



Wyoming Public Schools Board of Education Candidate Profiles Fall 2020

The following questions were given to each Wyoming Public Schools Board of Education candidate. These four candidates' names appear on the November 3, 2020 ballot. Voters will be asked to select three (3) full term Board seats and one (1) partial term Board seat. Frick, Hanselman and Popma are running for the full term seats and Norton is running for the partial term seat.

The responses below were submitted by the individual candidates and appear in alphabetical order by last name. Each candidate was asked to limit their responses to each question to 150 words or less.

Questions:

- 1. Please provide a brief bio about yourself. Include your personal background, particular skills or experiences that qualify you to serve and experience/involvement with our school and community.**

Shannon Frick:



I've lived in Wyoming, Michigan my whole life. I work full-time for a financial institution, where I've been for 21 years. I also currently work as a sub custodian at Wyoming Public Schools. My husband, Jeff Frick, is very involved in Wyoming Public Schools: working, coaching wrestling, coaching baseball in the community, volunteering and helping out wherever he sees a need. We have two children that attend Wyoming Public Schools. My son is a sophomore this year at Wyoming High School and plays a variety of sports. He has attended Wyoming Public Schools since kindergarten. My daughter is in seventh grade and is currently trying out for sideline cheer. She has attended Wyoming Public Schools since she was 3 years old and was enrolled at Huntington Woods in the special education program. Over the years, I have been a volunteer in the classroom and at various school events helping out where and when I can.



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Jessica Hanselman:



I am a Mom of three school age children, one who will graduate this year as the first Wyoming Wolf grad. Being a parent of Wyoming Public School students has provided me with the receiving experience of education, which is a valuable asset when also participating in the governance of a district.

I work for Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services as a Recipient Rights Officer, investigating complaints, develop policies to protect the rights of adult and child patients, and participate in initiatives to improve safety and quality treatment for individuals in our care. Previous to these 13 years of employment, I worked for Hope Network, managing group homes for adults with mental illness and providing hands on care before becoming a quality assurance manager. Those seven years provided me the experience of running business operations, writing and monitoring budgets and records within the human services industry.

Jeff Norton:



I am a father of 4 boys, all graduates of Wyoming Public Schools. My wife and I have been actively involved in our children's education. I have coached soccer and basketball and served as vice president and president of the Wyoming Band Boosters. I have been filling a vacancy on the school board for the past 2 years. It's my honor and privilege to serve our school community as a member of the Wyoming Public Schools Board of Education.

Craig Popma:



I am a proud father of four daughters and have been happily married to my wife Rachel for 32 years. I am an avid camping enthusiast and sports lover and have a strong passion for the sport of bowling.

I have willingly served on the Wyoming Public Schools Board of Education since 2004, have remained a very active member of our Board, and remain active within our schools activities. I have served on many boards including the board of Deacons at St. James Lutheran Church and have been involved in the many challenging decisions that our school district has had to face over these past 16+ years since I have been a member.



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2. What motivates you to want to become a Wyoming Public Schools Board of Education member?

Frick:

As my kids have gotten older, I've become more interested in how the school system functions. For the past few years, I've attended school board meetings which keep me up-to-date on decisions being made and helps to keep me informed about what's going on in the district. I strongly encourage all parents to attend these meetings.

As with the athletic boosters meetings, my husband is a member, these meetings offer great opportunities to be involved and stay informed. At the Board of Education meetings, I've also learned quickly, the district is not limited to my own kids or even their graduating classes. I believe all students should be represented. It's very important that local community members have visibility within our school system and that we represent the students and community needs at the board meeting table.

Hanselman:

As mentioned, I am a mother of students and feel very passionately that the Wyoming Public School District is one of deep integrity and quality. To maintain that level of quality, a district needs board members who will make thoughtful and careful decisions in support of the students, educators, all staff, and importantly, the administration of the district. While there will never be a time that this service is less important, we are at an often difficult and deeply challenging crossroads of the educational world. As we tell our students, "We can do hard things." I feel called and able to walk with this district through the painful challenges and the soaring triumphs.

Norton:

Since our children have graduated, my schedule affords me the time to dedicate to the Board without missing out on sporting events and extra curriculars. I feel I can be a better representative of all students and families without bias.

Popma:

Making a positive impact on students, families and our Wyoming Public Schools family motivates me to want to continue in my role as a Board of Education member. Seeing the positive impact that occurs within our buildings allows me to see that we are making a difference, one decision at a time. All of our decisions we make are for the purpose of students, staff and family and we are consistently looking at these with a purpose of growth and opportunity for all within our district.

Being able to see the many students and families come into a meeting to show off their many talents or to have someone come up to me at a meeting or within the school building and say thank you really tells me that I am still providing value to our Wyoming families.



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3. What are some of the current challenges facing public education in general, and more specifically, Wyoming Public Schools?

Frick:

One of the biggest challenges I'm seeing for public education in general is the current pandemic. Parents, teachers, staff and students are having to make tough decisions. Maintaining the health and well-being of our kids, faculty, families and all those involved is a challenge in the current environment.

Over the years I've also seen lack of parent involvement. Some teachers are struggling with students whose parents do not showing up for parent-teacher conferences. It is challenging to get everyone involved but so important that we have appropriate representation from every stakeholder in our district so that no one is left out.

I will listen and hear students, parents and faculty challenges so that I am aware of what's going on outside of what I see.

Hanselman:

It is no secret that the funding of schools is a steep challenge for schools across Michigan. Schools are asked to do more by our state legislature, but with fewer resources. Schools, including Wyoming Public Schools, have become true community anchors for our students and their families, providing safe spaces, shelter, meals, emotional supports, and other types of help. This stretches the resources of the district, as it does in many other districts in Michigan.

In addition, the Wyoming Public School District appears to be facing the challenge of community perception, in which WPS has been perceived as "less than" in terms of educational quality, and safety. This may cause some residents of Wyoming to utilize other schools. The dispersal of our Wyoming families to schools outside of our district causes fragmentation in our overall community which may sometimes contribute to the community's hesitance to support district initiatives.

Norton:

We are in unprecedented times with a worldwide pandemic. Local state and federal funding questions are yet to be answered in the coming months and years. I think our district has done a tremendous job of balancing in person and on-line learning as well as keeping our staff and students safe during this uncertain time.

Popma:

Throughout my entire career on our Board of Education, so many districts continue to face the challenges of funding year in and year out and our district has not been exempt from this either. It is frustrating to see the large disparity in funding between districts although we are being held to the same educational standards. I



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believe it is critical that we continue to work with our state government and continue to educate our peers on these challenges.

We as a district have been very fortunate to have a very strong administration team that does an excellent job of keeping our district in a good financial place. The efforts and planning put in by this team is awesome.

I believe that with all of the challenges schools face, we have remained in a strong position because of the work of our administration, staff and continued support by our community.

4. What are some of the strengths of public education in general, and more specifically, Wyoming Public Schools?

Frick:

Public education changes lives and is available to all. It is vital to our community. Wyoming Public Schools does a tremendous job of educating our youth and providing them with access to resources and many opportunities.

One of the many strengths of Wyoming Public Schools is our diversity. I love this about our community. So many in our community have a respect and responsibility to each other to embrace our differences and at the same time stay true to the values we hold.

Another strength is communication. A lot of questions can be answered via the resources provided on our school's website. Families are provided regular updates through robocalls, emails, announcements, notes/letters home, Class Dojo, social media and ParentVUE just to name a few.

WPS offers a wide range of sports programming to all students at no cost.

Another strength is that WPS provides free breakfast and lunches to all students.

Hanselman:

Public education's key strength is that we serve everyone. There is no lottery or waiting list for Wyoming resident students to be served in their own resident community. Our doors are open. This is the mission and duty of public school systems as they were imagined and instituted at their founding.

Very importantly, public school districts belong to the community and are governed in their operations by an elected Board. They do not belong to corporations or other entities. There are no shareholders, or private chartering bodies that can operate the district without community oversight.



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Most importantly, the community of families, businesses and others is a powerful force for growth and support for the district. The district is staffed with caring and qualified educators, support staff and business personnel who show up for our students in the toughest times.

Norton:

I believe teachers are the backbone of public education. With so many parents having to adjust to home schooling and on-line education, there is a new appreciation for what teachers do every day. I believe we have the best staff here in Wyoming. From our administration to volunteers, the dedication and level of caring is remarkable. We have the best teachers period.

Popma:

Public education within many districts remains a vital piece of life for so many students and families. Children need the educational and social experiences to grow and develop opportunities for themselves when they become adults. I believe Wyoming Public Schools to be the best and through the amazing efforts of our teachers and administrators, we are continuing to strive to become the choice of our Wyoming families for their educational experience.

Witnessing firsthand the love and respect that our staff have for their students and families is awesome. I have been privileged to work directly with many of our staff and too consistently see the outpouring of love and support that our staff shares with our community is unlike anywhere else in the state. Many students and families have faced many challenges, but through the support and love of our staff, these challenges have become opportunities and success stories.

5. How would you work collectively with fellow board members to address the above challenges in our district?

Frick:

Having a seat on the board will help me advocate for our students. I want to help improve their lives, not only how they perform academically but also their well-being and mental health. There's so much that needs to be done in today's world, our students deserve to have the best resources available to succeed in a safe and productive environment. I know being a board member is not solely to advocate for the students but the parents, teachers and all those involved. I think it's important to listen and be their voice as well. I want to know and hear all sides of each situation.

There is so much that needs to be done in today's world and all around there are challenges for safety, awareness of opportunities, a sense of belonging, to be heard and understood. I want to be a voice.



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Hanselman:

- Thoughtful support or challenge of the recommendations and plans of district administration.
- Willingness to ask tough questions of administrators and each other, and the ability to achieve consensus all to the benefit of our students.
- Represent the district well in public-facing opportunities, to elevate the image of the district and to seek and hear the community's positive or negative feedback with grace, using that feedback for growth.
- Being well educated about district finances and operations.
- Relentlessly advocating for the funding of education for our students with Michigan legislators or others, whenever the opportunity arises.

Norton:

I feel my experience allows me the flexibility to see issues from more than one side. I appreciate the friendships I have formed over the years with parents and staff alike. I can also appreciate the concern of current parents working through uncertain times.

Popma:

I continue to believe that we have a strong family on the Wyoming Public Schools Board of Education and together along with our staff, families and administrators we will continue to work closely together. Our Board has consistently kept the philosophy that each suggestion and idea has value and that no one person out values the other. By working together as one unified team, the sky is the limit for us and we must continue to work with administration, local and state government on our funding and plethora of challenges that we as a district face day in and day out. Most importantly though, our district will prevail because we will continue to remain unified and work together as a family.

6. What is your vision for the district and how can we better serve our students and families?

Frick:

For Wyoming Public Schools to educate each student to their fullest potential and support families, using all the resources available. To prepare students to become productive, responsible, ethical, creative and compassionate members of society.

Hanselman:

- Every student growing and achieving to their fullest potential in learning environments best designed to support the support of “the whole child.”
- Supporting initiatives that increase student enjoyment and investment in their school experience.
- A robust two-way relationship between district families and even district residents who are not currently using our schools but have an important stake in how students are grown to be the next generation of (eventual) adults in Wyoming.



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- A strong school Board that is fully prepared to support and represent the district in the community, elevating the district's image in the public eye.
- Supporting and encouraging the continued support for all school personnel; particularly our educators who are doing more with less every day in a surrounding culture that does not always understand or appreciate their work.

Norton:

I feel Wyoming Public Schools is the best place to be for our students. My goal is to continue to be the very best option for families in the Wyoming area.

Popma:

My vision for our school district is to remain and become even more so the continued schools of choice district for families within the Wyoming Public Schools district. Our district has so many opportunities to offer both students and families and I truly believe we have the ability to continue growing with our families to be recognized as the best opportunity for any child and family going through their educational journey.

7. If elected, what would you hope would be key accomplishments of the Board during your years of service?

Frick:

I'm eager to serve our entire district and community in this role. I'm passionate about our community, all of our student's public education and Wyoming Public Schools, currently and in the future. I would hope to be a part of the continued projects/plans that are in the works and continue supporting the school through anything the district is currently working on. My key accomplishments would be to listen, bridge gaps, and to support the students and their families while also working to improve the district as a whole.

Hanselman:

- A Board that is actively known and seen by families, students, personnel and the community. The Board should be visible, active, engaged, so that our students and families feel that their surrounding community in Wyoming supports them through the Board.
- A Board that continually supports the balance of the human needs of students and families with sound financial decision making. This is a difficult task in an era of limited funding, but a task that the board actively engages.
- A Board that solicits opportunities to hear the community's feedback via increased Board meeting attendance by the public, involvement and awareness of survey feedback and other avenues of community input. A Board that is willing to hear and address concerns or negative feedback as well as celebrate positive feedback.
- A Board that continually supports the Superintendent so that he can in turn support his many team members and the students.



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Norton:

I believe our duty as a school board is to be the voice of the students and families of our district. My goal is to communicate with school administration the needs of our community and continue the success we currently enjoy.

Popma:

If given another opportunity to serve my district and families of Wyoming Public Schools, I pledge to continue working with my fellow board members, administration and staff on the development and growth for many programs and opportunities for both our students and families.

A key accomplishment would be that we as a district are recognized as the choice of education for our Wyoming students and their families. To continue to work closely with my fellow board members, teachers, administrators and families to continue to educate our community on all of the amazing things our staff and team do each day.

Finally, I would love to continue to see our children graduate and receive their diplomas from a district that has provided such a positive impact in their education and lives make me believe we are a great district and have much to be proud of.