

Karen Oakes



It has been my honor to work on behalf of the APW community for more than a decade—as a member and officer in our PTSA since my oldest child started at Parish Elementary in 2010, and as a School Board Member since 2018. This District has been my home for more than 20 years, and I believe that all of our children and families deserve the very best from our schools. We are fortunate to have faculty and staff who are dedicated to our children’s wellbeing and success, and as a Board member, I work to support them all.

I’m asking for your vote this May 18th, so that I can continue to bring my experience and dedication to the Board. Thank you for your support.

Residence:

Village of Parish (resident since 2000)

Employment:

Instructor in Writing Department at Syracuse University

Adjunct professor in History Dept. and SUNY Oswego

Other community involvement:

Trustee, Parish Public Library

Support for teachers and new programming

Despite the many challenges of this last year, APW is planning to expand course offerings in the 2021-2022 school year. As a Board member, I support Supt. Rhone’s decisions to prioritize these new opportunities for

students because this will further our District's mission: "Because we believe in the potential of each student, we provide diverse opportunities and a competitive education for all learners."

Relationship between BOE and staff

The Board of Education adopts policies that govern the District's operations and hires the Superintendent who works with the faculty and the administrative team to implement those policies. This past year, the Board has refreshed the vision and mission of the District, which along with Board policy guides the work that happens in our buildings every day.

While the Board is not involved with day-to-day operations, we lay out the objectives for those who are. In effect, the Board determines where we head as a District, the Superintendent charts the course, and the faculty and administrative team do the important work of getting us there. It's a team effort, and I'm honored to be part of the team.

As a Board member, I have been actively involved with the Policy Committee and the Excellence in Student Achievement (ESA) committee. These committees represent all of our constituencies—teachers, administrators, board members, and community members—and it's here that we have the opportunity to discuss and collaborate, so that we're all pulling together in the same direction.

Sports

Along with our other special offerings like music, art, theater, and clubs, sports offer kids a point of connection to school, providing them with a chance to grow their skills and interests, to build relationships and learn to work collaboratively, and to open up new opportunities. Over the past year, we've seen just how important these activities are in keeping students invested in their school work. Sports have provided a valuable bit of normalcy amid all the upheaval of the pandemic.

Moving forward, our school community will continue to depend upon extracurricular activities as an outlet for students and as a way for families to stay connected to one another. I support offering a range of practice and play opportunities to ensure that all students can find their team and pursue their passion.

Leadership

Teaching is hard work, perhaps never more so than in this last year. Like many districts around the state and the country, we're confronting a wave of retirements and will have some new positions to fill, as well. Steady leadership at the building and district level is essential to retention. We need to provide new faculty and administrators with strong mentoring and to continue to build a culture of respect among our faculty and staff. This past year has shown the incredible dedication our teachers have to our students, and the amazing things we can do when we're all working together. Having a shared mission and vision for the district will help to guide this ongoing work.

School taxes

Here at APW, we're fortunate to have healthy reserve funds. Just like a household is more financially secure when they have funds put away for a rainy day, so too is our District. The crises of the last year have really made

us value that healthy financial position—changes in state aid last spring and the threat of massive budget cuts at the state level put a lot of other Districts into a really difficult position. APW was able to adjust and move forward.

Thankfully, APW is in a position to not have to ask for any more money from our local taxpayers once again this year. Sensible spending has allowed us to meet the needs of our students and even to expand course offerings, all **without raising taxes**. The budget you will be voting on in a couple of weeks (on May 18th) increases student services with **no added cost** to the taxpayers.

Supporting ALL learners

Like many rural schools, APW has a diverse student body, with a range of backgrounds, abilities, and needs. Ensuring that ALL of our students are prepared for their futures means meeting them *where they are*—addressing their social and emotional needs, their material/physical needs, and their learning needs. As a District, we have made great strides here, with free breakfast and lunch for all of our students, even when our buildings were closed, with expanded counseling services, and with the exceptional work from staff members who head up the Backpack Program and Comfort Closets at each school.

In the next school year, the District plans to use some of the federal CARES money to ensure that we have additional counselors and social workers to support our students, and our teachers are hard at work aligning curriculum to support students' social and emotional needs. All of this supports our district goals of integrity, achievement, care and compassion, continuous growth, and safety for all.

Communication

While communication has long been a challenge in the APW District, I feel that we've had significant improvement in this area since Supt. Rhone came aboard last year. Her weekly updates to the community have added another great layer to our communications plan. We offer families information through social media, phone, email, and now text, in addition to the District's website.

I understand that there is sometimes frustration with the changing information coming from the school, but much of that has been unavoidable, since state and local health departments and the governor have frequently updated their guidance to us. I applaud our superintendent, administrators, and teachers for continuously reaching for new ways to stay in contact during this difficult time. We're not perfect, but I know we're all trying very hard to do right by our families, who rely on us for up-to-date information.