



February 16, 2017

The District 155 Education Association has endorsed Ron Ludwig, Jason Blake, and Nicole Pavoris in the April 4, 2017, District 155 school board election. We believe these three candidates will be responsible taxpayer stewards and conscientious supporters of our students, our schools, and our educational mission.

Eight of the nine candidates – Jason Blake, Raphael Kamner, Donna Kurtz, Ron Ludwig, Nicole Pavoris, Dave Secrest, Ann Somers, and Scott Vetter – participated in thirty-minute individual interviews with the Political Action Committee for Education (PACE), which is composed of several Association members representing teachers from Cary-Grove, Crystal Lake Central, Crystal Lake South, and Prairie Ridge High Schools. These eight candidates also responded to a written questionnaire from the Association. Only one candidate, John Pletz, declined to respond to our questionnaire or interview with us.

One of the goals of the Association is to help educate the community about the candidates running for school board. In the spirit of transparency and education, below are our endorsed candidates' responses to the questionnaire.

Question 1: Name of employer/business

- RON LUDWIG** Crystal Lake School District 47
- JASON BLAKE** Associated Equipment Distributors
- NICOLE PAVORIS** School District U-46 (Elgin, IL)

Question 2: Please list colleges attended and degrees earned

- RON LUDWIG** Northern Illinois University: Masters in School Administration
 Illinois State University: Bachelors of Science/Education/Science and Physical Education
 Harper Junior College: Associates of Science
- JASON BLAKE** Roosevelt University- MBA, Lewis University- Bachelors of Science, Harper College- CPA Certification
- NICOLE PAVORIS** Marquette University (BA) and National-Louis University (MAT)

Question 3: Describe your involvement in District 155 schools.

- RON LUDWIG** Preparing over 10,000 students for D155 high schools over the last 27 years. Community supporter. Currently my son and son-in-law work in D155. Over the last twenty years I have attended many D155 athletic events, musicals, music concerts, GEMs conference, graduating ceremonies, announcing football games at PR/CG, and help to create over 30 opportunities for D155 Eagle Scout candidates.
- JASON BLAKE** Married to Sharon Blake - 20+ year teacher at Cary-Grove High School, children attend Crystal Lake Central High School. I know the history of the District and understand how it got to where it is today.

NICOLE PAVORIS My son is a junior at Prairie Ridge High School. He is a member of the lacrosse and boys swim teams. Besides being an involved parent in his education, I was on the committee that helped bring the swim teams' practices back to the Sage YMCA.

Question 4: Why are you running for Board of Education?

RON LUDWIG To be able to give back to the Crystal Lake community which has given me and my family so much over the last 27 years. All three of my children attended Prairie Ridge High School. My son was able to student teach at Central. My son and son-in-law work and coach at Cary-Grove. I have been employed in a school district for the last 27 years. We currently have an excellent high school district and I would like to help this to continue while overseeing needed changes that will make D155 an even a better school district.

JASON BLAKE I believe the leadership on the current school board has become stagnant and it is time for a change at D155. I understand that currently there are many difficult decisions the new elected school board will need to make in the next couple of years. I believe with my career experience, I can assist the board to make prudent business decisions to benefit the students as well as the community.

NICOLE PAVORIS To help make sure that the high level of education the D155 schools provide continues. To me, that means taking a step back from promoting & pushing AP classes as the end all be all in the district. Also, I would like to see more skills based programs offered, i.e. a certified nursing assistant (CNA) certification program. I think it would be a benefit to offer more dual-credit classes through McHenry County College to D155 students as well. This would broaden the course base and give students the opportunity to take classes that may help direct them towards a career. Ultimately, it comes down to making sure the district has programs that reach all students' needs to help them prepare for their future.

Question 5: What qualities do you possess that will benefit our schools?

RON LUDWIG Being the parent of former D155 students for ten consecutive years gives me a true parental perspective of what our students are experiencing in the high schools (academically, socially, emotionally and extra-curricular areas). Knowledge of the public school system grades K-8 having worked thirty years in public education. Two years in Elgin DU46 as a para-pro in a behavioral (today called emotional) disorder program with 10-18 year-old students. One year in the Wauconda school district as a 6th grade math/science teacher and coach. Physical education teacher for three years in D47 (North Middle School). School administrator for 21 years in D47. Served three years as Lundahl Middle School assistant principal. Opened Hannah Beardsley Middle School, as building principal, in 1996. Currently working at South Elementary School as the K-5 STEM instructor.

JASON BLAKE Current career experience, CFO and SVP at Trade Association. Past not-for-profit board experience 7+ years. 3 years as Board Director and 4 as President of Foundation.

NICOLE PAVORIS The qualities that I possess include professional experience, common sense, a collaborative nature and determination. As a teacher, my profession allows me to understand how schools work and all that a school's view encompasses to make them work. This means teachers, social workers, janitorial & food service staff, premier facilities, athletics, non-athletic extra-curricular activities, arts education, skills-based or hands-on classes, as well as safety and social-emotional concerns. My common sense and collaborative nature give me an open-mindedness on issues and the ability to listen & constructively work with colleagues to get things done. My determination will come in handy when valuable work takes longer than anticipated.

Question 6: In your opinion, what are the three most important issues that will face District 155 during the next two years?

RON LUDWIG

1. Fiscal responsibility while D155 has a reduction in student enrollment in the upcoming years
2. Preparing students for jobs that are increasing in the United States in the area of science and engineering.
3. Rather than consistently reiterating the low test scores of the three most challenged sub groups (low income, IEP and minority) finding real solutions to helping these groups attain education beyond high school.

JASON BLAKE

- 1) Evaluating the current high schools ability to service students coupled with the fact of lower enrollment.
- 2) Financial issues particular revolving around funding salaries and healthcare for the teachers.
- 3) Assessing the current administrative direction and future strategic plan.

NICOLE PAVORIS The three most important issues that D155 will face over the next two years have to deal with possible changes to federal mandates under the new administration and the effect those will have on schools in general. Secondly, as always, the issue will be how to balance providing quality education to every student amid rising costs. I feel that the third problem the district will face is changes to the grading policy.

Question 7: What strategies would you use to address the issues above?

RON LUDWIG

1. Be realistic and transparent with all stake holders (staff, students, parents and the community) on what is occurring, in regards to enrollment numbers in the upcoming years, and what the options are.
2. Look at D155 curriculum offerings as a whole and how do they parallel with the job market. Increase the number of students in STEM programs at all schools. Make science and STEM a required course for freshman and sophomore students. Work more closely with McHenry County employers to allow students more workplace experiences and job availability.
3. Why do certain inner-city schools find success on testing with their low-income minority students? Send our administrators to these school in Chicago, Rockford and Elgin where sub-groups have high performing students.

JASON BLAKE From a strategy stand point, I believe I would keep an open mind. Once I evaluated each issue, I would make a decision that was financially sound.

My biggest strategy would be to utilize my experience throughout my career to make sound decisions that benefit the student and the community.

NICOLE PAVORIS Above all, the strategy that needs to be employed to constructively deal with these or any of the issues D155 will face is teamwork. Inherent in teamwork is clear, open lines of communication between all stakeholders. This could come down to the Board of Education working with the administration to find creative funding vehicles. As well as, seeking out best practices in other communities dealing with similar issues. Not reinventing the wheel will save D155 time and money.

Question 8: Lists some examples from your life experience that demonstrate your commitment to public education.

RON LUDWIG I have worked in public education for the last 30 years. I will always believe that children are our future. I have been truly blessed to be able to work many areas within the educational system; starting with substitute teaching, para-professional, certified staff, building level administration and finally finishing my career back in the classroom with the students.

JASON BLAKE My biggest life experience was serving on the Countryside Foundation Board. This group focused on placing mentally handicapped students into the next phase of their life once they graduated high school.

NICOLE PAVORIS There are three ways that I can demonstrate my commitment to public education. The first is that I teach at a public school. I became a teacher in 2001 and have taught social studies at the same public high school for fifteen years. The second example of my commitment is that my children attend public schools. I have a son in public high school, a daughter in public middle school, and a son in public elementary school. Finally, I volunteer at the schools and support the schools in the community in a variety of ways including fundraising and positive promotion.

Question 9: How will you involve students, parents, and community members in Board decision making?

RON LUDWIG Board member are elected (hired) by members of our community who are over the age of 18. We must always respect their needs and concerns. We must always allow them to share their thoughts and ideas on the direction of their school system. With this information we will then be able to help form our decisions. It will also important for me to go into buildings and classrooms to see first-hand what is taking place in our schools and to be able to talk to our school personal and our true clients, the students. With all of this information we can that make an informed decision that will best serve all stakeholders in our community. Technology will be a key way to involve the younger generation, but we must still find ways to inform and be transparent with the older generation.

JASON BLAKE I think it is important as a public servant to listen to all those whom have an opinion and are willing to share it with you. I would take the time to listen and answer their questions so there would be more transparency between the board and community.

NICOLE PAVORIS To get more student input, I would create a student advisory board so the Board can hear directly from students. Representatives on this board would voice student concerns, hopes and ideas they have for the D155 schools. An added benefit of a student advisory board will be the leadership skills it fosters in those that participate. To involve more parents and be a more transparent partner with the community, I would suggest that a board member attend each of the high school open houses. They can set-up a table and field questions and concerns from those in attendance. I think people are tired of surveys and face to face contact is always a better way to communicate. To reach more community members, solicit McHenry County companies to join the Manufacturers Advisory Board. The resources (both monetary and non-monetary) these companies could offer would be another example of collaborating to make our schools, thus our community stronger.

Question 10: In your opinion, what relationship should the Board of Education have with the superintendent and district administration?

RON LUDWIG The D155 Board of Education's number one job is to select and support the D155 district leader (superintendent). This person must work to best serve all stake holders (school staff, students, parents and community members). When any of the groups does not feel the support or understanding of district direction they deserve, as taxpayers, to expect the BOE to work with the superintendent to find the reason and make needed changes. All D155 high schools are a direct reflection of building administration, starting with the principal. The principal and school administration's role has changed dramatically over the last 30 years with all of the demands that society has placed before them each day, and it is the BOE and superintendent's job to help keep our administration healthy and feeling supported year in and year out. The board must ask specific questions of building level administration, in regards to specific district initiatives, and whether or not these initiatives provided student growth.

JASON BLAKE The Board needs to hold the administration accountable for decisions they have made. The Board should be strategic in their role. The administration should recommend and then carry out the strategy that was approved by the board.

NICOLE PAVORIS I believe that the relationship the Board has with the superintendent and district administration is that of an employer and employee or of a board of directors and an executive director. All parties involved would benefit from an amicable working relationship but that relationship must be professional and incorporate the system of checks and balances that are set up to protect the integrity of both positions. Both parties must demonstrate accountability to each other and a willingness to work together to provide the best quality educational product to the students.

Question 11: In your opinion, what relationship should the Board of Education have with teachers?

RON LUDWIG Teachers make the difference with our students each day. They are in the "trenches" with our kids year round. They hear and see things that parents and administration will never hear or see directly from our kids. They are the true ears and eyes of our schools. We must always respect their concerns, needs, challenges, foresight and direction needed for our students to be successful adults.

JASON BLAKE: I believe it should be a partnership. Although sometimes difficult decisions need to be made, the teachers are not the enemy and in the end they have the best intentions in mind which are the students.

NICOLE PAVORIS I believe that the relationship between the Board and district teachers should be more like a partnership. The Board should consider the potential consequences that their policies may have in the classroom and ask teachers for input before making sweeping changes.

Question 12: Is there anything else you would like to add or that we should know about you?

RON LUDWIG My wife, three children, daughter-in-law and son-in-law are all in the service sector. All teachers, with the exception of my daughter (a nurse). We all believe that serving others is the greatest gift in life. I would love to see some kind of service expectation/requirement for all D155 graduates. I do recognize a great number of students are already serving in their lives, but to be able to say all D155 students serve our community before graduating would be a great accomplishment for our district.

NICOLE PAVORIS I am a 2013 graduate of the Leadership Greater McHenry County (LGMC) Program. This program cultivates McHenry County community leaders by giving them deeper insights into the workings of county government, education, and economic organizations. LGMC helps to hone & develop the leadership skills of their participants with workshops and hands-on projects.