



2022 JANESVILLE SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES

Q&A



We are pleased to present the 2022 Forward Janesville School Board candidate questionnaire.

After careful consideration and consultation with the Forward Janesville Board and Government Relations Council leadership, we determined that a candidate questionnaire was the most efficient way to present the candidates and their viewpoints to our Membership. Forward Janesville does not endorse candidates, but instead provides this kind of comprehensive information to our members.

Wisconsin's Spring Election is on Tuesday, April 5, 2022. Visit My Vote Wisconsin (myvote.wi.gov) for comprehensive, non-partisan information on what's on your ballot, absentee voting and polling place information, and much more.

There is much at stake on April 5. The Janesville City Council and the Janesville School Board regularly make important decisions that affect our community and your organization's performance. It is extremely important for all of us to vote on April 5.

We hope that you find this document to be useful, and we encourage you to share this information with your employees, your network, and your neighbors.

Meet the Candidates



Michelle Haworth



Amie Hughes



Jim Millard



Cathy Myers



Audrey Smith

As we look to 2022 here are our key initiatives we are zeroing on to affect with our community partners:

- Create a Forward Janesville Community Scorecard
- Promote business growth that raises our community median household income
- Build partnership and plan with Educational Partners to improve student outcomes and workforce capabilities
- Strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystem to increase number of successful start ups
- Evaluate and support important Quality of life improvement projects
- Continue building out Residential strategy that supports a population of 70,000 by 2030 while maintaining advantageous cost of living
- Increase Membership to achieve a 45% penetration of businesses in Janesville by 2025 (national average of 38%)



What qualities do you have that would make you a good School Board Member?

MICHELLE HAWORTH:

As a mother of 3 children who are in/gone through our district I ask for your support in electing me to a third term on the Janesville Board of Education. Our daughter graduated from Craig June 2021, and we have a son at Craig and another at Kennedy elem. I always have the best interest of the students in mind as I make every decision. I think the parent perspective is critical on the board. In addition, I work in distribution and management, so I contribute to discussions with a business mind.

AMIE HUGHES:

I have a lot of experience in business and finance and working with children. I've volunteered a lot in the community and am a lifelong Janesville resident. I would bring my experiences and strengths of organization, honesty, hard work, excellence and loyalty into making the School District of Janesville the best it can be.

JIM MILLARD:

I am honest, caring and believe in transparency in all aspects. I have been a school board member for two terms, 2016-2019 and Vice President of the Janesville School Board from 2019-2022. Coming from a custodial background I bring a different skill set to the board, plus I have been on the Finance Buildings and Grounds committee, Early Literacy committee, Benefits committee, Bags of Hope committee and I am the board representative for the Gang Abatement committee with the Janesville Police Department. All of these committees help me get a better understanding on how they work within our school district.

CATHY MYERS:

I think experience is one of my most important qualities. I'm teacher with 28 years of experience and have been on the school board for 9 years. I understand the complexity of the challenges we face because of my involvement as a professional and a public servant. I also think that my profound respect for public education and the people who devote their lives to it is another asset. I care deeply about the service we provide, am always looking for ways to make it better, and I support all who are in the trenches implementing the vision the district. Personality-wise, I'm a collaborator. While I share my knowledge and opinions, I also know that others have vital experiences that need to be part of the conversation.

AUDREY SMITH:

As a professional Registered Nurse, I use science, best practice and critical thinking skills every day. I practice diversity, equity and inclusion and will apply all of these professional skills to the school board setting. My son has been in special education for 7 years and I advocate for his needs. 12% of the students in the Janesville school district have special needs and I will be their voice.



What is the role of a School Board Member vs the Superintendent?

MICHELLE HAWORTH:

The school board is in place to manage the high-level budget, set policy and direct the superintendent. The Superintendent is in place to execute the policies of the board and be a guide and leader to take our district to the next level so that the JSD is a destination district attracting people from the Janesville area.

AMIE HUGHES:

The Superintendent is the CEO of the District and implements policies and daily operations set up by the Board. He/she is also an employee and face of the organization. The Board hires and makes sure the Superintendent is in touch with the concerns of the parents and staff. We would work with the Superintendent as 9 members of the Board in making sure the policies are carried out. The chain of command would be for students and parents to have discussions with teachers and staff first, then principals and administration, then the Superintendent and board. If someone came to me with a concern, I would have to figure out if the chain of command has been followed and if it's something to take to the Superintendent or have the person deal with the school directly.

JIM MILLARD:

We make policy and help the Superintendent by working through various committees to solve problems. Such as I am on the Early literacy task force, and what that does is get books into hands of parents who have children from 0-5 years old. We all know if you read to children at an early age, they will develop a thirst for reading and that will aide them in their learning skills and understanding. We also evaluate the Superintendent.

CATHY MYERS:

The board is the community's representative to oversee and collaborate with the Superintendent on policies that bring structure and process to the district. The Superintendent is the academic and personnel leader of the school. He/she is in charge is implementing a vision and strategy for the district that is approved by the board.

AUDREY SMITH:

The nine sitting school board members have no greater responsibility than to hire and oversee the Superintendent. As the school board sets policies and makes budget decisions, the Superintendent puts policies into action, selects leadership and oversees the day to day operation. They must work together, but yet have independent responsibilities.



What qualities do you think the new Superintendent should have?

MICHELLE HAWORTH:

I want the new superintendent to have a servant leadership style as well as experience closing learning gaps to improve our academic performance. I want them to also have a 3–5-year plan to take our district to the next level with creative ideas on budgeting, investing and academic growth.

Amie Hughes:

He/she should be relational and personable with the community, parents, staff, the school board, and administration. He/she would need to work well with people and be a positive and wise leader with experience in a successful high-ranking school district. He/she should have creative ideas and be able to implement them and be a good leader in finding strategies to bring Janesville up from the bottom 4% on the academic scorecard put out by the Department of Public Instruction.

JIM MILLARD:

He or she should be able to converse on any level and be honest, transparent and caring for all staff and students. They also should be vested in the community. Be very visible and wanting to be a leader and a person who brings people together. They should understand our strengths and our weaknesses and be able to lead in both areas. Understand our diverse population, low income and under served students and parents and problem solve with them to make our district a first-class learning experience for all.

CATHY MYERS:

The new Superintendent should have a lot of the same qualities that Steve Pophal has, especially in the areas of accessibility and communication. They need to be many things: a strong manager, an excellent educator, a visionary, a communicator, and an active member of the community. All of these things will help us in the next chapter with improving student performance, providing important services, and fashioning the curriculum to meet the diverse interests of our students.

AUDREY SMITH:

Transparency – being held accountable for action or inaction. Friendly and approachable to all students, parents and staff. Effective communicator who is always has time to listen. A visionary to accomplish goals and lead.



The school district over the past five years has implemented the Promises as their educational goals. In your opinion, what Promises are succeeding, and where are our challenges? Are there other areas the school district should measure or monitor?

MICHELLE HAWORTH:

I think the promises were a strong decision for the board to adopt and I think they measure the important characteristics to ensure students are successful when they graduate from our district. We are succeeding in the finance area with the successful passing of the referenda and being fiscally responsible with bonds and investments. I also think that prior to covid, we were successful in the Relationships promise as survey results showed positive engagement and feedback from families, students and staff. Safety is a key promise to ensure our schools are safe and secure and work from the referenda are ensuring that is done. I want to see bigger gains quickly in the Student and School Success promise as this is critical to improve our DPI state report card and ensure our students are ready for life after JSD. We need to improve our reading and math levels and improve graduation rates. In this time of a teacher shortage, we need to ensure we are able to attract and retain quality talent.

AMIE HUGHES:

Of the 5 Promises, Success, Relationships, Culture/Climate, Finances and Health/Safety, I believe the District is seeking ways to succeed in each of these areas. The one I see lacking is Success of the students and being prepared for life. I would like to see many aspects investigated as far as curriculum, teaching strategies, qualified teachers, and instilling a higher standard of learning into the students and enabling them to strive for success.

JIM MILLARD:

Our Janesville Promises are guidelines for staff and students. We need to work on student success since covid-19. Our students have unfortunately fallen behind because of the whole situation that Covid-19 brought about. Our reading scores need to be brought up. With the Early Literacy program, I definitely think that will help. Getting our children to read at an earlier age by having parents read to them should start their thirst for reading so when they get tested in third grade they will be proficient. Also, our math scores are low. We purchased a new math program this year and I think that will help our math scores. The new math program will start in first grade and follow our students through twelfth grade using the same terminology. The math program we had our students had to learn one program in elementary, another in middle and a third in high school. So, they had to learn three math programs and now the same program will follow them their whole career. Having teachers collaborate on a weekly basis with each other on what is working in the classroom and what needs to be worked on is another way to help our students get back on track to a great education. Also, we need to help our children with their anxiety from Covid-19 such as making them feel our buildings are a safe and healthy environment for them to have a great learning experience.

CATHY MYERS:

I think some facets of each promise are succeeding. The promise to know students by name, strength, and need is strong. The faculty and staff have worked tirelessly to attend to all of our students, especially during the pandemic. Within that promise is the issue of literacy and test scores. Some of our progress has been hindered by the pandemic, and some of it will just take time. The good news is that the district has been examining this issue and has made some adjustments in offerings of materials and approaches to methods that will help us out of this situation. The district works tirelessly to making sure that students are safe and healthy and I think we are succeeding on this promise. The beauty of our success is that it is coming about through the efforts of both the district and the community. Our Janesville family is instrumental in this because of its support of our referendum to build safe pathways in our buildings. It also has overall supported us in the COVID measures we put in place to try to reduce the spread of infection. Because of our ability to manage the virus, we were able to keep schools open, which is so important for our student's learning, but also for our students' health and safety. On finance we have been paid down debt and worked to improve our facilities so that they are more energy efficient, which is savings in the long run. We continue to put forward a balanced budget and pay our staff competitive wages. In regards to relationships and culture and climate, we have seen success, but will always have to connect with our families to make sure their needs are met and to do what we can to retain and recruit excellent staff.

AUDREY SMITH:

In my opinion it's a mixed bag of answers. I really like and believe in the promises. It's a great approach and platform for everyone in the district to reflect on. The current reading and math proficiency rates are at 35% and 30% at grade level. Which means we are not achieving student success and there are communication gaps. However, the recent approval of new math, science and language curriculums is a great step in improving promise outcomes. Another area that could be measured and monitored is to disaggregate discipline by school, grade, age, gender, race, etc.



If speaking to a family considering locating in Janesville, what data or information would you give them to convince them to choose the Janesville School District for their children?

MICHELLE HAWORTH:

I would talk to the family about the wide range of opportunities our district offers from dual-enrollment courses to Talented and Gifted enrichment to job-shadow and charter schools to meet the needs of students in whatever way they learn best. I would be honest in explaining the poor report card data but talk about the new curriculum adoptions being done already showing great gains in Math and the plan to ensure our teachers collaborate and share best practices so that all students have all opportunities and are successful.

AMIE HUGHES:

I would show them the statistics from 2015-16 on the Department of Public Instruction's annual scorecard where Janesville was exceeding expectations and had an overall score of 75. Although we have lost 800 students since then and lowered our score to 56.8 and meeting few expectations, I believe we can increase that and get back to a much higher score and equipping our students to succeed like surrounding communities. We are aware and looking into solutions to make Janesville excellent.

JIM MILLARD:

This may sound arrogant, but simply whatever your child is interested in we have a program for them. We at the Janesville School District are very fortunate to have a lot of options for students from our Arts Academy, Stem, and working collaboratively with our business partners in the community. There is something for every student.

CATHY MYERS:

I would point to our promises, which set the tone and expectation for the district. I would assure them that we are not satisfied with our test scores, and would talk about all that we're doing to turn that around. I would also note the range of offerings for students, the pathways in the arts, in trades, in STEM, in business. I include in that the great experiences students have with our summer school program and the forward thinking approach to success as manifested by our Early Literacy initiative.

AUDREY SMITH:

There are many options for school choice within the district. Parents are really happy with the sports programs with a lot community support. The student culture is diverse with the opportunity to learn from each other. There are unique opportunities for high schoolers to pursue the arts or business the world.



What are your thoughts about the Janesville School District's DPI Scorecard ranking, and what ideas do you have for improvement?

MICHELLE HAWORTH:

Many districts our same size did better than us in the last ranking, so Covid is not an excuse we can use. We need to be better about holding everyone accountable from the top Superintendent down to the classroom teacher level. We can't waiver on our standards of ensuring our students master the content and have resources to be successful. With Esser funds, I suggest we work to hire support staff to help with small group and individualized learning to meet students where they are and bring them up.

AMIE HUGHES:

I'm disappointed in ranking 404th out of 421 schools in Wisconsin. We can do better for our students, and they deserve better. I would like to be part of the solution in looking at ways to increase the level of education and enabling each student to care and take ownership of their learning. We need to listen to the community, teachers, administration and parents for solutions.

JIM MILLARD:

As I stated a little earlier our scores in math and reading need to be worked on. Our Early Literacy program that puts books in parent's hands that have children from 0-5 years old so they can read to them at an early age, and as we know that will jumpstart their thirst for reading. If you are a good reader nothing can stop you. Your choices are endless. Our math score needs work as well. Our new math program that starts with students in first grade and follows them through twelfth grade will help that score as well. As I said before our old math program had our students in elementary learn a math program, and in middle school another and in high school still another.

CATHY MYERS:

As a teacher, I am, of course, dissatisfied. As a teacher, I also know that while the challenges in the last two years have had an impact on learning, we can turn this around. I think the key is students who are reading at or above grade level by third grade. We are working on this, obviously. The Early Literacy initiative is part of that. Other ways we can improve this is with early interventions for students who are behind and with smaller class sizes, more tutoring, and targeted instructional services. We need to do a better job of identifying students with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, at the youngest age we can. Of course, there are other ways that are related to the performance of our students, but are often not regarded as having a direct link. Those would be emotional services for traumatized students, making sure they get great healthy meals from the district, helping stabilize our homeless students.

AUDREY SMITH:

The current DPI ranking of 404th place and pre pandemic ranking of 395th place is a red flag. There is a disconnect and change is needed. Smaller classes with more support staff is a must. In recent months I traveled to a Wisconsin school and observed their 5 minute drill. At the end of every class/every day, each student has 5 minutes to answer 2 questions related to the content presented during class. The teacher receives real time results. Those results will then help determine the lesson plan for the next day. Reteach core concepts or introduce new ones?



The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on students, teachers, parents and administrators. What role does the school board have to lead the district back to excellence after the pandemic and beyond?

MICHELLE HAWORTH:

Covid has had an impact on every industry including education. Our students suffered from isolation, and this caused social and emotional impacts we need to address with more support staff. Masking our kids meant kindergarten and first-grade students never saw the face of the teacher trying to show them how to speak, read and interact socially. This was wrong. I'm thankful we are now mask optional and I have already heard the mood immediately lifted in our buildings when smiles could be seen again. Esser funds should be focused on learning strategies to close academic gaps as well as emotional/social support for our students to recover from the damage done the last 2 years. It's being shared that staff specifically the JEA want staff bonuses totaling \$4,000 to be given over the next 18 months. This is not something I support us to use ESSER funds for. ESSER funds should be used for closing academic gaps, support services and building safety and security. We already keep our wages competitive in our district and offer one of the richest health benefits packages in the county. Our staff is fantastic, but the funds are limited and we must put the dollars to use where they'll have the most impact on our students so they're successful which benefits our whole community.

AMIE HUGHES:

The board approves the budget, sets criteria for hiring principals, hires the Superintendent and sets policies for the schools. The budget should be thoroughly critiqued, and policies should be investigated to see where we can make change and make sure excellent policies are carried out. The board supervises the administration and makes sure they are carrying out set policies as well. There are many ways we 9 members can all work together with the administration, teachers and parents to find ways to get us back to a higher ranking and higher test scores. I would like to consult with other succeeding districts as well.

JIM MILLARD:

Help our students, staff and administrators with the anxiety that has come from Covid-19 and listen to their concerns. Once we do that, we can get counselling for those that need it, implement more tutoring, one on one with teachers and students and have smaller class sizes so teachers can do the first two. That being said it took Covid-19 two years to put us where we are. But if we work hard at getting our students back on track to a first-class education, that is a good start.

CATHY MYERS:

The board sets the expectation and the Superintendent implements it. As the highest ranked educational professional in the district and lot of the plans and methods fall on the shoulders of the Superintendent. The school board must review the plan of the Superintendent and monitor the gains from that plan. If the plan is not working, the district must work with the Superintendent and support needed changes in methods, materials, curriculum, staffing, facilities, extra programming and services.

AUDREY SMITH:

The school board absolutely has an obligation to help breakdown barriers to student learning: issues at home, academic, mental, physical health or social well-being. They provide the resources and interventions for the supports via policy and/or budget change.



The school district has been a leader in development of many innovative program and partnerships like Rock University High School, the Elevate business immersion program, and many more. What are your thoughts about this type of programming?

MICHELLE HAWORTH:

A lot of work has been done to partner the school district with the community through programs like Elevate and we should continue to uncover those. We need to ensure our students can see how their learning can be applied to real-life but also ensure we are getting our students ready to take on jobs we have in this community, so they grow their own families here.

AMIE HUGHES:

Working with the community and area businesses by use of internships or work study programs helps prepare the students for entering the work force after school. I would like to see more business partnerships with the schools if that is what is needed for our students to be successful and be best prepared for life.

JIM MILLARD:

One of our Janesville Promises is that all students will upon graduation be college and career ready. Early in our students career we find out what they are interested in and help them follow the pathway to that outcome. Whether it be college or career. Upon doing that it gives the student a guideline to follow to the career that they have chosen.

CATHY MYERS:

I think partnerships with our business community are important to meeting this challenge head on. The ELEVATE program is an example of this. More mentoring, more bringing in local speakers to talk about their fields would help. Pathways into certain fields, such as healthcare, with internships and dual credit or coursework connections through Blackhawk Tech or Whitewater would give students the background and enhanced skill set they need to be career ready, and also provide them with authentic experiences.

AUDREY SMITH:

A coalition needs to be fostered between the school district and business community to help the workforce development succeed. Starting career interest/readiness early and implementing train to work programs. Also allowing volunteer opportunities to count as credits.



Workforce development is the biggest challenge facing the area business community. How can the school district work with the business community to prepare our kids to be career ready?

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The Janesville School District is one of the largest districts in the state and we have a growing diverse student body. What is your definition of equitable education for our students?

MICHELLE HAWORTH:

Equitable education means that every student no matter their background or situation should have equal access to programs and opportunities, no excuses and I won't settle for less. We offer opportunities to all and they are there for everyone. One of the traits that came out in the Superintendent search surveys was someone with experience bringing up low performing demographic students and that is something we must always commit to.

AMIE HUGHES:

I will bring everything back to what is best for all the students. It shouldn't matter the color, race, ethnicity, or income level. All students should receive the best teaching practices and curriculum to best prepare them for everyday life and life outside of school when they graduate. Every child in Janesville deserves to be in situations where they can best succeed and be part of a winning district.

JIM MILLARD:

One of our Janesville Promises is to know every student by Name and Strength. By following that Promise we are already having a conversation with them about their feelings, anxieties, hopes and dreams. Something so simple that can make a world of difference to a student. Knowing we care. Our students are the most important to us as a parents, teachers and members of the community. After all folks these students will be running our world. They need to have the best education possible.

CATHY MYERS:

Equitable education is making sure that you're meeting the needs of each student. Equity has nuance because the needs are different for each student. If a student needs more tutoring to help them operate at the level of their peers, they should get it. The goal of equity is that all students leave our school district on equal footing by being college and career ready.

AUDREY SMITH:

An equitable education is something our family is very familiar with having one twin in special education and the other twin in general education. Each child receives what they need to develop academically and socially. Same goal, 2 different paths. There is no other option than to provide an equitable education for our large diverse student body.