

Edgerton School Board candidates make their cases

Submitted by
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Editor's note: The Edgerton Reporter is publishing the following comments from the five candidates running for Edgerton School Board because the forum at which they were to speak had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 threat.

The Edgerton Education Association (EEA) and the Edgerton Educational Support Staff (EESS) were supposed to hold the forum on March 25. Instead, the groups asked the candidates a series of written questions and the candidates responded.

"With the cancelation of our in-person forum last week due to the COVID-19 restrictions, we felt it important to give the voters of the Edgerton School District the most accurate information to help them choose the best three candidates for the school board seats," said Emily Knott, an Edgerton Middle School FCE teacher and EEA Vice President, in an email to the Reporter.

Here are the candidates' written responses, which are numbered to correspond with the numbers of each of the following questions.

1. *What is your name and how long have you been an Edgerton resident?*

2. *Why did you decide to run for the Edgerton School Board and why do you feel you would be an effective board member?*

3. *If elected to the Edgerton School Board, what are the top three priorities on which you would focus your efforts?*

4. *What can be done to ensure that the School District of Edgerton is a "District of Choice" for not only families, but also teachers, administrators and educational support professionals?*

5. *How many school board meetings have you attended in the past six months?*

6. *How often have you been in our schools over the last year during regular school hours? What was your reason for visiting? What are your thoughts about your visit(s)?*

7. *Education in the arts (performing, music and art) has been very well supported by our community, school board, and school administration. How will you see that this valuable educational component continues?*

8. *What do you see as the role of a school board member in creating/maintaining a positive relationship with School District of Edgerton employees and the community they serve?*

9. *What do you see as the role of a school board member in helping to develop/generate respect for the cultural and racial diversity within our community?*

BRANDON FERRELL

1. Brandon Ferrell, I grew up in Edgerton and have lived here most of my life.

2. I have been attending board meetings for a while now and became aware that two sitting board members were not running again. I felt that it was my opportunity to serve the community that has given me so much. I feel that I am very approachable by both members of the public and staff at our schools. I have a background in public speaking and am not afraid to speak in front of others. My occupation in law enforcement requires that I am able to make rational decisions with careful considerations.

3. This answer has changed in the last two weeks due to current events. If elected to the board in April, the board will be tasked with dealing with the aftermath of the COVID-19 virus and how to get our schools back on track moving forward. The second priority will be seeing the successful completion of the referendum passed last year and any difficulties in doing so associated



FERRELL

with the impact of an extended closure of schools. The third priority is making sure our schools stay current as technology advances. Staying current with technology will provide students with the best chances of success.

4. I think the current board has done a fantastic job of setting our schools up for success with the passage of a \$40.6 million referendum last year. The current school board and administrative staff have made it a priority to make sure we have the finest staff by ensuring they are compensated on a level as close to equal as possible with similar districts. Bringing the compensation package into alignment with comparable districts applies across the board for all staff, and is essential to attracting and retaining the best staff possible.

Recent weeks have made it apparent that the availability, and ability, to use technology by our students is becoming more and more critical. Edgerton needs to continue to strive to be a leader on the cutting edge of technology in the classroom.

5. I've been attending board meetings for over a year now and have only missed a few meetings.

6. I have two children in elementary school and am married to an elementary school teacher so I am at the schools on a regular basis. On top of that I am active in coaching several youth sports so I believe I am familiar with the school buildings and many of the staff members. I am familiar with some of the challenges at each of the district's buildings as well as the strengths.

7. Both of my daughters are involved in dance, drama, and gymnastics, and I was a band member at EHS myself so I recognize the importance of the arts. I see these components as essential opportunities for our students to be exposed to multiple opportunities to express themselves. Support needs to be provided to these programs to see that they not only remain an option but that can be expanded to meet any growing need.

8. My background in law enforcement has equipped me with the ability to work with people of all walks of life and still be able to effectively communicate. My ability to relate to others is important in relating to board members and faculty alike.

Board members are elected by the taxpayers to oversee the administration of the schools. But board members must also be available to faculty members to hear concerns from within the schools. I believe I have established relationships with faculty members at each of our schools already and would look to build upon those relationships if elected.

9. I think that all board members need to be supportive of any opportunity that promotes diversity in our schools. The school curriculum and literature used by staff needs to be diverse enough to provide awareness and understanding to ever changing social norms.

JEREMIAH JOHNSON

1. Jeremiah Johnson - resident of Edgerton my whole life.

2. I started getting interested in the Board back in about 2017 while serving on the Facility Advisory Committee, where a large group of community members, parents, staff, etc., assembled to explore the District's facility and educational needs. The more I learned during this process, the more I wanted to learn. I decided somewhere along the way in that process that if I saw an opening on the Board, I would try to fill it. If elected, it seems like I will be able to step in right away, as over the past few months or years I have made myself familiar with the process, the



JOHNSON

past, and the current Board members.

3. I want to keep open dialog and transparency with the long-term goals of the Administration and the School Board.

I want to remain mindful of our taxpayer dollars, what they are being spent on, and how efficiently they are being used.

I want to see a renewed focus on the importance of vocational education and post-curricular careers.

4. A school and an education is about so much more than just test scores, but I really do believe that with our district's past and hopeful future academic achievements, our students, staff and administration feel a level of success that makes Edgerton a place they can be proud of. Continuing to provide lots of great options for both curricular and extra-curricular opportunities helps too. I also believe that maintaining quality, well-kept facilities for our performing arts, sports, etc., make our district desirable to people from outside Edgerton. Things like our performing arts center, gymnasium, our athletic fields, etc., are the things that people from outside of our district see, and what their perceptions of our facilities are based upon.

5. I think I have missed only one meeting in the past six months.

6. I probably have visited the schools during regular hours on average 1-2 times per month over the last 10 years. The purpose of those visits was normally to meet with either maintenance, administration, or information technology staff to discuss electrical needs, budgets, etc., for the different facilities. I'd say that other than the administration, maintenance, and custodial staff, very few people know these buildings more than I do. I don't think there is a ceiling, closet or crawl space that I haven't been in at one point in the last 20 plus years. Of course, with two active children in the district, I am also in the building for the occasional field trip, classroom event, classroom project day, etc., as well as to drop off the occasional pair of forgotten snow boots or cold lunch. I haven't really noticed a lot of major change over the years, mostly because it really seems like I never left. There are some new faces, but I haven't otherwise noticed a lot.

7. Edgerton has always supported the arts. The arts have been proven to develop learning skills that are important outside of what can be done in traditional classrooms. The motor skills, problem solving, critical thinking that are used in the arts are different from those used for more traditional math, science and reading. A diverse education can lead to a more successful education for many.

8. I am a pretty social person, who is out and about in the public a lot, whether it be at high school sporting events, youth sports, out at Racetrack Park, or even out for a Friday night fish fry. I think that these are the places that communication between community members, district employees, etc., are best made. Communication doesn't always need to be done behind closed doors. It may be better done in a more relaxed and open environment at times.

9. It is important not only to recognize but embrace our community's diversity. It is important that we learn to understand any differences there may be in learning or teaching styles for our entire district, no matter of one's cultural or racial background, and make any adjustments needed to reach students effectively. This may mean needing to hire more multi-language teachers or support staff or possibly educate staff differently to properly reach everyone. It may mean needing to adjust courses, teaching curriculum or materials to match our district's students. It will be a continuously evolving process that will require continuous change to keep up.

LEIA MAVES

1. I am Leia Maves, a 2003 graduate of Edgerton High School. I grew up in Edgerton and have lived in Edgerton for the majority of my adult life. Not only am I an Edgerton native, but so is my father, Lyle Maves, and my grandparents, Lucy and Rollie Maves.



MAVES

2. I am running for school board to give back to the community that has afforded me numerous opportunities. Education is the foundation on which our community can continue to build strong leaders well into the future. I will be an effective board member as I am able to make decisions that are based in fact, letting data driven decisions put students first while also ensuring we support our staff. I feel confident in making decisions that are in the best interest of all student demographics.

3. In running for school board, I don't have an agenda; however, I spoke with Dr. Pauli and Dr. Wehner to learn about and understand the Edgerton School District's top three initiatives.

1) The district aims to continue to focus on mindful spending. The referendum work is nearing completion and it is key that work remains on schedule and within budget.

2) Maximizing student instruction to promote academic achievement while supporting student social and emotional well-being is imperative to make Edgerton a district of choice. A successful school district goes beyond test scores. Ensuring we can continue to offer programming to enhance the lives of our students is key. I was able to take advantage of being in the band, choir, chamber singers, student council, FFA, cross country and track and field. Academic and extra curriculars has expanded and I fully support providing opportunities to our students.

3) The third top initiative is school safety. This safety includes physical safety and mental health. A great example of the district's dedication to the health and safety of our students and community has been demonstrated through the commitment to communicate with parents and students during the current public health events surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. The school's administration has made decisions with the health and safety of our students top of mind.

4. Being a "District of Choice" is multi-faceted and includes, but is not limited to, student academic achievement, student programming, and staff retention. Edgerton is succeeding in academic achievement as evidenced by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) report cards showing consistent improvement in the district's scores over the past four years (current year data not yet available). The district has moved from a scoring range that meets state expectations with a score of 71.5 in the 2015 - 2016 school year to exceeds expectations with a score of 76.5 in the 2018 - 2019 school year. Student programming has expanded, which will now include a boy's swim team starting in the 2020-2021 school year. Our district's administration uses Forecast 5, a comparative database, and have been key in expanding the database to include staff salary data. Edgerton has made conscious efforts to assess the pay and benefits of our staff in relation to neighboring districts using the Forecast 5 database, promoting our ability to remain competitive and train our talented teachers.

5. I have attended all school board meetings in 2020 as well as the election ballot drawing and the open session meeting on the district administration annual review process. As a citizen, involvement in the school board meetings is limited, but I have been able gain an understanding of how the board operates and feel that I would

positively contribute to the team.

6. I have visited the schools three times this year during regular school hours. My visits have ranged from tours of the school construction progress to meetings with Dr. Pauli and Dr. Wehner to discuss the direction of the district and to gain an understanding of the district's key initiatives. As a remote employee that works from home, I have been able to attend homecoming mini parades and Halloween parades over the past several years, supporting my godson. With a three-year-old who will soon be an Edgerton Rascal, I look forward to supporting her activities at Edgerton schools.

7. As a student who benefited from the various arts programs Edgerton offers, I fully support the arts. Extracurricular programming, including the arts, can often provide students with an opportunity to participate in groups/classes promoting a sense of belonging. I recently participated in the district's budget workshop and the district is committed to the arts.

8. Members of the school board serve in a role to advocate for students, staff and the community. To maintain positive relationships with the community, it's best to be an active community member and understand the needs of the district and the community.

9. Understanding the cultural and racial diversity that exists within the community is the first step in developing and generating respect. Edgerton participates in the Dane County Equity Consortium as a means to serve all students, working to meet the social and emotional wellbeing strategic pillar. Edgerton's largest minority group is based on socio-economic status, therefore, understanding the needs of this population of students allows Edgerton to provide equitable services and programming for all students. It's important to recognize that the needs of each family and student is different, and being able to meet the needs of all families and students is a priority.

MATT MCINTYRE

1. Matt McIntyre. I was born and raised in Edgerton and have lived here my whole life. My parents and grandparents lived here their whole life also. This is a great and wonderful city and I plan on living here forever!! I graduated from Edgerton and enjoyed all the time I spent in the school system and want to give back all I can in thanks and gratitude by being a member on the school board to continue making our school district the best it can be for our community and students!

2. I had a wonderful and very educational learning experience from the Edgerton School District, excellent teachers, great principals, wonderful administrators, a really nice superintendent, inspiring teachers, wonderful academic courses with superb shop classes and industrial courses. The gym and sports programs were great. One of my favorites was music that's in my heart and soul, along with art classes that were magnificent.

I have been involved in helping make good decisions in elected positions over the years for our great city. I have a good, honest, solid, dependable history of accomplishments for our city and citizens and wonderful businesses!! I believe in positive and productive things for our people and the school system with an open mind and cooperative manner. I always give much time and dedication and always study up on the issues and meet with the appropriate contacts to continue on with good things for the betterment of our students and society as a whole.

I attend workshops and seminars to help make continued good decisions for the school system and youth.

3. Number 1 would be to

make sure that we continue to always have all the necessary and needed classroom space, learning tools, equipment and programs current and updated. Number 2 would be to listen to our administrative team and teachers and staff about their data assessments, along with their goals and direction, to help make issues that arise get resolved appropriately and as a team for our students and school system as a whole. Number 3 would be to "always" make sure that our schools are as safe and fun as can be. It's always important to make sure that all students just can't wait to get to school every day to learn and enjoy all the great things that our school system has for them and their fellow classmates!! And to make sure that our budget is always in good financial shape and that should unexpected things need to get done, that we have the resources available.

4. To always keep our team effort with continued vision that encompasses the school system's fun and attractive atmosphere and high academic standards that are one of the great attributes of our school and city as a whole. Being positive as a board member (and school board members as a team) along with our excellent administration team and teachers we will always be the place that everybody wants to be a part of as a "district of choice."

5. I have been to a handful of school board meetings and have been overwhelmed with the professionalism and welcoming warmth and educational atmosphere at the meetings I have attended. The agendas are well written and have really good explanation in detail from the staff that explains each agenda item in easy to understand detail.

6. I haven't been inside the schools during school time, but have toured the school with members of the board and administrative team with the Cullen construction people. I wanted to see how the school construction and work was going and was impressed with the work and timetable. I saw students in after hours programs in the hallways and gymnasium and saw how everybody was getting along smoothly during the construction of the school. Everybody was in good spirits and students seemed happy and understanding of the new construction going on. I saw that the vision and plans of the additions were well planned out for the future of our schools. The safety on the tour was great. As a side note, it was fun to see the classrooms that I attended many years ago still looking in good shape and the memories of going to the school in the 1960s and 1970s was very nice and enjoyable.

7. I have always been involved in the arts and music my whole life! I played music in school and on weekends as a student back in the 1960s and 1970s. I was younger back then, but played at wedding receptions and after football games and sporting events around town; so I will always try to make sure as a board member that the music and arts have to always be a part of school curriculum. I know personally as a musician and with many classmates how enriching and beneficial that music and the arts are to the overall learning experience in school and life in general. It is one of my favorite things I enjoyed at Edgerton schools and I will always speak out and explain how music and the arts are part of the school curriculum.

8. To always listen professionally to all involved in our school district and to the whole community. I have always been available and been active as an elected person in various positions over the years and go to many functions and activities in our city. I always explain to many citizens if they have questions about things to help them understand their concerns or ideas. I enjoy very much helping out as much as possible.

See **SCHOOL BOARD RACE,** 3