



Ryan Billingsley

Bio:

My name is Ryan Billingsley. My wife Brandy and I have two boys, Andrew (10) and Alex (9), and one dog, Hank. We have lived in the Germantown area since 2014 and have really enjoyed making this community our home. My family enjoys all sorts of outdoor activities, family game/movie nights, and seasonal sports. Professionally, I have been in law enforcement for nearly 18 years and work for a local municipal police department, currently serving as the Deputy Chief.

1. What particular experiences or skills have prepared you to serve as a board member?

I have never served as a member of the Board of Education, so I am expecting a bit of a learning curve. I suspect there will be a few different experiences I will be able to draw from in serving in this role; first of which is being a parent of two students that currently attend Dist. 69. The purpose of the Board is to provide oversight and direction to administrators. Keeping the student's education, welfare, and benefit in focus should be the central goal of everyone in the district – an experience shared by all parents.

Aside from that, I am responsible for administering a multi-million-dollar budget for a local law enforcement agency and serve as the President of the pension board. The importance of fiscal responsibility and the dynamic of board operations is not foreign to me.

2. What do you see as the primary work of the board of education?

As I mentioned above, the primary work of the Board is to provide oversight, direction, and support to the school administration. The Board is elected by the community to provide community direction to the school. If standards are not being met, or the direction of the school is not in keeping with the community values – it falls on the Board to course correct. That correction can take many forms including anything from a review of current policy to hiring/firing decisions.

3. What is a school board member's role and responsibility?

To be an honest representative of their community and a responsible steward of public monies. School boards are elected via local elections specifically designed to foster local control over education. While the current environment in Illinois may not favor this view point, it is still vitally important nonetheless. Also, the fiduciary responsibility held by board members must be preserved in order to prevent mismanagement, abuse, or waste.

4. What is your vision for education in the Germantown Hills School District Community?

My personal beliefs on public education are that we should focus on academic skill building. This is the only time in the average persons life they will be afforded time dedicated specifically to building academic fundamentals. If you do not learn the basics of math, science, music, art, or grammar while in school – you are unlikely to build them later on. This is partly because our society does not offer many opportunities for base-level adult-oriented education, but also because there is little time available once your children are out of primary school and in the job market. Remaining focused on the primary purpose of education – and doing the best we can to prepare our children for entry into the 'adult world' is the real measure of success for any school.

5. What do you see as the major issue(s) facing our school district? Public education?

Financially, I was concerned to see our district running at a deficit this year. Obviously, that is not a sustainable practice and needs to be looked at. Given the long running financial history of the district however, it does not appear to be a dire situation. As I mentioned previously, I have never served on the Board in the past, so I am not privy to many of the details from this past year, but judging partly from the presentation Superintendent Mair gave at the State of the District dinner recently, it appears the district has historically done a respectable job in maintaining its fiscal responsibility to the community. I would look to see that responsible management of public funds continue.

With regard to public education in general, I see several recent attempts from State level organizations to interfere with local issues as a major concern. Our system of government, the make up of the school board system specifically, is set up as a means of local control over the education of our children. The State is there to assist, provide support, and recommendations. Mandates, political theater, and coercive threats only serve to distract us from what we should be focusing on – educating our children.

6. How does a school board balance the need to provide a quality education with the need to respond to the local taxpayer burden?

Schools are an investment whose dividends are not paid back in money. They are paid back in the quality of successive generations. There will always be a taxpayer burden to fund schools, and while we cannot get around that, we must be diligent in being good stewards of those funds. To use them wisely and prudently for the benefit of those successive generations – to pay back those dividends in the best, most economical manner possible. Financial waste, mismanagement, and fraud create an undue and unfair burden on the taxpayer. Speaking from my position as a public servant; public trust is a trust that cannot be won back once squandered.

7. Why should you be elected to the Board of Education?

I personally know some of the other candidates running in this election. I would have no issue voting for any of them. They are good people with good morals and values. I cannot sit here and tell you that I deserve anything more than they do. All I can say is that I hope I have given you some insight into my perspective and worldview. If your values align with that, then I would appreciate your vote. If they do not, then you have the responsibility to vote for the candidate whose values do align with your own. To reiterate one last time; this is a local election to find representatives that best align with local values. Win or lose, as long as we can find the right candidates to represent our children, then I am good with that.