

199 REPORTER

INVER GROVE HEIGHTS SCHOOLS | ELECTION SPECIAL EDITION

Save the Date: Election Day is Tuesday, November 7

On November 7, voters will vote on the district's two referendum questions and choose three school board members. Find your polling place by visiting www.pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us and learn more about the referendum at www.isd199.org/district/referendum.

Meet the School Board Candidates

On November 7, 2017, voters will elect three residents to serve on the seven-member School Board of School District 199. The terms of three current School Board seats (Cindy Nordstrom, Paul Mandell, and Lynette Stensgard) will expire on January 3, 2018. Filings received as of the August 15, 2017, 5:00 PM deadline include eight candidates: Michael Casello, Joe Harms, Todd A. Kruse, Carrie Lounsberry, Cindy Nordstrom, Lynette Stensgard, Ryan Walfoort, and Fred J. Yerke. Candidates submitted answers to a district questionnaire. Read their answers below and on the following pages. *Responses have only been edited to assist with clarity.*

MICHAEL CASELLO

As of the date of publishing, the district did not receive information for the ISD 199 school board candidate questionnaire from Michael Casello.

JOE HARMS



AGE: 39

CHILDREN: Two

Why do you want to be a member of the ISD 199 School Board?

As a varsity wrestling coach since 2003 and father of two children who are going through the ISD 199 School District, I am committed to the success of our schools and students. It is my goal to ensure that we are fiscally responsible, focused on core education, and seeing our students achieve foundational excellence.

What experience do you bring to this position? How have your experiences prepared you to fulfill the responsibilities of a school board member?

I am actively involved with our community. I currently sit on the River Heights Chamber of Commerce board as well as the Convention and Visitors Bureau. I feel that investing in our community is of the upmost importance, and that starts with investing in our schools. In addition, as a local business owner, I understand the significance of fiscal responsibility and managing a budget.

What are the most important issues concerning the Inver Grove Heights School District and how would you address them?

1. Fostering an environment that allows individual students to reach their full potential by investing in and empowering our teachers is very important to the success of the student.
2. Two very important referendum questions are hitting the ballot this November. If they pass, we need to ensure continued fiscal responsibility by promoting transparency and accountability to guarantee every dollar is accounted for and being used in the best possible way to benefit the students, the district, and the community as a whole.

INSPIRE. INNOVATE. EXCEL.

TODD A. KRUSE



AGE: 51
CHILDREN: Two

Why do you want to be a member of the ISD 199 School Board?

To utilize my college teaching knowledge and experience working overseas to explore collaboration opportunities for the school district to enhance student learning. Our nation's K-12 culture of "teaching to the test" needs a revolution that results in "self-directed learning" to harness students' personal interests guided by teachers.

What experience do you bring to this position? How have your experiences prepared you to fulfill the responsibilities of a school board member?

Experience: professional lobbyist, board of directors role at several non-profit groups, PSEO student teaching at Inver Hills Community College, and professional research work for a wide range of clients. My personal and professional experiences have taught me the importance of fiduciary responsibility and business ethics as well as the necessity of continuous improvement. Thus, I would bring critical thinking skills and an extensive contact network to the board.

What are the most important issues concerning the Inver Grove Heights School District and how would you address them?

- Low percentage of parental involvement. I would look to the sports club model of parental engagement to drive ideas for getting more parents involved in PTSA.
- Failure of Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts. Vast sums of tax dollars are sent to these failing school districts to the detriment of District 199. I would work with a coalition to lobby for revision of the very opaque and antiquated state funding formula.
- Global economic and technology trends. Robots are quickly replacing jobs in the Midwest so we need to partner with local technology companies to better prepare students and their (potentially) laid off parents via adult education for such a future.

LYNETTE STENSGARD (INCUMBENT)



AGE: 51
CHILDREN: Three

Why do you want to be a member of the ISD 199 School Board?

I want to be a member of the school board for the same reason I did when I originally ran 12 years ago. Children need a voice, someone to advocate on their behalf to make sure schools can do what is best for kids. A lot of progress has been made over those years and many goals have been attained, but many new tasks must be completed, so that is why I would like to stay involved with the board.

What experience do you bring to this position? How have those experiences prepared you to fulfill the responsibilities of a school board member?

Having been a school board member for 12 years already, I feel I have proven experience in what it takes to fulfill this important role. I have served on the personnel, finance, and facilities committees. I was involved in the rebuild of the middle school, additions to Hilltop, the new Early Learning Center, and many changes at Simley. The latest bond was completed on time and under budget.

The most important skills I bring to the table are:

- Good Listener and Communicator
- Very Organized
- Team player who works well with others
- Finance: I have a lot of experience working with tight budgets and limited resources
- Responsible: I am known for following through on big and small issues

What are the most important issues concerning the Inver Grove Heights School District and how would you address them?

I believe the biggest issue is budget. We run on one of the lowest in the area. It is the key in defining how much we can do for kids, and it doesn't leave the district enough to continue the needed transformation of our educational system. The world around us is changing at a pace schools have not been able to keep up with due to limited funding and resources. To address the limited budget, I would stay focused on the greatest of priorities and continue to look at options such as collaboration with other schools and businesses to help reduce overall expenses.

A second issue of concern is around the topic of career and college readiness. We need to help kids have a much clearer idea of their interests and talents before they graduate from high school as it is a key to their future success. To address this issue, I would be focused on curriculum needs and, again, collaborating with other schools and businesses to bring in that real-world experience.

CARRIE LOUNSBERRY



AGE: 38
CHILDREN: Four

Why do you want to be a member of the ISD 199 School Board?

As a former public school teacher, my heart is in public education; I want to help ISD 199 thrive, thereby helping our community thrive. Having an active role in working with the administration to support our teachers is also a strong draw for me, offering them the resources they need to educate each child to the best of his/her ability. Finally, I want my children to be a part of a vibrant, diverse, strong district, and I would love to support the district in its efforts to grow and excel.

What experience do you bring to this position? How have your experiences prepared you to fulfill the responsibilities of a school board member?

I graduated from Bethel University in 2001 with a Language Arts Secondary Education degree and then taught in the White Bear Lake School District for 10 years. I believe that my time in the classroom will be a valuable asset to our board. I also believe that my experience as a mom of children at Hilltop Elementary School is important. While my children will be impacted by the decisions of the board, I would evaluate and make decisions that would be in the best interest of every student. In addition to my educational and parental experience, I am also gifted in facilitating effectiveness. I would love to help our board and district continue to improve in effectively serving our students, teachers, and community.

What are the most important issues concerning the Inver Grove Heights School District and how would you address them?

Firstly, I love that our district is growing in diversity. With this growth, I want to ensure that all students and families are warmly welcomed into our schools in ways that feel most comfortable for them. This may require us to look at lunch menus as well as what stories are included in our curriculum. I would love to help our community grow in honoring the diversity around us and learning from each other. Secondly, I hope to increase the lines of communication between our community and our schools. Eighty percent of our community does not have school-aged children. Let's work to ensure that they still feel connected to and proud of our schools and our students.

CINDY NORDSTROM (INCUMBENT)



AGE: 53
CHILDREN: Three

Why do you want to be a member of the ISD 199 School Board?

I believe in the direction the district is currently heading, specifically in the areas of

- career and college readiness
- early intervention and preschool programming
- the district's mission of "Inspire. Innovate. Excel. A Community Commitment."

What experience do you bring to this position? How have your experiences prepared you to fulfill the responsibilities of a school board member?

As a person who is passionate about education, I walk the talk. I live in the trenches as a classroom teacher, and as a school board member, I am involved in setting policy that leads a district. Each position makes me better at the other one. I was the board chair for 5 of my 8 years on the ISD 199 School Board. Along with the leadership role, I served on the finance, personnel, curriculum, World's Best Workforce, Equity Alliance MN, BEST Foundation, and technology committees. I've been involved with the community groups that supported every levy/referendum since 2008.

What are the most important issues concerning the Inver Grove Heights School District and how would you address them?

1. While ISD 199 has earned awards for financial excellence and fiscal responsibility for 12 straight years, the most pressing issue for any school district remains meeting funding challenges. We are just one of 47 school districts with a levy referendum on the ballot this fall. Because our tax levy here in ISD 199 is less than half of the state authorized amount, our No. 1 task is making the most of every tax dollar we receive.
2. The next most pressing or exciting issue will be our response to the need for career- and college-ready students. I've toured four local businesses in Dakota County that are in need of future employees who can collaborate, communicate, and learn new skills and trades on the job in an ever changing world. ISD 199 is currently working with South St. Paul and West St. Paul to find ways we can offer career pathways for students to explore skills and trades that are in high demand, i.e. nursing, technology, mechanical. A four year college is not the answer, nor should it be, for every single Simley graduate. We need to find the best fit for every student.

RYAN WALFOORT

As of the date of publishing, the district did not receive information for the ISD 199 school board candidate questionnaire from Ryan Walfoort.

FRED J. YERKE



AGE: 52

CHILDREN: Eight

Why do you want to be a member of the ISD 199 School Board?

Education is a very important part of our lives, and having been in the Inver Grove Heights School District and reaping the benefits of it, I want to give back to the district that helped me achieve the level of success that I have in life.

What experience do you bring to this position? How have your experiences prepared you to fulfill the responsibilities of a school board member?

I have been on numerous committees responsible for both county and school functions. Also, with my background as a PCA who has worked in the mental health field for 30 years, I feel that my experience would be very beneficial to both students and staff. Through my experiences on boards, I have gained a wide range of understanding on how day-to-day operations of schools happen and are handled, how to deal with budgets and the issues that come up from time to time, as well as how to rectify budget shortfalls. I also have very extensive dealings with kids with special needs (autism, ADHD, FAS, ODD) and how to advocate for their needs.

What are the most important issues concerning the Inver Grove Heights School District and how would you address them?

Quality education is extremely important, and Inver Grove is looking at being one of the most diverse schools as far as education to the students and staff. With the way students have to learn today versus when my generation was in school (things are much more advanced), the school board, superintendent, and staff need to work as a team to utilize every opportunity that we can to provide equal opportunities to all students to get the best education possible. Having children with varying abilities from accelerated learning to cognitive disabilities, and a wife who has been in education for many years, I feel I should be able to help come up with a plan to benefit all students.

ISD 199 REFERENDUM INFORMATION: WWW.ISD199.ORG/DISTRICT/REFERENDUM



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