

## Announcement of 2016 Yinghua Academy School Board Candidates

The following TWELVE individuals will stand for election to the Yinghua Academy School Board this May, for terms running July 2016 through June 2019.

There are FOUR open seats on the School Board to be filled by this election. **Official ballots will be sent** to all eligible voters **via the email** on file in the office (or via U.S. mail if you have stated this communication preference) **by April 25**. Ballots will be accepted into the office by email from a Yinghua-recognized email address, U.S. mail or drop-off, or can be returned during the Annual Meeting of the School on May 2. **All ballots received in the Yinghua Academy office by 6 p.m. on Monday, May 9** will be considered on time.

Voters will have the opportunity to meet and hear from the candidates at the Annual Meeting of the School on **Monday, May 2, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Yinghua Academy cafeteria. Please plan to attend and please vote!

The Governance Committee of the School Board has identified a need for board members with experience in these areas: licensed teacher (employed at Yinghua Academy as a teacher), candidates with academic leadership experience, candidates with non-profit strategic planning experience, and candidates with strong financial management experience. However, note that the primary qualification is that the individual is a willing, committed, and objective leader.

### Overview of Candidates and Affiliations

#### Licensed Teacher:

- **Shu-Mei Lai**, Third grade teacher at Yinghua Academy; current YA Academic Committee member
- **Bo Liu**, Middle School Chinese language arts teacher at Yinghua Academy
- **Pamella Stommes**, Middle School Math Lead teacher at Yinghua Academy

#### Community Member:

- **Suzanne Reider**: (*incumbent, seated 7.1.13*) Supply Chain Manager at Peoplenet; current YA Academic Committee Chair and YA Finance Committee member

#### Parent/Guardian (grade of student):

- **Hattie Bonds (1 and 3)**: Former Principal at Minneapolis Public Schools
- **Mei Chen (2 and 5)**: Lead Analyst Business Intelligence & Analytics at Target Corporation
- **Jason Cintorino (1)**: Clinical Manager of Outpatient Treatment Programs within the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation
- **Amber Frost (2)**: Stay at home mom
- **Denny Grubish (2 and 4)**: (*incumbent, seated 7.1.13*) Operation Risk Manager at Wells Fargo Bank; current YA Board Treasurer and Finance & Facilities Committee Chair
- **Paul Haller (3)**: Emergency medicine physician at Regions Hospital in St. Paul
- **David Mair (2 and 4)**: Psychiatrist at South Metro Human Services
- **Steve Piekarski (1)**: Chief Program Officer at The Arc Greater Twin Cities

According to the bylaws of the School Board, in compliance with state statute, the YA Board follows the 1/1/1 governance model, where at least one member on the school board must be a licensed teacher working at the school, one member must be a parent/guardian of a currently enrolled student, and one member must be an outside community member who is neither employed by the school nor a parent/guardian of a child currently attending



Yinghua Academy. In accord with bylaws, candidates on the ballot will be segregated by category of board membership and identified as a community member, teacher, or parent/guardian.

## **2016 Candidate Statements**

### **(1) Licensed Teacher at Yinghua Academy: SHU-MEI LAI**

My name is Shu-Mei Lai and I am a third grade teacher at Yinghua Academy. In addition to my teaching role, I also have the pleasure of serving as a member of the School Board's Academic Committee this year, and I am in my third year of leadership serving as Mentor Lead of the new teacher mentoring program in the school. I joined Yinghua in 2008 at the St Paul location where I taught my first third grade class—the first immersion class of Yinghua. Prior to Yinghua, I taught Chinese in Oregon for one year and was an English teacher in Taiwan for twelve years. I hold a Master's degree in Second Language and Culture from the University of Minnesota. I am licensed to teach Chinese for grades K-12 in Minnesota.

As a teacher at Yinghua, I am running for the School Board in order to be directly involved in the many important decisions that impact the interest of all students. Specifically, I am interested in working with the Board to develop a community of students whose learning potential is maximized and who have an international perspective and a sense of responsibility to their school and local communities.

Being a native speaker of Chinese who has taught at Yinghua for 8 years, I am fully committed to the school's mission and its values. I have a sound understanding of the school system, and know the school's strengths as well as the issues it faces from a teacher's standpoint. I believe that my experience working with the students, parents, teachers and administration will bring a unique perspective to the continual development and success of Yinghua Academy.

### **(2) Licensed Teacher at Yinghua Academy: BO LIU**

My name is Bo Liu. Born and raised in China, I started my career as an accountant, but came to the U.S. to seek opportunities as one of the first Au Pairs from mainland China. Working with children solidified my passion for teaching, and my own immersion experience gave me a deep understanding of how language is acquired. Thus, I attended University of Maryland between 2010 – 2012, earning a Master of Education degree and state teacher's license. I joined Yinghua Academy in 2012, and have been teaching 5th -8th grade Chinese Language Arts since then. I have also been serving our community as the head of middle school Chinese language arts department.

On the first day when I joined Yinghua, I knew it would be a unique journey. Yinghua has been a leader in language immersion education, so I was keenly interested to be involved in shaping its growing middle school Chinese language program. I am honored that my work has contributed to Yinghua Academy being named a Blue Ribbon school in this past year. I am seeking to join the School Board in order to gain a better understanding about all aspects of our wonderful school, and to contribute my knowledge and first-hand experience.

Working closely with students, I see a clear need for more immersion learning opportunities both in and out of the classroom. This need is what inspired me to start the Student Life Chinese clubs last year, and they have been a huge success since then. I want to be part of the School Board to collaborate on creating even more opportunities like these for our students. When I see our students graduate, I want to know I did everything possible to give them the gift of Chinese for life, and I am sure joining the School Board will help to achieve that dream.

### **(3) Licensed Teacher at Yinghua Academy: PAMELLA STOMMES**

I started working at Yinghua Academy since my family and I moved back to Minnesota from New York City in the beginning of 2012. My oldest daughter, Camilla, was not quite one year old yet at the time. My husband, Keith, and I both knew how much it would mean to the family if we were close by each other.

Keith grew up in the city of Annandale in Minnesota. Ever since he was a little boy, he wanted to be a professional basketball player. He worked hard throughout his childhood and was invited to play for several colleges. He finally accepted the invitation to play for Hunter College in the City of New York. He believed that New York City would lead him to a greater opportunity. He studied Economics and planned to start his own business one day.

I was born and raised in Taipei, Taiwan. Growing up, my parents would always tell me to be brave, strong, and independent. They would remind me of the importance of setting and achieving goals and being in charge of my own life. After graduating from high school, I moved to Los Angeles where my parents had planned for both my brother and I. Two years after staying in L.A., I decided to explore the fast-paced city on my own. I applied for and was accepted by Hunter College, where I studied Mathematics at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

I have experienced the true benefits of speaking different languages from growing up in Taiwan, moving to L.A., living in New York City, and settling in Minnesota. Language is more than a communication tool. It is, in fact, a window to new opportunities. Mathematics, on the other hand, is a way to communicate with the others. If you “speak” Math, then you are more likely to solve math problems fluently.

Yinghua Academy had an outstanding first step by providing the young learners the opportunity to learn the Chinese language, culture and traditions through various activities and subjects. The question now is how to maintain the mission, expand the value to life-long benefits, and nurture its students’ global citizenship by providing them a true immersion environment. Like all board members, community experts, and Yinghua staff, I vow to find and enhance the true solutions to these questions by serving on the Yinghua school board.

Please use my expertise, background knowledge, and experiences as a resource for the on-going and future Yinghua developmental directions and designs.

#### **(4) Community Member: SUZANNE REIDER**

I am a northeast community member that has spent half my life in Taiwan/China and the other half here in the US. I am so excited that we have an amazing Chinese Immersion here in my community and am so proud to have Yinghua represent so much of who I am to those who live around me.

I was born in Taiwan and we immigrated to the US when I was a child. I remember attending weekend Chinese classes that did help me with my Chinese. We moved back to Taiwan when I was in 7th grade and I tested into the lowest level Chinese class learning to count and say hello in Chinese at the American school in Taichung. Even after hours of Chinese studies at school, I only tested out of one level of Chinese when I was attending Carleton College and still needed to take a foreign language. This is why I see the importance of Immersion at a young age and am passionate about the curriculum at Yinghua.

My interest in serving on the Yinghua Academy School Board has also deepened the past 3 years. Three years ago, I ran for the board without understanding the school and what the role the board serves. I have had the privilege to learn from some of the most dedicated people who serve as staff and board members to this amazing school. I am constantly stunned by the amount of time and work the Yinghua community has put into this school and I love being a part of this community. For the past three years, I have served on the finance committee and this past year I also served on the academic committee.

I feel that my strongest attribute I bring to this position is my willingness to ask questions. I will ask if I am unclear or if I don't feel like I am understanding correctly. I like to fully understand what is being said and/or proposed so I know what I am voting for is the best for the whole Yinghua Community in the long run.

It has been great to be see the wonderful growth and changes that has happened in the past three years and I would love to be a part of that for at least another term.

#### **(5) Parent: HATTIE BONDS**

I am Hattie Bonds and I have two children attending Yinghua Academy. I am a former public school science teacher, principal, associate superintendent and School to Career Liaison. While serving in these capacities I had many valuable experiences that could assist Yinghua Academy in its further development. Some examples of my areas of expertise are curriculum development, staff development, grant writing and programming. While working in the Associate Superintendents Office I was able to gain experience in assisting elementary principals and teachers in developing innovative ideas. I raised funding through businesses and the legislature to provide support to elementary and secondary schools. I also gained experience in problem solving with elementary school administrators. During this timeframe the elementary secondary office was structured in a K-12 structure. Each Associate Superintendent and I had K-12 schools assigned in our areas. We managed schools and curriculum based upon a K-12 scope and sequence structure. This as a different approach than the previous one in that it was not fragmented. Up to this point the Associate Superintendents office had been structured as elementary, middle and high school. My ideas and experience in improving student

achievement has been vast and comprehensive. In order for students to improve they must know how to do this, they must also know where they are and where they need to go. One way to help a student improve is to make sure they have a plan of action given the appropriate test data. I have always found students to be very capable of improving if they were given the information to do so. Even those students who struggle with issues not related to school tend to be able to be resilient and able to focus on school once they walk through the doors of a good school. They may need extra support to reach standards but they are able to blend in with other students who want success in school. Another ingredient to improving student achievement is to expect students to succeed and do not give them a choice. Having high expectations and coaching mechanisms to believe in them and encourage them to believe in themselves catapults students into success in school. While serving as an assistant principal I supervised all first year teachers in K-8 where the middle school had a small group of 6-8 grade level students. This K-8 school had approximately 650 students, 60 certified staff and 20 non-certified staff. The school was a high poverty school with a large immigrant population. We restructured our students to assure they were fluent readers. I placed students in school-wide Silent Sustained Reading groups, we created a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that set target goals for the school and we were able to reach our intended goals. I wanted all students reading by the end of their kindergarten year. In another school assignment I served in the capacity of head principal for 2 years and assistant principal for 3 years. While assigned as the head principal I lead our staff in several major grants over a three year period. I lead the staff and community to create a school improvement plan that had aggressive goals to improve our school. At the end of my first year as head principal the school met its NCLB annual yearly progress goals for the first time. I am interested in becoming a board member at Yinghua Academy so that I can share my knowledge and experience to assist the school with its goals and expectations. The school is a valuable alternative to a strong community which educates for the future. I am interested in Human Resources, curriculum, sustainability and program development. This will be an opportunity for me to share my skillset as well as learn about Immersion education further. Although most of my 37 years in public education was at the high school level, I have a special place in my heart for the K-8 structure of schooling.

#### **(6) Parent: MEI CHEN**

In a Yinghua school board position, I believe I can make meaningful contributions to the school board by leveraging my professional experiences in data driven business intelligence, as well as my cultural background and language skill as a Chinese native. In addition, I have leadership experience both in the business setting and in the volunteer-based non-profit organizations, which are transferrable to lead various initiatives on the Yinghua school board.

I am most interested in a number of issues and questions that are facing the board. The first issue would be the teacher recruitment and retentions. As Chinese immersion programs continue to gain popularities locally and nationally, how will Yinghua stay competitive in terms of attracting and keeping the best teachers for the school? The second issue is related to academy program and policies. For example, there is recent research that advocates against homework assignments for elementary school students. Does that apply to Yinghua? What will Yinghua's position and response to similar studies be? The third issue will be building parent teacher relations in the Chinese Immersion environment. How can we help Yinghua teachers, especially the new teachers recently arrived at Minnesota from Asia, to build trusted relationship with parents and overcome the cultural differences and language



barriers? How can we help students and their families prepare and thrive in a Chinese Immersion school no matter what their background or social status is? I have the passion, determination, experience and skills to help bridge gaps and help Yinghua tackle those issues.

I am extremely grateful to Yinghua Academy, both to the school and the broader Yinghua community. I have done a number of volunteer roles at Yinghua, including classroom coordinator, Spring Gala planning and classroom volunteer. Serving on the school board feels like the natural next step to not only give back to the Yinghua community but also help shape the future of Yinghua through setting vision, goals and conducting strategic planning.

My professional experience can help advance Yinghua's capability in leveraging data analysis to provide relevant measurement of school policies, and guidance to decisions and strategic planning. I have over sixteen years of professional experience in business intelligence and data driven decision support. My area of expertise includes marketing analytics and financial forecasting. I am currently a Lead Analyst of Business Intelligence and Analytics at Target Corporation where I lead a group of analysts to work towards enhancing Target's digital marketing capabilities. Prior to Target, I was a Manager of Consumer Insights at Best Buy where I led the efforts to establish the customer loyalty analytics capability in Best Buy China. I received a master degree in Agricultural Economics from University of Kentucky in 1997 and a bachelor degree of Economics in 1995 from Sun Yat-Sen University. I also enrolled in MBA program at the Carlson School of Management at University of Minnesota between 2010 and 2013.

I was born and raised in China where I lived with my parents in Guangzhou and Wuhan. After finishing college in 1995, I came to the U.S. to pursue graduate studies. As a naturalized U.S. citizen and a Chinese American who has lived in this county for over two decades, I have witnessed the increasing diversity in both the demographics and culture. For my husband and I, sending our children to the Chinese Immersion School at Yinghua Academy, is not only a way for them to embrace their Chinese cultural heritage, but also to foster their global citizenship.

I have been an active member in the local community via leadership roles in the Asian American community and volunteering positions at a number of organizations. I was the co-chair of the Asian American Business Council at the Target Financial Services pyramid between 2006 and 2008. In 2012, I participated on the community out-reach program committee in Roseville to conduct survey and provide policy recommendations to the Roseville City Council. I was a volunteer of the "Meals on Wheel" program between 2007 and 2010, and delivered meals to persons-in-need in Minneapolis public housing facilities. I believe these experiences are transferable to serving in the Yinghua Academy school board.

Thank you for your consideration!

**(7) Parent: JASON CINTORINO**

I am writing this bio expressing interest in serving on the Yinghua Academy school board after witnessing the incredible development of our daughter's education with her enrollment in Yinghua. With our daughter's course of education well under way



in first grade and her sibling brother's enrollment in kindergarten for the 2016 fall term, I would like to have the opportunity to serve in a broader capacity to contribute to Yinghua and to our community.

My interest in serving on the board is a part of a broader goal to give back and contribute to our community as we live mere blocks from the academy and have become embedded in our Northeast Minneapolis neighborhood. I have a broad wealth of personal and professional experience that can help foster ongoing growth for the academy in regards to staff, students and the greater community. I currently oversee the nation's largest non-profit treatment and rehabilitation programs in substance use disorders and work extensively with emerging adults as they face ongoing pressures of societal norms including gaining access to substance use. This includes exposure and use to severe and dangerous mood altering substances that an alarmingly increasing number of adolescents have access and exposure to. One issue that I can strongly contribute to is helping Yinghua understand some of the complex issues around awareness and prevention in substance use with adolescents and creating a solid awareness and prevention component within the fabric of Yinghua's exceptional curriculum. This is essential in aiding in the success of each and every student who will transition out of the safety of the Yinghua community and transition to schools where substance use is prevalent and peer pressure begins to introduce students to mood altering substances that they may have previously been sheltered from. In my opinion, this is a responsibility for the board and an ongoing challenge that requires expertise and guidance from a direct authority in the field.

Prior to my current clinical position I functioned in a high level executive capacity in business both in the non-profit and private sectors. I understand budgetary barriers, navigating complex financial environments and fiscal sustainability. Yinghua Academy will need ongoing fiscal strength and this will require individuals who can help pave the way through inconsistent and tumultuous economies; I can help provide insight and oversight as a board member to help keep Yinghua's growth trajectories in line with performance expectations, budgetary needs and goals. Some of my strengths in this area are networking capabilities, collaboration skills and relationship building to help support and develop fiscal strength and sustainability; this is a necessary component for the future financial success of Yinghua Academy and the board of directors. In my current position I create, implement and sustain a multi-million dollar a year budget and consistently demonstrate fiscal agility and success with meeting annual budgetary requirements. I am also currently part of a dynamic national leadership team that is mission focused and driven. I can translate my strong leadership skills to help Yinghua's mission of excellence in education, immersion in language and culture and nurturing classroom and school environment.

Thank-you in advance for your time and attention with my interest in serving on the school board of directors to Yinghua Academy. I am enthusiastic to continue to learn about the Chinese culture and to be a part of the Yinghua Academy community and the greater Northeast Minneapolis neighborhood. I hope that you will strongly consider my application to serve and contribute to our community.

**(8) Parent: AMBER FROST**

I am excited to explore this opportunity to be a part of the Yinghua school board. My daughter is now in second grade, and her younger sister will be joining kindergarten in the fall. In the past years, I have spent some time volunteering in the lunch room and it has allowed me to watch the school work through a very busy time. During my time there, I had felt it would be great to be able to play a larger role in Yinghua. I am a leader, and love to be given the opportunity to help others. I also consider equality very important for all children and adults. I desire to help children believe and know, that their voice matters and will be heard when brought to a listening and caring adult. I would also love to help work with the board to discover new ways to make Yinghua even greater!

I have spent the last decade as a mom and before that, I worked as a manager of a small restaurant, among other jobs. I enjoyed the responsibility of that position, and knew that someday, I would continue to pursue a similar position. Now that I will have two of my three children in school, I thought this would be a great moment to step up and help more at Yinghua, and spend more time getting to know others at Yinghua.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application!

**(9) Parent: DENNY GRUBISH**

My name is Denny Grubish. I am a parent of a second and fourth grader here at Yinghua Academy. I am an operational risk manager and have been working for Wells Fargo Bank since 1995. I joined the Yinghua Academy Board during my older daughter's kindergarten year in late 2012. The Board elected me to the officer position of Board Treasurer three months later in June, and I have been serving in that capacity since that time. I have really enjoyed participating and serving on the Board, and I believe that I have helped make some important contributions during these past four years.

I have been the chair of the Finance Committee since my election to the Treasurer position. During these years, we have partnered very closely with our financial management services group and school administration, and together we have been able to grow the school's fund balance to meet its policy goal of 20%. The school continues to be a recipient of the MDE school finance award (never missed a year). I was also a member of the Personnel and Facilities Committees and was very integrated in the bond and construction process.

I feel that there is still some unfinished business that I would like to see through its completion as a board member. My next immediate goal is to see the successful assumption of the school's bonds from our current landlord over to our affiliated business corporation, Yinghua Building Corp. Additionally, Yinghua is at a point of developing a new strategic plan for the phase of its evolution. I would like to be a part of that process as a means to lay out a strategy that creates a roadmap to an even brighter future. My last goal is, *when the time comes*, to leave the school in an even better position than it is today.



**(10) Parent: PAUL HALLER**

I am asking you for the privilege of working on the Board of Yinghua Academy as we educate your precious child. Please allow me to describe my credentials and what I can bring to the board.

I have worked the past twenty years as an emergency room physician at Regions Hospital in St. Paul. My role there involves organizing the care provided by a diverse group of EMS personnel, lab techs, social workers, and nursing staff to provide care to acutely ill or injured people. I coordinate the complex cases with specialists from a broad range of backgrounds. In addition, I am involved in the bedside teaching of medical students and residents on a daily basis. I think the experience of working as a team player across this spectrum of professionals will assist me in the important role that the school board carries out.

My prior work with nonprofit organizations such as Yinghua Academy has included serving on the Board of the YMCA of Shoreview. In addition I have worked with the Ramsey County Public Health Department on their citizens' advisory panel. I have also been fortunate enough to work extensively on the ground with medical NGOs in both Haiti and in Africa.

At Yinghua Academy we have two markers of a good educational system. We have strong parental involvement as shown rather simply by the distance our families choose to travel to get their children to our site. Recall the large number of zip codes that our pupils reside in. A second strength that we have is the incredibly high rate of students who return each fall. Nearly all of our eighth grade students started with us in kindergarten. That consistency is an accomplishment that many school systems would desire to achieve.

I would like to serve on the Board at Yinghua Academy to help in the process of building global citizens. We should aim to prepare our students for high school by giving them the skills they need to develop quality friendships, to have a healthy sense of self confidence, and to continue to have a quest for knowledge.

**(11) Parent: DAVID MAIR**

I am a husband, father, psychiatrist, and filmmaker. I live with my wife, Colleen O'Brien, and our three daughters in Vadnais Heights. Two of my daughters are currently students at Yinghua Academy (Norah Mair in 4th grade and Ada Mair in 2nd grade), and my youngest (Louise Mair) will begin kindergarten in 2018.

My primary job is at South Metro Human Services, based out of Minneapolis and serving patients in Hennepin County, where I have worked since 2008. I work with a team of nurses and social workers, caring for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. Along with the rest of the team, I see most patients in the community, usually in their home, as symptoms or circumstances prevent traditional office visits. I also moonlight at Innovative Psychological Consultants, a private practice clinic in Maple Grove.

My hobby is filmmaking. My short films and screenplays have won awards and screened at several film festivals.

I have a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Minnesota, Morris, and a doctor of medicine degree from the University of Nebraska Medical Center. I completed my residency in psychiatry at the University of Iowa.

I am interested in being a board member for several reasons. Since two of my daughters are currently students, and soon all three will be, I want to be involved in my daughters' education and help them and their school to strive for continual improvement. I am interested in using the best available scientific evidence to guide our children's education.

I have a background in science and mental health. I work well in a team setting, and am experienced in problem solving and working with limited resources. I feel these attributes will be beneficial in helping to shape the future of the school.

The issues facing the board that are of most interest to me are planning a smooth transition for Yinghua Academy students to high school (and to the rest of their lives), and to ensure that Yinghua Academy is applying the best evidence to inform policy and education. In particular, I feel that the amount of testing and homework that students have should be balanced with appropriate amounts of exercise, art, music, and free-time. Our children's safety, health, and education (both academic and social) are paramount in creating happy, healthy, productive adults.

## **(12) Parent: Steve Piekarski**

My name is Steve Piekarski and I am the proud parent of a Yinghua Academy 1st grader. I am delighted to submit my application to be considered for one of four School Board seats to be elected later this spring. I became interested in running for the School Board primarily because my daughter has had a tremendous educational experience at Yinghua Academy over the past two years. I am continually amazed by the dedicated staff, parents and volunteers who work collaboratively to make Yinghua one of the premier charter schools in the country. Because of our experiences, I have the desire to apply my professional and personal skills in a deeper level of engagement with the Yinghua community as a school board member; I want to be a part of what makes Yinghua Academy great.

I believe that self-governance is the key for charter schools like Yinghua to maintain flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of their local communities. If elected, I will bring a myriad of experience and perspectives to my role on the Yinghua Board. I will contribute expertise gained in my 15+ years working full-time in non-profit leadership. These experiences have given me a strong background in financial planning, long range strategic planning, Board of Director membership, and working on physical space projects which will all directly benefit Yinghua as we work collaboratively to shape its future. I bring an excitement for and satisfaction in confronting challenges and working collaboratively to overcome them. I have lived in Northeast Minneapolis for over 13 years and have been aware of Yinghua and its unique educational mission since before my daughter started Kindergarten. As a



school board member, I can represent a Northeast perspective, parent perspective, and the problem-solving and professional perspective that comes from years of non-profit management and leadership experience.

The School Board opportunity is a natural fit for my background and experience. I am excited about the opportunity to give back to the Yinghua community in a deep and meaningful way, working closely with school staff and volunteers to ensure that Yinghua continues to offer the exemplary educational opportunities it is known for today and will surely be known for well into the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.