

Vanessa Aspeter-Hellstern

1. What is a school board member's role and responsibility? How does that role differ from the role of the superintendent or administration?

I feel the role of school board members will have a variety of duties...

- *to keep the vision and the goals for the school district at top priority
- *to be aware of or to have knowledge of policies, laws, and regulations / to also implement policies that will help improve work of the district and our schools
- *maintain and gauge the annual school budget
- *deliver excellence in leadership representing the community and advocating for students and the district

This will differ from the roles and duties of the superintendent/administration as they should be focusing on instructional leadership and developing, implementing, and evaluating district school systems and policies.

2. What Makes you the best candidate for the Rice Lake Area School District Board of Education? What experience, knowledge or special skills do you possess that will make you a unique addition to the Board?

I believe you will find it is hard to find transparency with some board members on all levels not just school. I promise to provide that in everything I do and say. Our family has 4 children; 23, 21, 10, & 9 with that being said I have been a part of this school district for quite a few years and have been through a lot of changes. Good and bad. In my 23 years of being a mother I have raised children in an evolving school district. From curriculum to policies. I would like to be a part of a change and opportunities focusing more on solutions than personal agendas.

3. What issues do you believe your district needs to address in its academic program and offerings? What changes would you recommend?

I would like to focus on the things that the school district doesn't currently focus on anymore. We don't teach children how to survive in the world after graduation including navigating a map, avoiding debt and budgeting, basic survival skills, and mental health issues including self-regulation and meditation practices. We need to teach children to be allowed to self-think through questioning and researching world topics. We have lost the art of observation, digestion, and forming opinions for basic debates and conversation. I look back on when I graduated from high school, I felt unprepared to deal with the leap into adulthood and the struggles one faces in their early twenties. How do we better prepare our children for the world and society if we don't focus on these areas within our schools?

4. What is one thing about the Rice Lake Area School District that you would like to work to improve?

I feel like we have an opportunity to better communicate with parents and prospective families through building a resource application and website tab. These would be utilized to effectively communicate programming, news, applications for various camps, summer programming, and financial assistance for youth. I would love to be able to have administration, the school board, and residents be able to work together to solve district challenges creatively without financially burdening the school budget constraints. In researching our district needs, I was disheartened by the poverty level and low student body attendance. Whether or not these correlate, I find these issues to be an important piece to student success and want to find solutions to better equip our youth upon graduation.

5. Do you have specific suggestions for improvement?

Focusing on better communication, I want to diminish the extra committee meetings and address them to mirror other school districts that have restructured the school board public meetings within the month. This would allow public appearances to be focused on agenda topics and create transparency of what to expect at the monthly meetings. Monthly school board meetings on the 2nd and 4th Monday of every month at 7 pm would focus on specific committee topics like finance and curriculum at one and the next would have buildings and grounds with addressing policy and administrator observations. It's important for board members to understand concerns and opportunities for the district leading up to meetings but also encouraging the public voice to reiterate agenda topics.

6. What is the best way to address differences of opinion on the Board or between the Board and the Administration?

The best way to address differences is to lead by example. The art of listening is currently lost. We need to focus on understanding all perspectives before creating an informed policy. How can we possibly carry out the will of the public if we do not listen to our families, youth, and staff. Let's build a better model where we face challenges with opportunities to improve the future. It's important to have differences of opinions to create the best policies for our district as a whole, not a selection. I will never serve a select few but will focus on what fits our district the best for all students, families, and staff.