performance, and prioritize the remainder (striving for maximum result).

#### Wills

Teacher prep time should be protected for teachers to prep lessons, co-plan with other teachers, and another activities the teachers sees as valuable to their curriculum.

#### Yates

Right now I don't think the Board has a role, other than to say, "We guess we have to do this stuff..." Frankly, I don't believe that's true. The Board should stand up to it whenever legally possible and put a stop any of it that is unnecessary/redundant. Teachers need to be teaching and addressing the needs of students, not pointlessly collecting data (see above for my attitude toward "data").

**6. In 2010 the Iowa legislature adopted the Common Core, establishing statewide standards grades K-12 in Iowa. How do you envision meeting Common Core standards district-wide while maintaining autonomy and flexibility for Iowa City teachers?**

#### DeLoach

I'm not a classroom teacher, so I don't think it makes sense for me to take a stand on the specific methods teachers use. I believe that if we work in a smart way, we can find solutions that make sure our students are learning the key skills and information outlined in the Common Core without hurting teachers' autonomy and ability to use their expertise. The role of the board should be to make sure that whatever methods we use are established in a fair, equitable, and informed manner, collaboratively between administrators and classroom teachers.

#### Eyestone

Without a specific curriculum to go along with the broad strokes guidelines of the Common Core, many things are left up to the imagination of each district, school, and teacher. Our district needs to work closely with teachers across the whole district to work on a curriculum that will work well for all by taking into consideration the differences among each school. More time to be able to communicate with teachers at other schools for best practice tips would also be beneficial. The assessment process will be a difficult one, but if the teachers have input on how to get from point A to point B, it becomes less about the final destination and more about the journey.

#### Fanning

This is a process that will take time. An education committee of the Board should meet with the teachers and administration to come up with a collaborative solution that will involve testing and benchmarking over time to make sure we are meeting those standards.

### Hemingway

We must do our utmost to help students meet or exceed certain benchmarks and goals especially in the areas of reading and math. At the same time it is unreasonable to expect all early elementary students to acquire those skills at the same rate or to reach the proficiency level by grade X or Y. I've had the opportunity to observe some of our great instructors at work in the ICCSD. Teaching is a creative art and it takes a special person to take on the task. They are first and foremost educators, but they are also entertainers, social workers, psychologists, counselors... the list could go on and on. As I stated earlier, we need to allow teachers to be creative, to be engaging and to do this they need autonomy and the ability to differentiate their curriculum based on the learning styles of their students. Taking a one size fits all approach to education is a recipe for disaster and is the antithesis of good teaching.

### Lewis

In researching the Common Core, I found this quote: "Each Iowa school district decides what curriculum to use to deliver the Iowa Core, and Iowa teachers design and develop the lessons used in their classrooms. Modifications to the standards may be made for special education students based on their individual learning needs. States also can build on the Common Core to set even higher standards."

I emphasize the importance of autonomy for every teacher while working within the boundaries of these expectations. As I've said before, teaching is in many ways an art and creativity and adaptability is of the utmost importance in the classroom. As a district we need to trust that we know our schools, our teachers, and our students better than any organization or standard principle. We should believe in our ability to meet and exceed these standards, no matter how they are packaged, and seat a board that shares those values.

The Common Core should act as a tailor's measuring tape, extending to fit each school, each teacher, and each student, not as a box to contain them.

### Liebig

I'm not a fan of the Common Core project. I'm fine with having standards, but the Common Core is yet another top-down enterprise constructed with little or no meaningful input from the communities it is being imposed on and from the teachers who have to implement it, and there are some serious concerns about the quality of the end product.

That said, we're stuck with the standards. That's not the end of the world as long as we make sure that we're treating teachers as professionals who can read the applicable standards and devise their own strategies for checking the various boxes while still having a lot of freedom to bring their experience to bear on what will work in the classroom. We shouldn't let the standards become a straitjacket dictating particular lesson plans with enforcement from above.

### Richman

Like many parents, I've invested a good deal of time over the past couple of years trying to learn about the Common Core curriculum and standards. That said, I am still building my knowledge about the actual implementation of Common Core within Iowa school districts and what it means for teachers. At this point, I will simply expand upon my response to the previous question by saying that I do believe it is important for teachers to have the flexibility to teach in a way that inspires students and ensures that they develop critical skills. I would expect the board, the District administration and the teachers to work cooperatively on strategies to make that happen while complying with the requirements of existing law.

### Roesler

- Teachers need the flexibility in meeting the needs of the students. The common core allows teachers to look back if a child is behind and see what they need to be working on to catch back up to the requirements of the Core. This also works the other way, if a child is ahead they are able to look ahead to see what they can work on to get the child to be working towards the next

requirement. The teachers are the experts in this field and the Common Core, along with the curriculum is the guide. That curriculum should have instruction and lessons most aligned with the Core because some teachers will not go above to create lessons that do that.

#### Roetlin

I believe that our teachers and principals are the best equipped to define how to meet Common Core standards. They are most familiar with the methods that will work best with the student population in their building. Given the current differences in the level of poverty between our schools, the method to meeting the standards is likely to be different between buildings.

#### Schwalm

I think it is imperative that teachers have autonomy in their classroom. While it is important to meet Common Core standards, teachers should have greater say in how they meet the standards. Teachers should be given more pedagogical freedom and flexibility, including the ability to utilize techniques such as special topics, differentiated learning, and project-based learning.

#### Van Orden

Common core sets standards, and mandates performance targets be met. It does not specify the manner in which the targets are met. Moreover... It SPECIFICALLY states that a result-driven autonomy should be afforded the school districts, member schools, and the individual classroom teacher. My philosophy (from a business standpoint) is that the role of the school board is to set a goal, define absolute parameters that must be observed, and then get out of the way. Our teacher in the classroom should be afforded the professional respect to determine the specific manner in which the goals can be met.

#### Wills

Any standard should be viewed as a framework that teachers can use as a point of reference in their lesson development. I do believe teachers should have the flexibility to use any resources to enhance the learning environment and excite their students to learn. Using open source resources, the internet, and any mean of enhancing the student's retention of material is ultimately the goal of the district.

#### Yates

The simple answer is to let the teachers decide how best to meet the standards. Some of that has been done, but some of the Core standards are bizarre. What I've heard about elementary math standards is horrifying. On the other hand, some high school Lang. Arts teachers say the standards are reasonable.

In any case—again—this should be decided by the people who actually have to TEACH the curriculum and not by people who don't.

**7. Some elected officials in the State of Iowa believe that the collective bargaining rights of teacher's unions----and the contracts that negotiation process produces--are largely to blame for the budget problems facing many local school districts. What role should collective bargaining play in public education?**

#### DeLoach

Collective bargaining is not causing our budget problems. A failure by the state to prioritize and invest in public education is causing our budget problems.

### Eyestone

I think that blaming budget problems on contracts is ridiculous. The state of Iowa ranks 26th in the country in teacher pay and only 6th out of the Midwest states. Unfortunately making those numbers higher will necessitate either the lowering of overall teacher numbers or a decrease in teacher's aides or any other helpful positions. That is something that needs to be addressed at the state level (see question 8 below). As far as what role collective bargaining should take, it should always be done with the ultimate goal of ensuring that the students will receive the best education they can get. I know that bargaining doesn't include curriculum decisions to directly affect student achievements. But most things are top down influenced. In business, they always say a happy worker is a good worker. Well, a teaching staff with declining moral due to poor salaries, benefits or other restrictions is not going to be as effective.

### Fanning

Collective bargaining is an essential element in negotiations because it is how the teachers (or any union) can be heard and collectively voice their concerns. As long as the union's requests are reasonable, there should not be any undue burden placed on the district funding. It is important to distinguish "ability to pay" from "willingness to pay". Again, proactive communication is the key to this relationship working. I have been a part of several negotiations with teachers' unions through my previous tenure on school boards.

### Hemingway

Everyone needs an advocate, and this includes educators. I am a firm supporter of unions and the collective bargaining process. Historically trade unions have made the workplace safer and they have helped ensure that all laborers, including teachers, are fairly compensated for the work they perform. The teachers in our district deserve every penny of the compensation they receive. As a state we need to look at the other areas to reduce costs such as creating statewide pool to reduce insurance costs or reducing administrative costs by sharing school administrators between districts. Of course we can also save money by making our buildings more energy efficient including using geothermal technologies, by utilizing renewable energy such as solar and wind, and by using less consumables like paper copies. We must stop looking to balance our school budget off the backs of our teachers; they deserve more compensation, not less.

### Lewis

I categorically reject the idea that teacher contracts and negotiating procedures are to blame for the budget problems we face. The blame lies most notably in the laps of a state government that has underfunded our schools year after year while trying to deflect blame.

Teachers deserve to be paid well and to have a say in how their rate of pay and work conditions are established. Collective bargaining is a very effective, time-tested tool to reach that goal. This is a central concept of organized labor and one I strongly support.

### Liebig

This is baloney. The budget problems are caused by inadequate state support for public education, and by the state's preference for tax cuts over education spending.

Collective bargaining is not about education. It's about the right of employees (not just school employees) to organize to more effectively negotiate with management, which would otherwise have disproportionate bargaining power. I don't think schools staffed by poorly paid, poorly treated teachers would be good schools, but that's not the main justification for collective bargaining. The main justification is that we live in a better world when employees are less easily taken advantage of and exploited by employers because of bargaining power disparities.

### Richman

As a prospective board member, there are several facets of the parties' approach to collective bargaining that seem important. The process needs to result in an agreement that:

- Produces a cost structure that is sustainable over the long term.
- Ensures that the District will be able to attract and retain the best teaching talent in the numbers it needs.
- Ensures that teachers feel free to share their opinions about changes to the teaching and learning environment. That's particularly important in this increasingly dynamic era in public education.
- Enables teachers to try approaches and tailor their teaching in a way that works for their students. Teachers are on the front line, which puts them in a good position to assess what works and doesn't work in the classroom.

The process should offer an appropriate degree of transparency to build the trust of the community. And I believe it's important that both sides take a long-term perspective. This is particularly necessary during periods of resource constraints such as the one currently faced by K-12 schools in Iowa. Both sides need to keep the long-term interests of our children in clear view.

### Roesler

- You can look at the first part of the question to get the real answer to where the budget problems we are currently facing. The legislation and the current Governor are one of the biggest reasons we have the budget problems that we have. They have repeatedly broken the law by not setting the Supplemental State Aid Funding by the required deadline. Passing funding increases of 0% and 1.25% also do not help. The ICEA should continue to bargain as they always have. Teachers in this state on average are paid considerably less than the average teacher in the United States. To continue to have great teachers that want to come here and teach and retain the ones we have the ICEA should continue as they have already been doing.

### Roetlin

As a member of a union myself (SEIU), I recognize the value of unions in protecting the rights of employees and also providing a means for employees to be compensated at a level that they feel is fair. I absolutely do NOT think that the budget problems facing districts are the result of teacher unions. I think that budget problems are the result of the state underfunding education. As I stated above, I believe collective bargaining should be seen as a tool for improving the quality of education of our students, by increasing the teacher morale and improving retention.

### Schwalm

Collective bargaining is absolutely not to blame for budget problems facing local school districts. Collective bargaining is an integral part of public education because it ensures that teachers receive the salary and benefits they are entitled to, and thus, helps with retention of quality teachers in the district. Furthermore, teachers should not be vilified for the State's lack of funding to the schools.

### Van Orden

The budget problems facing local schools are the same issue facing everyone else. Everyone seems to have wants and needs that outpace their income. Collective bargaining is a standard tool of any union. It comes with the package, and is not specifically the problem in any way. All the participants need to work together openly, with a favorable long-term goals being the objective, and only acceptable result.

### Wills

Collective bargaining allows teachers to have a joint voice in the discussion of how resources are prioritized in a district. The budget problem is solely laid at the feet of legislators whom use State Supplemental Aid formulas as a political football in budget negotiations. Inadequate funding from the state has nothing to do with teachers' salaries. SSA below inflation, and frankly, below national averages, does.

#### Yates

First, those elected officials are just wrong. Second, if you are going to call teachers "professionals", you have to treat them like professionals, and PAY them like professionals. Collective bargaining results in negotiated contracts. Contracts result in mutually agreed upon standards for all sorts of things. Those standards give everyone a basis for operation.

Budget problems in this state are due to a legislature which is sitting on a near-billion-dollar surplus which it does not want to spend on its biggest line-item expense—education.

**8. As you may have heard or read, 81% of the Iowa City School District's budget goes for personnel costs. Given this and the low level of Supplemental State Aid funding from the State of Iowa, what will be your budget priorities and goals if elected to the Board?**

#### DeLoach

Direct resources for students is my number one priority. A limited pool of resources means that we have to be careful with every dollar we spend. One of the ways we can do that is by asking, "Is the money we are spending on 'x' having the impact we want?" Too often we commit to doing things a certain way without stopping to evaluate whether it's working.

Over the past years, we've seen most everyone's workload increase. On the education side, if we create new non-teacher positions in the district, we'd better be ready to show that these employees will have a direct benefit for our young people. On the operations side, we need to make sure that we are taking adequate care of our facilities AND the people who maintain them.

#### Eyestone

The board this year issued its one Legislative Priority of increasing the Supplemental State Aid to 6% with a timely decision making process. This would be a dramatic increase over the last few years, but still far short from where we need to be. Making this happen year after year will get us much closer to where we need to be. I think the Board in our district needs to reach out to other School Boards across the state to put the needed pressure on their state representatives.

I would also look at the salaries and benefits packages for all personnel not just the teachers. I want to make sure it is an equitable system across the board.

#### Fanning

The first priority is to look at operational costs and design a budget where student-related expenditures are maintained as much as possible. If cuts need to be made, they should be as invisible to students/parents as possible. I have many years of experience at doing this from my prior tenure on school boards.

#### Hemingway

As I stated earlier, we have ways to reduce this number and creating a statewide insurance pool would be one way to reduce those personnel costs. Another would be to reduce the amount of administrative overhead. Like a laser beam, I would focus on the millions of dollars we have 100% control over. The state legislators who serve constituents in the ICCSD do a phenomenal job lobbying on our district's behalf to provide us with the funds we all feel are needed. Unfortunately the state legislature did not listen

to them and our Governor vetoed the one time funds agreed upon by the state senate and legislature. My role as a board member is to let my state legislators know how much the people in the ICCSD value education and to implore them to work on fully funding education so we can meet the needs of our students. We can complain about the decisions made in Des Moines; that is our collective right. However, if I become a board member I will work my hardest to ensure that the money we spend and that we do have control over is spent wisely. I will therefore prioritize fiduciary oversight and will call for the creation of a finance or auditing committee, something the Synesi report said was necessary. I will also prioritize making a bidding process which is opened up to all potential vendors and one that is transparent.

#### Lewis

My focus would start with putting the teachers in the classrooms, limiting class sizes, and supporting those teachers with the staff needed to maintain our buildings and processes. Students come first. Teachers are the most important element under that measure. Even though I have been active in the district for several years, the various layers of how the funding works is still opaque to me in some areas. I need to learn more in order to fully answer this question, however, I am aware of the disparity between the typical rate of pay for a district employee and the rate of pay for administrative staff. I would like to look more closely at how that structure works and where we might find efficiencies to keep our resources inside the classroom.

#### Liebig

I'd like to answer Question 8 and Question 9 together, so please see my answer to Question 9.

#### Richman

As a prospective board member, it is crucial to me that the District ensures its personnel are treated fairly and also ensures that our schools are not caught in a spiral of ever-increasing class sizes and declining program offerings.

First, I think it's important that we not take the low level of SSA funding—or, in the longer run, even the Iowa educational funding model as a whole—as givens. I believe we have to plan for that low level of funding, and I'll discuss that in more detail in my response to question 9 below. But I also believe we have to work on building a statewide groundswell against it.

I would very much like to see individual board members take a leadership role in building relationships with board members from school districts in the western half of the state. These districts, including smaller ones and ones with declining enrollment, are often located in more politically conservative parts of the state where they are in a position to influence legislators who have opposed adequate K-12 funding. With a more unified voice and a more unified lobbying effort from across the state in favor of appropriate funding for childhood education, we are more likely to reach that goal. And I believe ICCSD board members building those personal relationships can be a key to this effort.

In addition, one of my priorities as a board member would be to enhance long-term strategic thinking at the board level. It is crucial that the District judiciously manage growth in operating costs over the long term while ensuring that the quality of education our children receive is maintained at the highest possible level.

We need to avoid relying solely on one-shot fixes in dealing with the current crisis in K-12 funding and instead focus on creating a cost structure that is sustainable over the long run. I believe that the District, the ICEA and other stakeholders can accomplish this on a cooperative basis, and as a board member I would work to build the trust among the parties that would make this approach possible.

#### Roesler

- We need to set our priorities ahead of time and follow them as close as possible. Spending should directly affect kids learning, not fluff. We need to be sure we aren't jumping the gun on things that could lead to more costs down the road that we have not planned for.
- Continue to watch and question, if needed, personnel hires at the Administrative level.



- Look at the agenda and the spending item by item. We can't just approve the spending we need to look at it and question things when they need to be.

#### Roetlin

I think it may be time to look at our unspent reserves policy. The level of state funding is so ridiculously low this year, and I can only hope that there will be a political backlash that will swing the pendulum the other direction. I absolutely do NOT support higher class sizes due to laying off staff. I absolutely do NOT support paying our teachers less. Obviously there is a finite amount of money that can be spent, but in this year of such low state funding, I think dipping in to district reserves should be seriously considered.

But if low funding continues? In that case, I think it would be best to have a committee of district employees, including teachers, make recommendations on where they think cuts can be made, with the least direct impact on the quality of education provided by our district. Perhaps things such as the operating cost of buildings per student would need to be looked at more closely to make sure that we are not putting money into expensive buildings (operating cost) at the expense of having enough teachers and compensating them fairly.

#### Schwalm

The Iowa Legislature has failed our students and staff for the last few years. We need much higher funding from the State, which could be used for increasing the wages of support staff, paraeducators, and other low-wage workers in the district. Unfortunately, it does not appear that State funding will increase anytime soon. As a board member, I will work to move the district forward within the budget constraints while ensuring that teachers and staff continue to receive the salaries and benefits that they deserve and are entitled to.

#### Van Orden

Fairly simply... First, pay for what we must provide (in the form of providing a quality education for our children). Then allocate the remaining funds to what we would like to achieve. As personnel expense represents the vast majority of the budget, it drives the budgeting process. Side note here... I have been frustrated by ALL the participants in the community (board, administration, teachers, and parents) using cost and funding source information improperly to make a point. If the public were better educated, and people took the time to correctly research the facts, we might very well avoid the infighting that so frequently derails any budgeting process discussion. This has been a bad practice by ALL the participants in the process.

#### Wills

Teachers are not a disposable asset that can be cut or added on a whim of budget fluctuations. Human capital is ANY businesses most valuable asset. Keeping and retaining our qualities teachers is a priorities. I will commit to working with ICEA, UEN, and the state level school board members to lobby the legislature for adequate funding for all of Iowa's children.

#### Yates

Maintaining the level of professional pay for teachers and staff is still most important. Our chief business officer says that 81% is too high, and would like it to be lower. He is mistaken.

There is a lot of waste in the district, in many areas. One of the things I would like to do is make Accounts Payable an Agenda item for each Board meeting, and take it out of Consent. Millions of dollars go by each month with the Board just saying ok.

**9. For a variety of reasons, the District made cuts to several areas two years ago. If faced with such a decision in the future, what criteria would you use as a Board member for prioritizing people and programs.**

### DeLoach

I believe that we can make hard decisions in a way that maximizes positive outcomes for students. It takes input from teachers, students, families, and community members to identify the strongest solutions.

In the event that programs have to be cut or suspended, we have to weigh who will be impacted by the cuts and whether those cuts will harm our progress toward more equitable education for all our students. NO one group of students should be disproportionately harmed by cuts. We should also be prepared to re-evaluate and find any possible way to restore programs as more funding becomes available.

### Eyestone

All cuts are made to hit a certain budgetary constraint. So, the first question is how much money is needed to be saved. That makes the cost of each program a necessary evil to consider. I would create a scoring system which included cost, but also took into consideration other factors. How many students are affected by a program? In what way are they affected; will this decrease overall achievement, will it decrease their opportunities for involvement in character building groups (music groups, sports teams)? How much affect will this have on staff across the district; not just numbers of teachers, but what potential movement to other schools or other disciplines would be involved? These answers help to determine the relative priority of one high dollar program vs. several smaller ones.

### Fanning

Again, if cuts need to be made, they should be as invisible to students/parents as possible. A rule of thumb I also use is to make spending cuts in areas that effect the fewest number of people. Vendor contracts should be reviewed along with routine expenditures that may not have been “shopped” lately.

### Hemingway

I spoke many times during this period of time when orchestra, German, 7th grade football and other staff and curriculum cuts were thrust upon the public at the last minute with little or no community input. We had options and we had alternatives but Administration had a lack of imagination and did not want to hear of any alternatives from the staff or the public. Could we have done things differently? Hell yes. I would have started as far away from the classrooms and at the front door of the ESC by eliminating non-essential staff.

### Lewis

It's hard to separate people and programs. The programs are made up of people and I know many teachers and staff were impacted by the cuts we made two years ago. The loss of programming is a tragedy. To cut an entire language from our curriculum, to eliminate arts programming, and to excise athletic opportunities—these are all choices we should never have to make. I would have preferred the district taken a position that said both no layoffs, but also no programming cuts. I have to believe there were other options. Cutting programs is unacceptable. Cutting personnel is unacceptable. It's difficult for me to envision a scenario where I would vote to layoff teachers, or staff, or to cut programming of any kind.

### Liebig

We're in particularly lean times. We should continue to advocate for better funding, but if the money isn't there, it isn't there. If we need to look for savings, we should first make sure that the administration is using our money wisely. (For example, are we using the general fund for things that could be paid for with PPEL money?) We should also make sure that the administration is as lean as it can be. But if we have to look further, we should try to minimize the impact on the educational experience, with special attention

given to the neediest students. The district's recent decision to postpone the replacement of textbooks seems like one fairly reasonable way to economize in the short-term, for example.

Lean times call for temporary sacrifices, not irreversible changes. I do not believe that we should be closing elementary schools to save what are relatively small amounts of annual operating expenses. When the pendulum swings back and funding returns (I believe it will), we can restore the things we temporarily sacrificed, but schools we've closed will be gone forever.

#### Richman

If I recall correctly, cuts were made to seventh grade football, languages and, I assume, a few other areas. These were undoubtedly difficult decisions. Given the current political climate in Des Moines, it's certainly possible that the District will be forced to contend with choices like this again in the near future.

My current thinking on how the District should approach this challenge is as follows:

- Be proactive instead of reactive. The District should put together a strategy for dealing with what could potentially be a multi-year period of difficult financial decisions. With this type of advance planning, the Board can gather input and ideas from the community to help prioritize changes that affect our children's educational experience and extracurricular opportunities. That's a far better approach than pretending things are about to get better and then having to rely on the administration to essentially make decisions on its own in May and June about where to reduce costs.
- As much as possible, the District should seek to minimize reductions in programming at the high school level. For so many kids, high school is a time when they find new modes of individual expression, new activities that excite and inspire them to push their limits, and new roles that can help them manage the social challenges that can be a defining part of the teenage years. Whether it's in academic subjects, the arts, athletics, media or other areas, we should endeavor to minimize the loss of programs that fill these important needs in our kids' lives.
- We also need to minimize the impacts on families who can least afford the loss of school programs. My family is fortunate enough that if my son wanted to play football in seventh grade or my daughter wanted to learn German, we could find those opportunities outside of the schools. Not every family has those options. To the extent possible, the District needs to avoid making cuts which disproportionately affect economically disadvantaged students in the community.
- Finally, I would like to see cost reductions occur as far from the classroom and, frankly, as far from the schools as possible. I believe there are certainly efficiencies to be found at the ESC, which seems to have grown disproportionately in recent years.

#### Roesler

- As much as possible budget cuts if needed need to stay out of the classroom. With that being said we also have to work to keep teachers teaching in the areas that they are passionate about. We can't continue for example to shift art and music teachers into classroom teachers. Once you begin to take away their area of passion you begin will begin to lose great teachers, which is happening now.

- When the cuts begin to hit the kids in either programming or extracurricular activities we to show the communities the facts, the dollars and numbers. We can't pit one program against another. We can't pit academics against the arts against athletics because each one of those areas is important to different people equally.

#### Roetlin

- 1) I would consider if the proposed cut disproportionately has a negative impact on our lowest income students.
- 2) I would want to make sure that programming cuts do NOT compromise our efforts to prepare our students to succeed globally in the future.
- 3) I would consider the number of students affected by a proposed cut.

### Schwalm

I am committed to supporting and respecting staff within our district. Teachers are a vital part of the ICCSD and are the key to providing students with a quality education. Teacher compensation is a priority for me and is not a budget item that I would be willing to cut.

### Van Orden

Fairly simply, don't you think? We are in the business of educating students. It would be a good idea if we had a staff to perform that task. I'm in favor of teachers filling that role. Programs are staffed by people, so clearly the two go hand in hand. As I have stated previously... We need to examine, and prioritize the goals into a clearer definition of wants, needs, and obligation. It begins there.

### Wills

I agree with the decision to cut programs before teachers. We already have classrooms with students well above the "aspirational" goals of our classes and cutting any teachers exasperates this further. Ultimately, staff inside of our building are better able to judge reasonable cuts between programs and teachers than the administration or the board whom are removed from the day to day operations. Utilizing our principals for suggestions when cuts must be made, allows cuts to happen that cause the least disruption.

### Yates

It is a cliché among board candidates and members to say, about almost any topic, "It's for the kids." This is not true. Many decisions are made about operations which have nothing to do with actual education. The criteria ought to be, What is most important to the actual education of students, and the best way for teachers to get what they need? Again, ask teachers.

Central Administration does not need to grow, and probably could be reduced. Administrative salaries can be cut if necessary.

**10. One of the challenges in a growing district is balancing the need for new schools and facilities with the need to support existing schools and facilities. As a Board member, how would you balance these needs?**

### DeLoach

We've been playing catch up with our facilities needs. At the end of the current Facilities Master Plan, I think we'll be in much better shape. Then, we need to keep up this practice of long-term planning. There doesn't need to be a conflict between older and newer schools if we work carefully.

### Eyestone

I think this is where the Facilities Master Plan does a pretty good job. Especially in regards to the scheduling of upgrades to existing buildings as compared to construction of new facilities. Several schools have been dealing with construction sounds, smells and other distractions while class has been in session. I think some effort could be made for better direction to the contractors doing this work to minimize the effect they are having on current student learning. Other building needs that are separate from construction must be addressed as quickly as possible so they don't fall through the cracks of implementing the Master Plan.

### Fanning

This will require more study, but there are many schools in the district that need attention and the MFP is an attempt to do that. We also know that as the area continues to grow there will be a need for newer buildings and there is only so much money to do

that. The MFP is a great start, but it will need to be reviewed and monitored constantly. The best way to balance the needs is to continually review the plan, plan ahead, and monitor the funding that is available.

#### Hemingway

The needs at our older schools date back decades and these deficiencies, until corrected, will persist. Existing schools with existing students have immediate challenges that can't be ignored. If indeed we find that new schools need to be built to address our growing student base, we will have to build them and they will be able to serve all students regardless of need from day one. I am most interested in providing the best learning environments possible where the students presently are, as opposed to a "Field of Dreams" philosophy whereby you build it thinking "they will come".

#### Lewis

I'm a strong supporter of our Facilities Master Plan. I will be a vocal proponent of that plan and will actively campaign for the 2017 bond initiative whether I'm a member of the board or not. One of the reasons I support the facilities plan is it provides the attention our older facilities have long needed, as well as a plan to build the capacity necessary for the district to grow. As a board member, I will keep the focus of our planning squarely on that fulcrum.

#### Liebig

I'm not quite sure how to give a concrete answer to this question. Once new facilities are opened, they will have a claim on operational funding just like all the existing schools do.

Renovating older schools and building new capacity (to address overcrowding and the use of "temporary buildings") are both important. The district's facilities plan tries to do both. To pass the bond that will be necessary to follow through on the plan, we need to (1) make sure the proposal makes sense, (2) make sure that the voters trust the district with the money. My major objection to the current plan is that it takes an eight- or ten- or twelve-million dollar asset, Hoover School, and destroys it for the sake of obtaining a little over five acres of land for "needs" it cannot even identify, which makes no sense economically or politically. By keeping Hoover open, the board could immediately save \$3 million by cancelling the 125-seat addition at Lemme, and would eventually save even more because it would have that much less new capacity to build as the district continues to grow. That savings would not only pay for what few renovations Hoover still needs (multi-purpose room?), but would also free up funds for other needed projects or simply reduce the amount of the bond – any of which will make a bond more likely to pass.

#### Richman

As you read in my response to Question 1, implementing a facilities strategy that both accommodates growth and responds to the needs of existing schools is one of my priorities if elected to the board. I could write at length about this issue, but since you've been kind enough to read so much already, I'll hit on a couple of thoughts:

Decisions about where to invest money in building new schools and maintaining, expanding and upgrading existing schools should be based, to the greatest extent possible, on need rather than politics. That means that the board and the community need to be provided with accurate, valid, reliable data to make those decisions. That type of data has been in fairly short supply over the past 2-3 years. Going forward, I expect the new board to push the administration much harder to provide it.

That said, politics and competing interest from various sectors of the community are always going to play a role in facilities decisions. From a financing standpoint, there are a couple of ways to help ensure the District has the resources to accomplish needed projects. Most of the major capital projects are going to be funded from bonds backed by sales tax (such as the \$65 million offering that the District will be bringing to market this fall) or by property tax (e.g., the big G.O. bond that the District plans to take to the voters in 2017). PPEL funds are also available for certain projects.

Obviously, project timing plays an important role in determining which funds are spent where. When possible, though, I would support using the more flexible funding sources—those that don't require new voter authorization—for projects which have,

perhaps, less broad support from the public. That allows the District to commit to funding projects with broad popular support from the G.O. issue and thereby enhances the likelihood that voters will pass the G.O. authorization.

Bottom line: we do need some new schools to handle a growing population and we do need to ensure that existing schools provide safe, well-equipped, inviting learning environments for our students. There will be competition for dollars, but it's going to be much easier for the board to make good decisions and to stand behind those decisions if they're based on solid data and analysis.

#### Roesler

- The first thing to always look at is what is going to make the biggest impact, in a positive way, on the district. Those things should be addressed first. The current FMP does that. It balances the need for new schools in growing areas but it makes sure that the other schools are also receiving needed updates to make their learning environment equitable (not equal). The plan also spreads out the work across the district evenly so that all areas of the district are invested in the plan.

- The Board needs to be able to make the hard decisions after seeing all the data. Their decisions should be data driven with measurable results.

#### Roetlin

As mentioned above, when funding is as limited as it currently is, we should look at the operating cost of older buildings. If building new buildings means that we are able to meet increased capacity needs AND operate at a lower cost per student, then it may be prudent to move in that direction. I recognize that our district constituents value our older buildings and it would be a very difficult decision to close a building because it has a high operating cost. In my opinion, this would be a last resort decision that would only be justifiable if it meant that it avoided cuts that more directly affected the quality of instruction given to a larger number of students.

#### Schwalm

I am committed to creating a district that is fair and equitable, including with regards to facilities. While it is necessary to build new facilities, it should not be at the expense of maintaining old facilities, as long as they are still viable. As a board member, I would work to ensure that all of our facilities are equitable.

#### Van Orden

It is straightforward... Facility Master Plan. Yes, there will always be issues of building need and maintenance that arises on an ongoing basis. The board needs to set a clear vision, and instruct the administration to affect a plan that addresses the day to day needs of facilities, with an eye on both near-term growth, and long-term expansion (or reduction) as usage demand fluctuate over time.

#### Wills

Some of the catch-up we are seeing now, and the large impending bond vote, hinge on the fact that our previous boards and/or administrations did not invest needed capital into our older buildings. When seats were needed, new schools were built. Older schools deserve upgrades and renovation as an equity issue among our students. This is a public school system and we should treat all students AND their school as valuable to our district.

#### Yates

I appreciate this question not being asked in the guise of for-or-against support for the Facilities Master Plan. That said, the FMP is the elephant in the room. I am in favor of supporting current buildings, and improving infrastructure. New schools are necessary, but we can use the best design plans we already have. I am not in favor of creating a school “donut” around Iowa City with a ring of 500+ student elementary schools, and endangering the core of Iowa City neighborhoods.

**11. Teachers throughout the District are facing difficult working conditions ranging from 35+ kids in a classroom to prescribed use of prep time, plus personnel and programing cuts. This has led to increased stress and decreased morale. If elected, what will you do to address this situation?**

DeLoach

It’s really a struggle to watch teachers deal with the increased pressure placed on them. I hear you and your concerns. I can’t promise to fix everything! But I am always open to your suggestions and feedback. We’re in this together. So you tell me -- what do you need, and how can we get there?

Eyestone

This is similar to what I have had to do at work. We have been tasked with increased employee retention and engagement. I have asked my employees what they would like to see happen to keep them invested and employed with us. As you can imagine, the general answer is “more money”. I can’t always help that. So, I ask them what else I could do for them to help them succeed and grow. They come up with many great ideas, many of which we can actually put into place. This would be my approach here as well. You tell me what I can do to help alleviate some of the stress and I will do my best to see that we get those things accomplished within the constraints of our budget and governmental guidelines.

Fanning

Again, there needs to be a Board committee to meet on a regular basis with teachers and administration to hear these concerns. Class size has a direct impact on learning and 35 kids is way too many. I would work to reduce this by hopefully moving resources. Prep time is critical to teacher success and must be included. I would like to see a comprehensive plan developed, with input from all parties, to address these needs.

Hemingway

For the past six (6) years, I have been a mainstay at board meetings and have provided board members with alternatives and direction on spending issues. These alternatives were centered around decreasing the impact on students and teachers. I loudly voiced my concerns to our districts administration and showed them several instances of funds being spent inappropriately that could have been used to prevent staff reductions that resulted in larger class sizes. It’s crucial we maximize the buying power of every dollar spent and that we prioritize that spending for things that will improve the educational experiences of those in the classroom. We need dollars for curriculum, for staff and we need to provide teachers with adequate prep time so they can craft their lesson plans and teach our students. As far as I am concerned, one of our state lobbying goals should be to provide mandatory paid prep time for our teachers and to work on making sure this is a part of the Iowa Code. Some of the stress and decreased morale has resulted from things done at the state level but if elected, I will do everything within my power to provide an environment where there can be a real dialogue between staff and administration where teachers and staff will not have to worry about retaliation and retribution for giving truthful and meaningful critiques. I will not tolerate teachers being punished for advocating for their students or their ideas. We need everyone’s involvement and input if we are going to grow as a district and if we are to create true professional learning communities.

Liebig

My experience is that people want to do their jobs well and that morale falls when people are put under unrealistic demands. The district needs to make clear what the real priorities are and not expect the impossible (from teachers or kids). From what I've heard, elementary teachers in our district feel like they can't spare even two minutes to depart from the scheduled daily plan because the school day has become so overstuffed with expectations. That's not a good model of education. The board should direct the administration to address this problem by paring down the expectations to what's important and what can be done well in the available time.

I don't know what you mean by "prescribed use of prep time," but I don't like the sound of it and would like to know more.

#### Lewis

Teachers need a board that's on their side, one that understands and respects the difficulty of the job they do. Prep time should be sacrosanct. This time is necessary for grading papers, lesson planning, communicating with parents and other important aspects of the work. Our district has always prided itself on small class sizes, but we have seen classes ballooning in recent years, while cuts in programming have taken away opportunities for our students and constrained the teachers' ability to provide a well-rounded, effective education. Personnel cuts means fewer people to do the same job. It's not a recipe for success, and frustration, burnout and decreased morale are understandable side effects. But that does not mean they're acceptable side effects.

As a board member, I will work hard to be an advocate for the teachers and other staff, for maintaining current staffing levels, growing staff where needed and when possible, and actively seeking to shrink class sizes. This will be a tough job, one that I hope will be met with enthusiasm from the other board members and a strong resolve to tell the administration, "no," when asked to cut personnel or programs. This is my line in the sand.

I will also encourage the board to be stronger advocates for the teachers and other staff when asked to provide additional benefits to salaried employees when those same benefits would not be extended to the teachers. The teachers do the work. They should receive our deference, not high level administrators.

#### Richman

Most of the challenges you've identified—larger class sizes, cuts in programming, reductions in staff—are a direct result of financial constraints. As I noted in my response to Question 8, one of the board's priorities needs to be building support for increased SSA appropriations from Des Moines as well as pushing, in the longer term, for changes to the K-12 funding model.

That said, I've spoken with quite a number of teachers in recent months, and the consensus opinion seems to be that it's not just the actual changes in working conditions that are causing stress and low morale. (The teachers I've spoken with have all acknowledged that some of the changes are unavoidable results of reduced financial support.) Rather, the bigger problems seem to be:

1. the way those changes are communicated and implemented,
2. the lack of voice the teachers have had in the management of those changes, and
3. the fact that the central administration continues to grow despite the changing conditions at the classroom level.

Those first two problems are, plain and simple, a failure of leadership. They are a failure of administrators at the District level and sometimes at the principal level to value the opinions of front-line employees in managing change. I'm not saying that teachers should have the final say in change management decisions, but they should certainly have a voice and they should not be afraid to express their ideas and opinions.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the board has only one employee they can direct and work through—the superintendent. In my opinion, the goals the board sets for the superintendent and the superintendent's employment reviews need to include a greater focus on these type of leadership and morale issues.

As for the third problem noted above that teachers identified for me, I think it goes without saying that expansion at the ESC needs to come under tighter control.



### Roesler

- A genuine show of appreciation goes a long way. The teachers don't want the Administration to visit the school and celebrate what they are doing if they aren't genuine about what they are there for.
- In my current role I have to be creative, I have to try and find that wow factor. What can I do to make people appreciate what we just did for them or the experience that they just had? I'd like to be able to offer that to the district in my role.
- In June I reached out to the district and had talks with them about how Schools can be more involved with the district aside from just donating money. One of the items that I presented, and we are currently completing is that we are going to provide every student and staff member at Alexander Elementary with an Alexander Elementary T-shirt the first day of school. Opening a new school where you are bringing together students that previously identified with other schools and teachers that are working together on a brand new adventure is tough. Getting them all in the same t-shirt for the day one picture will hopefully bring that school closer together. This type of thing is important. We need to support the teachers and give back to them where and whenever we can in order to keep the best here and get the best to want to come here.

### Roetlin

I am the daughter of a retired third grade teacher that taught for 30 years. The reason that I did not choose education as my major in college, was because of the long hours that my mother put in. She had a reputation for being a very good teacher, but she spent most evenings working late into the night on school work, went in on weekends, and worked in her classroom during the summer (and had ME work in her classroom during the weekends and summer!). I am well aware of the toll that this lifestyle takes on a person and family. As a board member, I would advocate for supporting our teachers in minimizing the amount of time they need to put in outside their work hours. They need to be able to have a good work/home balance in order to continue to provide quality instruction over many years. Also, I would want to include teachers in decisions about cuts as I feel that their morale would be better if they were included, instead of just informed.

### Schwalm

I would engage teachers in decision-making processes and ensure that their voices are heard. If our district wants to retain the exceptional teachers it has, we need to focus on decreasing stress and increasing morale. I am committed to working with teachers to find ways to increase their job satisfaction.

### Van Orden

The best resolution is found in an open discussion between ALL the stakeholders. It begins with an impartial and open process, free of retribution or rebuke. The solution will be found by all the individuals working together. Like most thorny issues, there is no single culprit, and no single solution. I would work to encourage my fellow board member to facilitate that discussion, and affect that process change. Very much like compliance with common core, wide latitude in crafting the solution should be utilized to achieve the goal. Last point... The expectations of all stakeholders (beginning with the parents in the district) needs to be adjusted a tad. We have in many ways expected far more from our teachers in the classroom, than the resources and time we have provided them. We are overdue for a greater degree of personal responsibility on behalf of students and parents in achieving best performance.

### Wills

I would like to see the board spend more direct time with teachers and staff. I believe when teachers are truly heard, their opinions and thoughts are taken into consideration, and they feel valued for what they are bringing to the table by the board, this can help boost morale. Making small changes can oftentimes lead to big results....ask the teachers what can be done to help.

### Yates

This question will not be asked often enough in this election cycle. I will ask teachers to explain the harm this does. They are going to have to step up on this, and explain it to parents. Parents are going to have to put pressure on the Board to do whatever is necessary to make sure teachers and class sizes are protected. I am extremely concerned about this issue.

**12. Please list one “under the radar” issue that has not received adequate attention that deserves more focus and explain why.**

DeLoach

The disparities in the four-year graduation rate for students who receive free or reduced lunch and African-American and Latino students. If only 4 out of every 5 of these students are graduating, we have some more work to do. In order to effectively address it, we have to start talking about that data. I’ve found in my work on other disproportionality issues that sometimes, just recognizing that there is a problem can lead to a change. Then, we have to work together to identify the challenges and address them head-on.

Eyestone

I would like to more thoroughly investigate the possibility of moving to a middle school system over the current Junior High system. This has been brought up multiple times in the past and is used quite successfully in a number of districts. With frequent complaints of overcrowding at schools and a concern over the costs of building new schools, we owe it to the community to look more closely at all possible choices.

Fanning

It doesn’t appear to me that there is much discussion on student achievement for the district as a whole. I would like to see some element of this presented at every school board meeting along with emphasis placed on developing reading and math skills. We need to be monitoring our progress and developing methods to track our efforts.

Hemingway

There are many “under the radar” issues – and it is very difficult to limit it just to one. However, one issue I feel that needs to be addressed is the labeling of elementary students “behavior disordered (BD)” which carries the real prospect that this label will stick with them throughout their school career. There needs to be a system that helps students develop the social and soft skills they will need to shed that label and reintegrate back into the general education setting. Another issue I would be remiss not to bring up is the lack of competitive bidding for service contracts with the ICCSD. I have lobbied the State legislature to amend the code to no avail and our board is fiscally blind to the potential savings competitively bidding projects could result in. There is a profit incentive by the private sector to be the only bidder for public monies. Competition is what we need and our Board members have to be jealous watchdogs of all public funds, especially now. There is constant pressure by private business to get a bigger and bigger piece of the public fund pie. Student success should be our driving concern, not private business profits.

Lewis

The inability to communicate effectively is perhaps the biggest failing of our district. Whether its board members unable to work in a positive, constructive manner; the administration being unable to provide basic understanding of policies and plans; or the failure to listen to the concerns of the community, our district has struggled to communicate.

I’ll use a personal example to highlight these failings. My daughter has a 504 Plan and my son has an IEP. We have always been able to have great, productive conversations with teachers and staff and work together to meet our students’ needs. We are foster parents and have firsthand experience with struggling families. Over the last several years, I’ve had discussions with parents across the district who haven’t had the same positive experiences we have. Whether its special needs students and their families unable to break through the red tape, or families of underrepresented status feeling unable to get the help and answers they need to be

effective partners with the schools, I have heard many stories hardship and in each the common denominator is a failure of communication. This has to change from the inside, at the ESC, so it can trickle down to the buildings and improve the lives of teachers, students and families. I want to be a champion for special needs children and their families. I want to be a champion for the underserved. I want to be a champion for enhanced communication and partnership in the district. As a board member, I would like to review how we interface with our families—special needs, underserved, and otherwise—and discover how we can improve those interactions.

Much of the community feels like the administration acts on its own, with little or no attention paid to the concerns of its stakeholders. Nowhere is this more apparent than with the families of special needs children and our underserved populations. We have an opportunity to change that, if we're willing to look in the mirror, ask hard questions, and live the answers. I hope to be a part of that change, always listening, asking, assessing, with the strong partnership of our teachers and staff.

#### Liebig

I'd like to list two. First, it's been my strong impression that many teachers and staff in this district are often afraid to talk openly about district practices and policies for fear that they will be somehow penalized. This is disastrous, not only for those employees (who have a right to speak about public issues) but for the district's ability to make good policy decisions, which it can't possibly do without the kind of information that staff exclusively possess. I think the board should address this problem. Ultimately the only solution is a change in the district culture, which isn't easy to legislate, but we could start by trying to develop an employee free speech policy to ensure that staff feel free – and encouraged – to speak out on district policies and practices. (I realize that staff members can't speak publicly about particular students and families, but that is no reason they should feel inhibited from commenting on policies and systemic practices.) I would also be interested to hear of other possible ideas (additional contractual protections?) to address this problem.

Second, I am very concerned about the possible state adoption of the Smarter Balanced standardized tests. The state Department of Education has been in favor of requiring these new tests, which are much, much more expensive than the Iowa Assessments that it has required in the past. The Department was unable to persuade the legislature to adopt them in the last session, but now appears to have decided (very questionably) that it can impose them without legislative approval. Not only are these tests much more expensive than the locally-produced, also-Common-Core-compliant Next Generation Iowa Assessments, but they also require technology expenses that could dwarf the sticker price of the tests, and the money for all of this is money that could otherwise be available for state supplemental aid, which means it will inevitably come at the expense of the operational money which is already so scarce. In my view, the Iowa State Education Association made a terrible mistake supporting the adoption of Smarter Balanced when a much cheaper, satisfactory, Iowa-made alternative was available. As a district we should be vocally opposing the use of scarce educational dollars in this way.

Thanks for giving me a chance to respond to your questions. I know that I am a relative outsider to the school system and that I have a lot to learn from people who know more, but I hope these responses give you some idea of where I am coming from.

#### Richman

I've alluded to this in several previous responses, but I think the effective silencing by administrators of dissenting opinions from teachers is an important issue that is not fully understood by the community at large. Too many teachers from multiple schools have told me that they feel compelled to just keep their heads down and their mouths closed. That is not, in my experience, how organizations move forward and reach their goals. School administrators at all levels should value honest debate and use the ideas generated by those interactions to better inform their decisions and their actions.

#### Roesler

- The Weighted Resource Allocation Model. This plan is currently being phased in next year for secretaries, paras and others. The plan that David Dude has developed is one that I think will, along with the Equity Policy the board developed, will be something that is going to help more kids and teachers in the district. I don't think many in the district are aware of how this is going to help. So many times in the rezoning talks people said that the schools that needed the extra resources should get them, even if it meant sacrificing larger class sizes at the schools that may not need those resources. I firmly believe that you cannot throw money at the

problem to solve it; you have to provide resources and attempt to balance out school populations in order to help the teachers achieve the optimal learning environment.

#### Roetlin

I would like to see our district explore what are the best foreign languages to be taught in our secondary schools, in terms of what languages will best prepare our students to work in the global marketplace. Looking globally at population growth, global business growth, and in this age of global communication at the touch of a keyboard, I would like to see a re-examination of what foreign languages should be offered. In addition, I would like to see students given more skills for working in the global marketplace. Perhaps short term study abroad programs should be explored, or even just greater classroom collaboration with the many persons in our university community that come from areas of our globe that are seeing the most population and business growth. If I had a magic wand, I would want foreign language taught at the elementary level as well as secondary. This is done in some districts through grant funding. I believe more creativity and effort needs to be given to explore how we could secure grant or other funding to offer our elementary students the opportunity to have foreign language be part of their daily curriculum.

#### Schwalm

I have had numerous conversations with teachers in the district who have expressed concern related to prep time, including prescribed use of prep time, inadequate prep time, and lack of compensation for prep time. I believe that teachers deserve adequate prep time and deserve to be compensated for it. Furthermore, teachers deserve more autonomy with regards to how they utilize their prep time.

#### Van Orden

Its personal... and fraught with colorful feedback when running for the school board. I would like to see EVERYONE take a greater level of personal responsibility in resolving their issue, BEFORE turning to the administration or school board. Our best result begins in the family home. How can a student be best empowered to succeed? It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to take charge of that responsibility. It is NOT the responsibility of a school or teacher to play babysitter or surrogate parent, in the absence of an engaged adult overseeing the child. I would love to see a VERY frank, and uncomfortable public discussion that asks "what have you done?" Yes, there are many in the district with profound needs, and limited resources. To the extent that the school district can be of assistance in facilitating a solution, I am delighted. If a situation is identified that requires outside assistance, I would like to see a referral generated, and direct the student or family to the best source of assistance to resolve their issue. This begins by having a better system in place that identifies the problems, and clarifies the responsibility. In so many cases, the scant prep time that a teacher has available is consumed by a situation that could have been avoided if the student or parent took a greater degree of personal responsibility. That would be refreshing for a change.

#### Wills

I am deeply concerned about the third grade retention program beginning next school year. I want to work to with teachers and administrators to make sure the board is supporting all efforts to help every child reach proficiency by third grade. And ultimately, support the children and families who are designated to attend the summer program.

#### Yates

The support, funding, and personnel use of the TLC program will need a sharp eye. Since we have to do it, and the implementation is going forward, I hope it works. But I am worried about great teachers being out of the classroom, lopsided class sizes, and a failure of administrators to understand their roles in it. I'm hopeful I can become the Board rep on the district TLC Committee.