

MEET THE SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES



As we approach the upcoming school board election on Tuesday, April 7th, we are fortunate to have four candidates stepping forward to serve our community and support our schools. With four open positions on the board, this is an important moment for the School District of West Salem.

This election comes at a time of growth for our district and community. We are in the process of updating our strategic plan, continuing construction projects tied to the Capital Referendum approved by our community in November 2024, and preparing to expand opportunities for our students thanks to the incredible support we've received. The leadership and vision of our Board of Education will play a key role in guiding this work forward.

Due to past board member resignations, the terms for this election will vary. The top two vote-getters will serve three-year terms, the third-highest vote-getter will serve a two-year term, and the fourth-highest vote-getter will serve a one-year term.

We are excited about the opportunities ahead and remain committed to ensuring that the School District of West Salem continues to be a place where students thrive. Our goal is to provide exceptional learning experiences led by dedicated staff, supported by high-quality facilities, and focused on preparing students to be future-ready, whether that path leads to college, career, or beyond. Just as importantly, we remain committed to helping students develop the essential soft skills that will serve them well in all aspects of life. Thank you for your continued support of our schools. We hope the candidate biographies help you learn more about those willing to serve and lead our district into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ryan G. Rieber'.

Ryan Rieber
Superintendent



Vote April 7

MEET THE SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES



Nick Walters

What motivates you to become a board member?

What motivates me to serve as a school board member is the opportunity to preserve the strong traditions that have shaped our schools while also recognizing and adapting to changes happening in today's workforce. Our students are entering a world that looks very different than it did even a decade ago, and I believe it's important that our schools evolve to prepare them for those realities.

What do you see as the board's roles and responsibilities?

School board members help set the direction for the district what we value, what we prioritize and what we want students to walk away with when they graduate. We work with leadership to make sure there are strong polices in place that the schools are safe, supportive places to learn and work. It's also about listening. A good member pays attention to parents, staff, and the community that supports them.

What is the most important responsibility of a school board?

The most important responsibility of the board member is to keep students at the center of every decision.

What aspects of our school district are you most proud of and how would you like to grow & enhance these aspects?

One of the aspects I'm most proud of in our school district is the strong support and opportunities we provide for students interested in hands-on, skilled trades- what many of us would proudly call blue-collar careers. Not every student's path is a traditional four-year college, and it's important that we recognize and celebrate the value of hard work, craftsmanship, and the essential role these careers play in our communities.

As someone who values blue-collar work, I appreciate seeing programs that give students real-world skills-whether that's technical education, partnerships with local businesses, or opportunities to explore trades early on. By investing in these programs and celebrating their importance, we can ensure students feel just as supported and valued pursuing a skilled trade as they would any path.

MEET THE SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES

What motivates you to become a board member?

Being a parent, sales professional, past President of the West Salem Business Association, active networker, and engaged member of our community, I bring a variety of ideas and perspectives to help our school district continue to grow and succeed. I am passionate about giving back, and serving on the school board is a meaningful way to support the community that has given so much to my family. I especially enjoyed participating as both a speaker and judge during the 2025 Pather Portfolio presentations, where I had the opportunity to encourage students as they prepared for the next phase of their lives. Serving as a board member allows me to support these efforts on a more consistent basis.

I also value collaboration and the exchange of ideas with other dedicated community members. I look forward to learning from fellow board members and working together to address opportunities and challenges facing the district.



Jennifer Hatz

What do you see as the board's roles and responsibilities?

I believe the role of the West Salem School Board is to listen carefully to students, staff, and community members to ensure the School District of West Salem provides a safe, supportive, and challenging environment where students can learn and grow. As a parent, I understand how important it is for students—and their families—to feel confident and prepared as they take the next steps in life. This year, as our oldest son began his college journey, I felt reassured knowing he was well prepared through the knowledge, experiences, and values he gained both at school and at home. The school board plays an important role in listening to concerns, addressing challenges, and working collaboratively to develop thoughtful solutions.

Board members must also stay informed about changes and trends in education and the broader world. By doing so, they can provide guidance and make decisions that help ensure students are well prepared for college, careers, and life beyond graduation.

What is the most important responsibility of a school board?

The safety of students and staff is one of the most important responsibilities of a school board. Ensuring a safe, supportive, and challenging learning environment must remain a top priority for board members. From an early age, parents place significant trust in the school district to nurture, educate, and help their children grow into confident and capable individuals. Meeting the diverse needs of students across the district is essential to preparing them for a successful future.

Creating an environment where students feel safe sharing both their successes and their struggles is critical to learning and personal development. One of the greatest challenges is establishing policies, programs, and support systems that effectively serve the wide range of student needs within the district. Selecting and supporting strong leaders, teachers, coaches, and staff members is a key responsibility of the school board. These individuals play a vital role in shaping the culture of our schools and helping ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed.

What aspects of our school district are you most proud of and how would you like to grow & enhance these aspects?

I am proud of the West Salem School District for providing opportunities to challenge and support students at all levels. Every student learns and grows differently, and our district offers a variety of programs to help them discover their best path. I am especially excited that full-day 4K will be offered beginning in Fall 2026, giving parents confidence that their children are in a safe, nurturing, and engaging learning environment while helping young minds begin to thrive.

I am also proud of the opportunities available to high school students. Access to college-level courses gives students a strong head start for higher education. The new CTE lab will expand career and technical education options, allowing students to explore different career paths before graduation. Trade-focused classes also provide practical skills and life knowledge valuable for all students. By offering diverse opportunities, the West Salem School District helps students discover their passions, build confidence, and thrive in life.

MEET THE SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES



Bob Minard

What motivates you to become a board member?

A deep commitment to education and community service motivates me to serve. Education has the power to transform lives, and strong schools are an important part of a strong community foundation. Serving on the board is an opportunity to help shape policies that directly impact students and families, including my own daughter. There is a responsibility to ensure every student has access to a high-quality education in a safe, supportive environment. That commitment—to students, families, and the long-term success of the district—is what drives the desire to serve.

What do you see as the board's roles and responsibilities?

The school board is responsible for the overall care, control, and management of the district. Its role is to provide governance by setting policy, overseeing finances and operations, and ensuring the district fulfills its educational mission. The board also represents the community by ensuring transparency, accountability, and responsible use of taxpayer resources. It works in partnership with district leadership to set direction and priorities, while respecting the day-to-day management of administration. At its core, the board's role is to make thoughtful, balanced decisions that support students, reflect community expectations, and position the district for long-term success.

What is the most important responsibility of a school board?

The most important responsibility is balancing the needs of students, the expectations of the community, and the responsibility to taxpayers. The board must ensure students receive a high-quality education while also being a responsible steward of public resources and maintaining the trust of the community. That requires clear priorities, thoughtful decision-making, and accountability at every level. When those three areas—students, community, and taxpayers—are aligned, the district is positioned to deliver strong, sustainable outcomes.

What aspects of our school district are you most proud of and how would you like to grow & enhance these aspects?

The School District of West Salem has a strong culture of community support, dedicated teachers, and a shared commitment to student success. One area of particular pride is the investment in Career and Technical Education (CTE), including the recently approved referendum to build a new CTE facility. This reflects a forward-thinking approach to preparing students for both college and career pathways. Moving forward, there is an opportunity to expand CTE programming, strengthen partnerships with local businesses, and ensure students have access to modern tools and real-world learning experiences. Building on these strengths will continue to position the district for long-term success.

MEET THE SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES



What motivates you to become a board member?

I've proudly served this district since 2014 and have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I've had the joy of signing hundreds of diplomas and handing them to students excited for their next chapter, knowing they are well-prepared for success, because of our educational excellence. I appreciate being able to give back to my community through board service, and I'd be honored to continue.

What do you see as the board's roles and responsibilities?

The board sets policy and strategic direction. We are financial stewards of the district and approve budgets and spending. We represent the community and serve as a liaison between school and community. We also monitor student achievement and district performance toward strategic plan.



Catherine Griffin

What is the most important responsibility of a school board?

I believe the most important responsibility of the Board is to care about student success, and care about supporting all of our educators.

What aspects of our school district are you most proud of and how would you like to grow & enhance these aspects?

I'm proud of our excellence in academics, the arts, and athletics, and that we continue to be a destination district for families and employees. I'm also proud and thankful of our community support for our soon- to- be enhanced CTE space. I'm proud of our College, Career, and Life Ready scorecard and providing students opportunities for success, no matter their life path. I'm excited to see how our CTE programming evolves and grows and how we can support new technologies.



405 EAST HAMLIN ST.
WEST SALEM, WI 54669

NONPROFIT
ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WEST SALEM,
WI
PERMIT NO. 38