



# DAVID BOVA

## Board Candidate (Incumbent) — April 2, 2024 Ballot

I have lived in Ste. Genevieve nearly my entire life, including graduating from SGHS in 1990 and raising my family here. My wife, Julie, and I have been married for 26 years, and we have raised three daughters here in Ste. Genevieve; our daughters all graduated from SGHS.

I worked as a retail business manager for 25 years but went to work for the City of Ste. Genevieve six years ago as the Community Development Administrator. My wife, Julie, is the Ste. Genevieve County Circuit Clerk and has worked in that office for the past 11 years. Julie and I have always volunteered in our community, including Project Graduation, Jour De Fete, PTA and other organizations.

I am currently a member of the Ste. Gen. County Fair Board, Ste. Genevieve Rotary, and Foundation for Restoration of Ste. Genevieve. Julie and I and our daughters have all benefited greatly from our Ste. Genevieve school district. One of our daughters went on to become lieutenant for the Perry County Sheriff's Department and another is Senior Video Production Coordinator for Making It Media. Our youngest daughter currently works at SGHS while attending online courses full-time at Missouri State University to become a Special Education teacher.

I believe our community and our school district are each one of the best in the state of Missouri, and I want to work to keep it this way.

### 1. *What motivates you to want to become a Board of Education member?*

I believe our public schools are the backbone of our communities, especially small rural communities like ours, and I would like to be a part of helping our community continue to have a strong backbone, one that produces educated citizens who will one day be the doctors and dentists and carpenters and clerks that will take care of our community and care for it. Being a board member allows me to be a part of helping to make certain that happens. In addition to that, SG R-II provided a great education and experience for me and my children, provided fulfilling employment for my grandparents, and currently provides a wonderful place of employment for my daughter. I wish to give back what I can to help make certain those opportunities continue for other families.

### 2. *What attributes do you consider to be essential for successful school board members?*

I believe to be a successful board member, you must have a passion for helping all children succeed, have a strong will to make difficult decisions, be an honest and ethical person, be devoted to putting the needs of school children and the school district ahead of any personal or political leanings, and be able to commit the time needed to be a knowledgeable and involved board member, including speaking to faculty and staff throughout the year and advocating for children locally and in Jefferson City.

### 3. *What is your vision for education in this community?*

My vision is that our schools educate all of our children to be smart, respectful, self-confident, compassionate citizens in this world—and that we do that by hiring and retaining a terrific workforce, teaching academics and social-emotional skills, making certain we introduce our children to many subjects and thought processes, offering a wide array of extra-curricular activities, keeping our children safe both physically and emotionally, preparing our graduates to become active and contributing members of society, involving our community stakeholders in decision making, and communicating with everyone involved in our success.

4. *What do you see as the three most pressing issues facing public education, and what is your vision for addressing those?*

- The biggest issue facing our schools and teachers today is the amount of mental health challenges our children are facing. Behavioral issues, depression, self-harm, anxiety, and other mental illness are more present in our schools than ever before. Our district has hired behavioral specialists in our elementary buildings, partnered with Community Counseling, increased our own counseling staff, and much more. While we will continue these efforts and more, I believe we need to also focus on the importance of early social-emotional learning. I know our elementary teachers are doing a great job, but if we can teach SEL skills to more pre-schoolers, studies have shown this protects against mental health issues and improves their academic capabilities at the same time. Win-win!
- Another big issue facing all schools is a lack of teachers in our workforce. This shortage has led many school districts to transition to a 4-day work week; these schools aren't able to pay teachers as well as larger districts, so they compromise by offering the 4-day week. As a state and a nation, we have to pay our teachers better and treat them like the professionals they are. While we haven't had as much of a problem with this locally, it will affect us if we don't address it. Our district has a very good salary schedule and benefits for our teachers and our staff. But we must continue to improve upon those and I am committed to doing that while being fiscally responsible.
- While public education faces many more issues, I believe an important one is public perception. Fixing this issue will also fix many more. While we are doing well here, many schools are severely underfunded and are working hard to deal with the issues listed above at the same time. They're educating kids while also feeding them, nursing them, transporting them, coaching them, helping with their mental health, their physical health, their social well-being, and so much more. And those stories need to be shared and reported. Here at Ste. Genevieve, we have worked long and hard many years to have a strong tradition of excellence. And we also work hard to share that excellence—with our students, our parents, our alumni, our community, our local businesses, our media, and our leaders—and I will work hard to continue sharing that excellence and making sure the excellence continues on long after I'm gone.

5. *Legislation establishes state policy for education, and there are several state bills that would systematically impact public schools. To what extent would you like to be involved in legislative activity? What responsibilities do board members have regarding advocacy?*

School board members are the elected representatives of their school district and have a compelling responsibility to represent their community to state and federal legislators. Board members must prioritize our students, our district, and our community. Many times, prioritizing those three means speaking out in support of them and advocating for them. I enjoy the opportunity to do so and would continue to be very involved in advocating for our kids at home and in Jefferson City. Each year, I travel to Jefferson City at least twice during the legislative session to advocate for our schools, and I will continue that. I stay informed of the legislative actions that could affect education and also communicate with our State Representative and State Senator in addition to other legislators on the House and Senate Education committees. Additionally, I have worked with district admin the past 4+ years to have our state legislators tour our district and will continue asking them to visit our district. To expand our advocacy efforts, our district has held informative sessions on educational legislation to communicate to our community; I hope we can expand that in the coming year and try to increase community involvement.

6. *What do you see as our district's educational strengths, and what do you see as areas of improvement?*

I believe our areas of strength here at Ste. Gen. are our quality of staff, our classroom size, our English / Language Arts & Math scores vs state results, our support for reading and math success for our teachers and students, our Special Education department, our agricultural program, our level of elective offerings, and our focus on the whole student (character education, social-emotional learning, extra-curricular offerings, etc.) which leads to better academic success overall.

Some areas of improvement I would like to see are offering more college credit courses in high school (which we are working on), adding some additional electives in MS/HS in robotics and coding, and working towards incorporating more STEM in the early grades (which is being done; the more, the better as time permits). Personally, I would also love to see a building trades class brought back to Ste. Genevieve. We offer those classes at Perryville Vo-Tech, which is great, but if we had enough kids registering and enough room here, I think our school and our community would benefit greatly.

7. *Please share your thoughts on how to provide quality education for a diverse student population. For example, this would include students who use special education services, students who are differently-abled, students who have cultural differences, students who utilize English as a Second Language (ESL) services, students who perform in the average range academically, students who utilize the gifted services, etc.*

First of all, we need to and do provide a quality education for ALL students, no matter their ability or differences. Secondly, we need to teach our students inclusivity through character education, and we do that through multiple programs from K-12, including Power Leaders, mentors, after-school clubs, FRIENDS club, and much more. We need to include kids of all abilities in all activities also and we do a tremendous job of that in our district, helping teach our kids to celebrate our differences and learn that differently-abled does not mean disabled. Third, we need to provide our staff the resources they need to educate ALL students, whether that be professional development opportunities, specialized instructional materials, assistance inside the classroom or otherwise. This includes providing an accessible campus, and we are working on those improvements with our Prop SG funds. Fourth and finally, I think we need to work hard to be fiscally responsible in order to keep small class sizes so that our K-5 teachers can teach to each student's ability. And so that we can also offer those additional services some of our kids need or want, including our gifted program, our alternative classroom, a robust Special Education program and more.

8. *What is your position in regard to both character education and social emotional learning in schools?*

As I've mentioned in some of my previous answers, I believe both of these aspects of education are vital to the success of our students and our community. Social-emotional skills and character building skills have become less prevalent in many homes due to parents working multiple jobs, increases in screen time as we become a more tech-focused society and other factors. And the pandemic only made much of the problem worse. Schools have now had to take on a more active role in these aspects and, while it has made teachers and principals jobs even harder, it has helped our students. Research shows that social-emotional learning and character education have a positive impact on not only students' well-being but also their academic success. While our top priority for students must be their academic education, we need to provide both character education and social emotional learning for them in order to give them the best chance of success in their academics.

9. *What kind of relationship should the district and school board have with its community, including any partnerships or activities that could support student achievement outside of school?*

The district and the board should have an open and honest relationship with the community, parents and taxpayers. Board members should be approachable and listen to any district concerns or questions from all community members and act as a conduit to school administration and staff who can listen and try to help resolve issues. The district and board should also work proactively to involve the community in district goals and decisions. The board and district should encourage community input via volunteering, committee membership, survey feedback, public comment and other avenues. All of these opportunities are available in our district and we are working to create additional possibilities for community involvement. Board members and administrators should also reach out to community organizations and local businesses to network and establish relationships that could help increase and improve student success. Our board and district administration have partnered with multiple organizations and businesses, including the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, City & County government, local banks and manufacturers, local farmers, and many others to help offer our students more opportunities including scholarships, internships, hands-on experience, and much more. We should continue to do so and grow these programs as much as possible in the years to come.

10. *What have you done to become informed about our District in order to prepare for your possible election to the school board?*

I have been on the board for the past 12 years and have worked hard to stay informed and educated about our district, our community, and the issues facing public schools and public school teachers. I visit our school buildings regularly and try to talk with teachers, staff, and administrators on each visit. In the past few weeks, I have been in each building and spoken with teachers, custodians, cooks, secretaries, maintenance, administrators and students. I attend as many district activities as I can, including athletic events, PTO/PTA activities, fundraisers, drama, choral & band performances, and more. I also regularly attend training provided by the Missouri School Boards Association including webinars, annual conferences, and online courses that help me to better understand some of our district operations. Lastly, I consistently visit our district office to discuss ongoing matters with our superintendent and other district administration so that I can be as informed as possible for board meetings and board decisions.

11. *How would you handle requests and/or concerns if approached by an individual or special interest group?*

First, listen to the request or concern. Second, guide the individual or group to the proper channel for their request or concern. Many concerned parents that I speak with are simply passionate about their child's needs and want to be heard. So listening is very important. I advise the individual to take their request or concern to the teacher or principal involved. I then follow up with the teacher or principal to make certain the individual was heard. As for special interest groups, again I would listen first, ask for facts and literature to support their position, and advise them to take any requests or concerns to the entire board as I am only one member and cannot make unilateral decisions.

12. *Suppose the board made a decision you voted against, and a community member asked you about the decision. How would you handle the situation?*

I would offer my opinion but state that I am 1 member of a 7-member board and that I support the board's decision as the elected body of the entire district. I would not disparage other board members or administration and would direct the community member to speak to other board members or at a board meeting if they thought it necessary.

*Is there any other information you would like our faculty and staff, our families and our community to know about you?*

13. I have been on the R-II Board of Education now for 12 years and have worked to listen to our community over those years and reflect your values in my decisions. I visit our school buildings, talk to students and staff, speak with parents, taxpayers, & other community organizations, and make myself available throughout the year. I have done that throughout my tenure and I will continue to do so. Though my top priority is always our students and providing them an excellent education, a strong second priority and key to achieving the top priority is making certain that we have a top-notch faculty and staff to provide that education. I will work to help our district recruit and retain great educators, great staff, and great administration. Lastly, neither of those priorities is achievable without the support of our local community, and we have tremendous support. I will continue to work hard to keep your support by being fiscally responsible, keeping our facilities safe and secure, making sure all of our students and staff are proud to be a Dragon, and making certain I'm always available to listen to your concerns and suggestions.