

Phil Henkel

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

The school board members, working closely with the district superintendent, with input from administrators, teachers, and the public determine the policies needed to run the school district. It is the duty of the administration and superintendent to carry out those policies.

The superintendent, administrators, and especially elected board members, as public servants, have the responsibility to listen to the concerns of the public, especially parents, and see that those are addressed.

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?

My prior education and training as a physician gave me many years of exposure to varied methods of teaching and learning, and taught how important an orderly, distraction-free environment is to learning. I have also not lost sight that a lifetime's experience of what works and what doesn't (also known as "common sense") remains important for decision making. I have the ability to process data, commit the time, and listen to others.

However, the most important qualification for a school board member is to have a deep concern for the quality of education of our children, which also directly affects the quality of the Rice Lake Community, where I have lived and worked with my family since 1986, where my children still reside and work.

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

American history must be thoroughly and honestly addressed, so that our students develop a deep appreciation for their community and country. Research needs to be done mainly with primary sources rather than from internet sites.

All students need to achieve proficiency in Science, English, Math and Technology. Foreign language offerings should be strong. Rice Lake's history of excellence in the arts and music needs to be nurtured.

Student athletes intensively learn the value of hard work and teamwork in achieving goals, values that last a lifetime.

Cooperation with Northwood Technical College should be cultivated to give technically oriented students opportunities to pursue one of the many essential and well-compensated technical fields.

The district must continue to strive for excellence from each student according to their gifts and must resist the current trend toward “equity” of results, which fails to encourage students to fully use their individual gifts, lowers each student to the common level, and prevents equality of opportunity and excellence. This will require careful monitoring by the board, of how state standards for curriculum are implemented.

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

Transparency in both development and implementation of the various curricula needs to be improved, to increase parental and community trust.

5. Do you have specific suggestions for improvement?

Communication between the community and the board, between staff and the board, and among the staff needs to be open, honest, and promoted, which tends to resolve controversies, produce more good ideas, and reduce unpleasant types of conflict.

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

First, treat and speak to others as you want yourself treated. Secondly, speak and act in good faith and defend your ideas; don't use labels. Finally, everyone must be comfortable to speak freely.