



The Good Government Council (GGC), a committee of the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce, was formed to act as a focal point for voluntary political involvement by the business community and other interested individuals in the Eau Claire area. One of the main objectives of the GGC is to learn about candidates' positions on various issues and inform and educate our members. The Chamber does not endorse candidates. For more information about the Chamber and its Governmental Affairs programs, contact Scott Rogers: [rogers@eauclairechamber.org](mailto:rogers@eauclairechamber.org) or 715-834-1204.

*We have provided candidates for the Eau Claire School Board the opportunity to fill out the below questionnaire to share their thoughts on some issues within the area business community. Here are the responses as we received them from each of the candidates. Candidates are arranged alphabetically. We encourage you to pass on this communication to anyone interested in learning more about the candidates and their position on issues. There are seven candidates running for four open seats. Three of these candidates are incumbents.*

## **Eau Claire School Board Candidate Questionnaire Spring Election, 2018**

### **1. What are your background and qualifications for this position, and why are you a candidate?**

- **Lori Bica (Incumbent):** I earned a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from Ohio State University, focusing primarily on children/adolescents. In 2000, I joined UW-Eau Claire's Psychology Department. In addition to work as a Professor, I served as Chair, which afforded significant experience with budgeting; facilities; hiring and contract negotiation; personnel evaluation; curriculum/assessment; student graduation and job placement. I've had extensive involvement with community and schools, focusing primarily on academic interventions for at-risk students, assisting principals and teachers with program development/evaluation, and grant-writing to support school initiatives. In one statewide project, I worked with DPI and state legislators to secure millions in ongoing federal funding to combat food insecurity. Everyone should consider service to a school board or other public entity as a means of contributing to their community's long-term vitality. Given trends impacting education, there's never been a more urgent need for citizens to serve. For me, the time to offer service is now.
- **Joshua Clements:** I am a community development professional with over 12 years' experience. I have a daughter at Lakeshore, son at Memorial. I serve on the ECASD Demographics and Trends Committee, Eau Claire Transit Commission, and Third Ward Neighborhood Association Board. Previously, I was the President of the 501c3 Dubuque Montessori School. Community livability is my passion and my vocation. Public schools are intimately linked with communities as centers of

learning, employ residents, connect people, and provide life-long skills for the pursuit of happiness and general enrichment. Schools are the ultimate place-based institution and are perhaps the most important institution to the long-term condition of the community and its people. My value proposition is that, as a community development professional, I have some insights and an overall approach that provides value and perspective to the policy governance, budgeting and strategic planning functions of the board.

- **Laurie Klinkhammer:** No answer provided
- **Joe Luginbill (Incumbent):** My background is in child welfare and charity leadership. I have worked as a case manager for children and families, am the current coordinator of the Eau Claire Coalition for Youth, and have served on boards for public and private organizations in the Chippewa Valley. When I was first elected, I immediately got to work to help tackle the most pressing challenges facing our schools. I helped author over 75 policy changes that make our district safer and more inclusive. I helped secure funds to approve a pay reclassification for special education assistants and advocated for successful compensation reforms for all employees. I have held over 200 school visits to spend time directly with our students and staff. I presented at 100+ listening sessions to ensure the success of our 2016 Referendum. I'm running for re-election because I want to continue the important work necessary to move our district forward.
- **Tim Nordin:** Our district needs experienced, expert board members to guide our already great schools to become even better. Positively impacting schools has been my life's work. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in physics, I taught high school science in southeastern Iowa. There, I created innovative cross-curricular and community-based projects and worked to streamline district policies to serve students. I then moved to New Jersey, where I completed a Ph. D. in education, focusing on policy, equity and diversity. I worked with districts across the state to help teachers use evaluation data to improve practice. In 2015, my family and I relocated to Eau Claire. Here, I volunteer in ECASD schools, where I have two sons. I also serve on the Board's Demographics and Trends committee, seeking ways improve student equity. I am fully prepared to use my unique background and experience to benefit our schools and community.
- **John Plewa:** No answer provided
- **Eric Torres (Incumbent):** I am an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. I chair the Council on Internationalization and Global Engagement and serve in the Steering Committee of the Latin American Studies Program, the Teacher Education Program and the Middle Childhood-Early Adolescence Program. A native from Callao, Peru, I lived in North Carolina for eleven years with my wife, Ronda, and son, Sebastian before moving to Eau Claire in 2011. I have served as a classroom teacher and school administrator in Lima, Peru and Moore County Schools, NC, for almost twenty years. I define myself as a public educator. I completed undergraduate and graduate studies at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, Autonomous University of Madrid, Duke University, and the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. Originally an attorney with a specialization in constitutional law and political science, my work and interest in multidisciplinary research led me to earn a Ph.D. in curriculum and teaching with a specialization in cultural studies. I have consulted with the World Bank, United States Inter-American Agency for Development and Ministries of Education of Peru and Chile. My current scholarly interests blend my areas of expertise in law and education to include the critical interrogation of education public policy and its global trends, cultural diversity and global learning, the promotion of critical literacy as a condition for democratic citizenry, and the re-description of education as a fundamental right in the United States. I am a strong supporter and advocate for public education and public educators, enjoy mentoring students and leading them on high impact practices like student-faculty research and faculty-led immersion experiences to Milwaukee, Washington DC, and Peru. It is clear to me that, as a leader in public education, one sets the tone for thousands of teachers, staff, and students who look to you for guidance and inspiration. I am a candidate because I aspire to become another trusted source who moves and inspires teachers and students with innovative ideas. One who encourages teachers to

model for students how to learn engaging others, especially those who don't look like them, to solve shared problems. I will make sure that there is policy and supportive practice to turn those innovative ideas into reality. I can contribute to eliminate structural barriers to replicate and scale their success into sustainable, equitable change in service of a democratic, diverse, and inclusive citizenry. I decided to stand up and help make our local government body stand out.

**2. With a strong local economy and low unemployment, many businesses report difficulty in filling key positions. What can the school system do to promote a skilled workforce for the area sufficient to meet the needs of business and industry?**

- **Lori Bica (Incumbent):** We must help students become adaptable and skilled, as today's young people will change jobs, even careers, several times in their professional lives, with many taking positions in the future that do not yet exist today. The ECASD should play a central role in this preparation, and can do so most effectively by focusing its curricula on 1) knowledge of the natural sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, history, languages and the arts, 2) intellectual and practical skills that are practiced extensively across the curriculum (e.g., analysis, critical thinking, quantitative literacy), and 3) personal and social responsibility (e.g., ethical reasoning, intercultural competence). At the high school level in particular, the curriculum must emphasize synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies. Students also need many opportunities to engage in high-impact practices, including post-secondary experiences; project-based, integrative learning experiences; apprenticeships and internships; capstone experiences; and domestic and international immersions.
- **Joshua Clements:** The ECASD Mission: "To inspire and prepare our students to live creative, fulfilling and responsible lives" and Vision: "We challenge minds, build relationships and nurture individual growth to prepare all students for post-secondary success." The purpose of K-12 education is to prepare and equip all students for successful lives, of which employment and community contributions are part. The District must be aware and responsive to continuously changing content of skills that are in demand. However, there are larger missions to public education in preparing our next generation that are well beyond the purely academic purposes. Laser focus must be on the whole person, developing overall learning aptitude, problem solving, resiliency, critical thinking and citizenship through balance in the arts, humanities, and STEM. The school system promotes a skilled workforce as one outcome of effective education, and builds community to keep, return or attract people to the area.
- **Laurie Klinkhammer:** No answer provided
- **Joe Luginbill (Incumbent):** Our schools play a key role in promoting and preparing a skilled workforce, and I will continue to advocate for that as a board member. ECASD currently has a career clusters program and a comprehensive academic and career planning guide. We also have a number of dual credit opportunities that we offer in partnership with CVTC, which provide tuition savings for students and help prepare them for the workforce. We are currently working to expand the student internship and apprenticeship programs we offer. I was recently a vocal advocate in support of plans to remodel our culinary labs at the high schools. This is very important to invest in because our students can achieve the "ProStart" certification which can get them into the workforce, and, according to the Department of Workforce Development, we know that there will be 18,000 food industry jobs in this part of the state by 2022.
- **Tim Nordin:** The district is committed to developing post-secondary opportunities for students while still attending school. This includes partnering with CVTC, UWEC, and others for dual-credit options, allowing students to more rapidly complete their education and enter the career field. We support work-training apprenticeships and internships with local businesses, giving students a chance

to gain experience in careers of interest. The district maintains a detailed career guide, and recently added courses for students to explore the teaching profession and supported our culinary labs to make sure students can receive ProStart culinary certification. For younger students, ECASD offers myriad summer options in science, technology, engineering and math programs. As a district, we must continue to build relationships with our wealth of local resources for higher education and business and communicate about how to tailor our educational program to keep our growing region vital.

- **John Plewa:** No answer provided
- **Eric Torres (Incumbent):** Public education leaders have to play a key role in understanding the issues that impact our societies at large. Whether it be politics, or economic development, or climate and environmental impacts, we have to provide critical direction and early pathways to focus on these issues. The increasing collaboration between ECASD, CVTC and UWEC becomes a great opportunity to establish those early pathways to scaffold educational opportunities in career and technical education as well as higher education. Besides knowledge in academic content areas, the school system also values skills and habits. We want all our students to be active and well informed citizens in a democratic society. It is clear that all our graduates must be critical thinkers, able to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and solve real world problems. To this end the school system needs to strategically join efforts with the community to continue building mental health supports, developing and expanding community learning centers as safe environments for extended learning, striving for every child to have access to summer learning opportunities and nutritious meals, and boost school safety measures that address bullying, racism, and harassment. As a public educator, I know how a motivated teacher looks like. In this sense the school system must continue to make sure that our educators are inspired and empowered to teach. In my opinion, they are responsible for the renewal of the public around shared aspirations. Once met with respect, teachers are now met with fabricated distrust. We must restore respect for public educators. We must invest in recruiting and retaining the best and brightest talent to education careers, grow the diversity of our education workforce to reflect the demographic changes of our community, and empower them to lead beyond the classroom. As an expert in teaching and learning environments, I believe the school system needs to continue promoting engaged learning, as well as critical and culturally relevant pedagogies for the benefit of all students. To this end, it needs to continue identifying and generalizing best teaching practices that differentiates instruction for students, bolster building and district solutions to closing the achievement gaps, and encouraging and rewarding educators who identify creative ways to impact student learning. Finally, to ensure that all students are college and career ready, the school system must address the inequities that result from our current funding system. To this end we must advocate and collectively act in support of funding equity across rural, urban, and suburban districts, making sure funding reflects the impact of local poverty, rural needs, and students with disabilities accommodations.

### 3. What is the role of the school board in ensuring the safety of students in the Eau Claire community?

- **Lori Bica (Incumbent):** The Board must ensure that facilities have safety measures considered standard for schools (e.g., security systems, trained staff, relationships with law enforcement, etc.). These measures are important, but they alone cannot ensure safety. And schools alone cannot provide solutions. Research demonstrates that efforts designed to strengthen children, families, and communities are what prevent violence. We must collaborate with community agencies to offer effective early childhood education, mental health services, family supports, youth organizations, and other services people need to flourish. For our schools, the Board must invest in guidance counselors who focus on students' emotional needs; knowledgeable, caring staff to facilitate meaningful curricular/co-curricular activities; social workers; and family liaisons. We must foster a school

culture in which non-violence, dignity, and respect are core values. School violence is one component of a larger system of societal violence. The Board can and should lead efforts to make positive changes regionally and nationally.

- **Joshua Clements:** The School Board must seek out the evidence-based best practices in ensuring physical and emotional safety of students and staff. Buildings and campuses must have reasonable measures in place to make entry by those who intend harm or carrying weapons difficult, while remaining welcoming centers of learning. Consistent with our District vision, building relationships and inclusive community within each school is crucial not only to ensure an emotionally supportive learning environment, but also to identify students who have additional needs or may be showing early signs of depressive stress and trauma that have led to many of the most violent incidents around the County. Board members, with one voice, must intentionally communicate and prioritize the creation of a positive, mutually-supportive culture of cooperation. The necessary resources must be allocated for campus facility measures, teacher training, as well as support staff such as councilors and school nurses.
- **Laurie Klinkhammer:** No answer provided
- **Joe Luginbill (Incumbent):** One step that we must take moving forward is to make sure that we have adequate staffing in the areas of school counseling, nursing, mental health and social work services. We must also continue to invest in safe and secure school environments, and in strengthening and updating district policies/procedures. We currently have a district safety team that does a great deal of proactive planning for our students and staff. One area to continue to support is our “Digital Citizenship” curriculum, which promotes safe online behavior and appropriate and effective online communication with others. It is also important for the school board to call on legislators to support accountability and safety legislation, advocating for local control when it comes to protecting our students. Most importantly, we need to remain vigilant and connected as school communities, as the safety of our students is the most important priority we have.
- **Tim Nordin:** The board is charged with developing goals, evaluating performance, and establishing policy. It imperative that the board work with district administration, faculty and staff, as well as experts in the fields of school safety and local law enforcement to continually evaluate procedures to keep our schools safe while supporting the values of the public school and community. The board must rely on the insight of these experts when determining policies and projects to keep our schools a place where all children are respected, valued, and taught in an environment free from fear. The board is responsible to educate themselves so as to make informed decisions guiding the district’s efforts in this regard. This includes accessing current research on effective safety efforts and advocating at the state and federal levels for changes that will benefit not only our students, but students across Wisconsin.
- **John Plewa:** No answer provided
- **Eric Torres (Incumbent):** As an educational leader it is clear to me that the challenges that gun violence present to the public school system is an issue that must be solved at the state and federal levels. I support bipartisan solutions to address the pressing school safety issues. But arming teachers is not one of them. I am in support of the Department of Public Instruction comprehensive approach to ensuring safe and educationally sound schools. It includes advocacy for the restoration of the revenue limit adjustment for school safety expenditures to implement modern safety features, as well as the use of those funds to purchase school safety equipment, fund the compensation costs of security officers or other expenses consistent with school safety plans. Additionally, under the umbrella of equal educational opportunities, we must develop a program to address school climate and violence through a culture of respect, affirmation and critique to include: a. Conflict resolution or dispute management strategies, including restorative practices and student leadership programs; b. Peer mediation, anti-bullying and equity programs; c. violence prevention curricula; and d. Emergency preparedness.

#### 4. What do you believe citizens of the district would identify as the top three priorities for their School Board?

- **Lori Bica (Incumbent):** I believe citizens of Eau Claire would identify the following as top priorities for their School Board. That all children who attend our public schools are guaranteed inclusive access to a rigorous education of outstanding quality, and to put their learning to immediate, meaningful use toward a productive career or advanced schooling. That to ensure this access, rigor, and quality, the Eau Claire Area School District will recruit and retain excellent, experienced, committed faculty, staff, and administrators. That to enable and fulfill these priorities, the District will establish, maintain, and improve its procedures to ensure the physical and emotional safety of every student and every employee and visitor in every school.
- **Joshua Clements:** Communication – ECASD is a large district, challenging for parents to keep up, and even more so for people without current students. An effective communication strategy must be a priority and regularly updated. Safety – Terrible school violence events around our nation have elevated safety concerns. This goes beyond punctuated violent events to include bullying, social isolation, and other conditions. Board members are expected to be vigilant and do whatever is necessary to create conditions for a safe and supportive learning environment for all. Equity – “One-size fits all” fails students. People have varied learning styles, strengths, needs, and come to school each day with the accumulated experiences of life. For many, this means severe stress and challenge. Education is an equalizer - schools must create a supportive environment and allocate resources accordingly so that each student, regardless of culture, learning style, or life situation, receives an excellent education.
- **Laurie Klinkhammer:** No answer provided
- **Joe Luginbill (Incumbent):** I believe that the top three priorities for the community are our People, Programs, and Places. 1) People: Our community values high quality educators and staff, and wants to see our district attract and retain teachers that will make the greatest impact with students. 2) Programs: Our community values an educational environment that is focused on academic achievement as well as the social and emotional growth of students. This includes low class sizes and providing students with innovative opportunities for learning. 3) Places: Our community values ECASD’s buildings and grounds, and wants to see the board investing in safety and security, ADA accessibility/compliance, and capital improvement projects throughout our school buildings.
- **Tim Nordin:** In speaking with community members, priorities that have consistently arisen are equity, innovation, and fiscal responsibility. We need to continue our work making services and programs available to all, regardless of economic standing, racial/cultural background, special educational needs, or sexual/gender identity. This means improving policy, attending to issues of bullying, and ensuring that gaps in student achievement are closing. Educating all students well is our top priority. Secondly, our community desires programs that encourage new teaching methods, small learning communities, and personalized paths. Research supports the use of advanced teaching techniques and offering a range of program opportunities for students to focus their education. We should be leaders in student education. Finally, we must pursue these goals as faithful stewards of our taxpayer funding. This includes transparency in our work as well as seeking out excellence in programming and teaching in cost effective ways.
- **John Plewa:** No answer provided
- **Eric Torres (Incumbent):** I think that the top three priorities would be 1. Pursuing excellence through equity; 2. School physical safety and learning environment; and 3. Fiscal responsibility and transparency. While the Eau Claire community has received with satisfaction recent reports about academic achievement of the school district, it is clear to me that the community has higher expectations. At a time when nearly one child out of four in the US lives in poverty, our school district needs to focus on equity, providing additional resources where they are needed. It is important

to continue setting goals for increased academic achievement of all students, but a closer look must be given to the academic growth of each student, especially students of color and students living in poverty. School safety will continue to be a priority in the mind of the Eau Claire community, as well as a continued effort to make the learning environment a more inclusive, diverse and equitable one, where all students can achieve their potential. Finally, fiscal responsibility and transparency will continue to be highly appreciated and demanded by the community, since the role of the school system and the stewardship of the board continue to be one of the utmost importance: securing equal educational opportunities for all.