

**UNIT 5 – SCHOOL BOARD**  
**CANDIDATE: KENTRICA COLEMAN**

**BACKGROUND**

I have been a resident of Bloomington, Normal for 23 years. I am a native of Alabama, but I grew up in Louisiana. I am a graduate of Loyola University New Orleans with a BS in Computer Science and I serve as a Technology Manager at State Farm. My husband Michael and I have been married for 20 years and we have 4 beautiful children (Brianna, Victoria, Mikey, and Jeremy). Family, community volunteers, mentors, local church, and educators have all played a huge part in investing and developing the person I am today and why I serve. The organizations I have served are an example of my commitment and connection to the Bloomington/Normal community. I currently serve: Unit 5 Citizens Advisory Council member, EJHS PTO Treasurer, Eastview Little Kidsview teacher/worship volunteer, The Jule Foundation mentor, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and Jack and Jill of America, Inc. chapters. B/N.

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO SERVE AND WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE OFFICE?**

I want to share my time, talent, and connectivity to Bloomington/Normal community to support and enable future success for all students within our district. I have been an avid champion for removing roadblocks for all students in support of enabling each child to achieve academic success. I am confident that every student has the ability to be successful and reach their individual fullest potential. To make it happen, our district will need community, educators, and caretakers coming together like never before. My goal will be to strengthen ties between Unit 5 School board and voice of stakeholders, ensure equity visibly exists for all students, and support educational excellence through the work of our educators and administrators. I commit to advocating for needs of all students.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE PRESSING ISSUES FACING THE VOTERS TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES?**

Top 3 issues facing voters include financial state of the district, post pandemic recovery strategy and equity. It will be important for the board to engage community, parents, and educators to gather input to understand impact of issues. These issues are complex in nature, in order to understand and drive needed progress, it will be key to obtain metrics/data to provide deeper understanding as to where greater need exists. Initial thoughts around improving financial state would be to identify ways to generate revenue through grants or other avenues. Establishing a holistic recovery plan to supplement student needs will be key to ensuring students remain on track for academic and

emotional success. Fostering an inclusive environment will assist in deeper connections and learnings for all students.

**UNIT 5 – SCHOOL BOARD**  
**CANDIDATE: GAVIN CUNNINGHAM**

1

**BACKGROUND**

Hello all. My name is Gavin Cunningham and I am currently a freshman at Illinois State University majoring in Special Education. I am a Unit 5 alum; graduating from Normal Community West High School in the spring of 2020. While in high school, I was a part of Speech, Cross Country, Track, Best Buddies, Not in Our School, orchestra, and choir. Along with that, I co-founded and led the Bloomington/Normal Youth Activists, or BNYA. BNYA is a group made up of high schoolers striving to improve the community from a youth perspective. I also interned in the fourth grade classroom of Mrs. Traci Freitag for the entirety of my senior year. I am running for this office because I love Unit 5 dearly and I believe that I can make a positive impact in the district that has done so much for myself and family.

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO SERVE AND WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE OFFICE?**

My platform consists of three points. The first is to run as someone representing the west side of Unit 5. Currently, not a single board member lives in an area that would feed into Normal West. My second stance is to run as both a former student and recent graduate. Between my time in the school district and interning in a fourth grade classroom the entirety of my senior year, I have a unique perspective. The third and final point of emphasis for my campaign is the creation of a subcommittee to reform the current K-12 history curriculum. I believe that the current curriculum isn't honest enough to our students. Information like Juneteenth, Black Wall Street, and much more is not in the current curriculum.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE PRESSING ISSUES FACING THE VOTERS TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?**

I am compelled to answer with the perspective of a recent high school graduate. In my opinion, getting out the vote for students and recent graduates is a pressing issue. Voting in local elections possesses a much larger impact on people of McLean County than the general November elections. I propose students learn more about our local history and how many races, especially recent ones, resulted in a razor thin margin. Doing this will enforce the idea that "every vote matters". If every registered voter ages 18 to 25 showed up to the polls, local results would differ. Unit 5 encourages civic engagement and, personally, I feel like enforcing local political history would excite students for the April elections.

**UNIT 5 – SCHOOL BOARD**  
**CANDIDATE: JANELLE CZAPAR**

**BACKGROUND**

Janelle Czapar, and her husband Paul, are the parents of four children (ages 12 to 22) all of whom are products of the Unit 5 school district. For the last eight years Janelle has been a high school educator for El Paso Gridley School District where she plans, coordinates, and directs lab activities. She is part of a team tasked with the development and implementation of the science curriculum throughout the district. During her tenure there she has planned for Physical Science, Earth and Space Science, Plant and Animal Science, Biology, Anatomy and Physiology, Chemistry, Forensic Chemistry and A.P. Biology classes.

Janelle graduated from Illinois State University with a Bachelor of Science in Biology, and obtained her Master of Science from the University of Florida in Pharmacy with a major in Pharmaceutical Sciences and a concentration in Forensic DNA and Serology.

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO SERVE AND WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE OFFICE?**

Janelle's goal is to work with fellow board members to ensure fiscal responsibility and financial stability for the Unit 5 School District. She will work to ensure that Unit 5 educators have the tools and support they need to provide the best education possible for all students. She will strive to consider the needs of the district's diverse student population so that each student will have the opportunity to reach their maximum potential.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE PRESSING ISSUES FACING THE VOTERS TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?**

The most pressing issue relating to the Unit 5 School District facing the voters today is the COVID Pandemic and the question of how to safely return our students to the classroom. The addition of an individual with a strong science background, like Janelle Czapar, to the Unit 5 school board will add perspective and clarity to this undertaking as the needs of both students and educators are carefully considered.

**UNIT 5 – SCHOOL BOARD**  
**CANDIDATE: JEREMY DEHAAI**

**BACKGROUND**

I attended the US Merchant Marine Academy and was a commissioned officer in the Navy upon graduation, reaching the rank of Lieutenant Commander. I met my wife, Krista, in 1995 and we married in 1998. We have three children (Miranda - 19, Sydnie – 17, and Justin – 15). In 2004, we moved to Bloomington because we were so impressed with the Unit 5 school district. Our children have been in the district for 15 years.

I work in chemical sales and Krista works at Carriage Crossing (senior assisted living) in Life Enrichment. We are parishioners at St Patrick's Church of Merna. I have coached baseball and basketball for 10+ yrs and have volunteered at the Boys & Girls Club of BN, Home Sweet Home, McLean County Pony Baseball, and other local organizations.

If you would like additional information, contact me at [jeremy.dehaai.unit.5.school.board@gmail.com](mailto:jeremy.dehaai.unit.5.school.board@gmail.com) or via my Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/JeremyDeHaaiforUnit5SchoolBoard](http://www.facebook.com/JeremyDeHaaiforUnit5SchoolBoard)).

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO SERVE AND WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE OFFICE?**

The platform of my campaign is quite simple - students first. If I am fortunate enough to be elected, I will be sure that every decision that I am involved with on the board is focused first on how that decision will impact all of the Unit 5 students. There are many other stakeholders involved such as teachers, parents, administrators, staff, taxpayers, etc; but the sole purpose of the school district is to educate its students and I will make that my focus and will be a voice for the students to make sure that they get the best education possible.

If anyone would like to share their thoughts and ideas on how to improve the district, I would love to hear from you!

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE PRESSING ISSUES FACING THE VOTERS TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?**

One of the most pressing issues facing the voters, and the Unit 5 School District, is the state's budget crisis. With a continually reducing population base and a state that seems unable to control spending, this crisis is most certainly going to continue to impact school districts. The school board is going to have to closely monitor and control

its budget in order to continue to be able to provide an exceptional education to its students with reducing state support.

Additionally, the education gaps that resulted from remote/hybrid learning during COVID-19 is going to require great effort to overcome and all of the students need to be in person ASAP, and need to stay there, in order to start to overcome these gaps.

**UNIT 5 – SCHOOL BOARD**  
**CANDIDATE: STAN GOZUR**

**BACKGROUND**

I am an actuary at State Farm. My wife, Marielena, is a bilingual special education teacher in Unit 5. For the past 12 years, we've made the Twin Cities our home. We have three children – our oldest enrolled in kindergarten at Cedar Ridge Elementary.

I was raised in a multi-cultural area of Ohio where my high school ranked in the highest 5% of most diverse schools in the state. There are 7 public school teachers and administrators in my immediate family, spanning 5 different districts. The state of education is often our topic of conversation. In my job, I use math, statistics and predictive analytics to develop fair and adequate insurance premiums. My decisions must be fiscally sound and morally objective as I balance input from numerous stakeholders to achieve strategic objectives.

For my full background, I encourage you to go to <https://www.facebook.com/StandWithStanU5>.

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO SERVE AND WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE OFFICE?**

I want to serve to focus the district's attention to its sole mission: Educating each student to achieve personal excellence. Our public schools offer more than just a classroom. They represent an inclusive environment for our children to better understand the world around them, and they lay the foundation upon which the future of our community will be built. I am asking for the opportunity to work with the district's leadership, faculty, families and community to develop a shared vision for self-sustaining academic improvement and financial stability. I am making it my mission to foster a culture of open dialogue across all parties in the district, where information disseminates swiftly and accurately, and where all points of view are respected and considered.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE PRESSING ISSUES FACING THE VOTERS TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?**

If we truly prioritize educating each student to achieve personal excellence, then it is imperative to improve educational equity across student populations. The next Board will hold the responsibility of doing this in the wake of a pandemic with the likelihood of volatile and diminishing state funding for our district. We must be intentional with our expenditures and efficient with our programming in order to maintain or exceed the quality of education we intend to provide.

I pledge to pursue district policies that:

- Establish meaning modifications to the structure of our Elementary education,
- Encourage instruct that reaches each student at their individualized level, including further implementation of culturally-responsive teaching strategies; and
- Allocate revenues efficiently as we recognize post-COVID financial realities.



**UNIT 5 – SCHOOL BOARD**  
**CANDIDATE: ERICKA RALSTON**

**BACKGROUND**

My name is Ericka Ralston, ErickaHoward7311@gmail.com  
I am married with 2 boys that attend Sugar Creek Elementary. I have a degree in Elementary Education. I serve on the PTO, and CAC for Sugar Creek as well as the Governance Board for Heartland Headstart. I am the Chairperson for Bridge for Hope through Christ Temple Church Bloomington, where we are in partnership with Home Sweet Home Ministries. This program helps acclimate homeless families into unfamiliar communities. As a church we provide emotional and spiritual support. I have diligently served since 2015. I believe communities grow through your service. I trust if we work together all children can excel academically.

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO SERVE AND WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE OFFICE?**

It is my belief that the school board plays a vital role in keeping our schools on track by setting policies that impact and benefit our students and teachers. It is my goal to serve on the school board as a motivated voice for students, families and educators. My strengths as a leader are great listening skills, consistent volunteerism and a strong educational value system. When elected to the school board, my vision will be to make it my mission to engage with all community stakeholders for the wellbeing and personal excellence of each student.

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE PRESSING ISSUES FACING THE VOTERS TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?**

Two pressing issues facing voters today are achievement gaps in the district and the lack of diversity amongst staff members. I propose to address these issues by working as a team to formulate an annual support plan. I believe Unit 5 does an outstanding job rewarding students that are excelling academically, but what programs are we using to motivate the students that are facing academic challenges? Locally, there are resources available for our academically challenged students, but they are not being tapped into because of lack of knowledge. Diversity in the district is imperative to appropriately represent all nationalities that we are serving. As a district, there is a need to improve equity across the entire employee lifecycle and uncover inequitable gaps in our organization.