

## Announcement of 2018 Yinghua Academy School Board Candidates

The following SIX individuals will stand for election to the Yinghua Academy School Board this May, for terms running July 2018 through June 2021.

There are FIVE open seats on the School Board to be filled by this election. **Official ballots will be sent** to all eligible voters **via the email address** on file in the office (or via U.S. mail if you have stated this communication preference) **by April 30**. Ballots will be accepted into the office by email from a Yinghua-recognized email address, U.S. mail, drop-off, or can be returned during the Annual Meeting of the School on May 7th. **All ballots received in the Yinghua Academy office by 6 p.m. on Monday, May 14** 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 7, 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:

- **Pamella Stommes**, Middle School Math Lead teacher at Yinghua Academy

#### Community Member:

- No applications received

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

- **Nathan Bode (1 and incoming K)**: IT Applications Manager at Cargill
- **Paul Haller (5)**: (*incumbent, seated 8.21.17*) Physician at Health Partners, Current YA Governance Committee Chair
- **Joel Luedtke (1 and 5)**: (*incumbent, seated 7.1.15*) Program Director Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation, Current YA Development Committee Chair
- **Annie Nelson (2 and 5)**: Chief Advancement Officer at Summit Academy OIC
- **Amanda Schneider (2 and 5)**: (*incumbent, seated 7.1.15*) Chief of Staff – CFO Office at Ameriprise Financial, current YA Board Treasurer and Finance and Facilities Committee Chair

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



## 2018 Candidate Statements

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

My name is Pamella Stommes, and I am a teacher and a parent of a student at Yinghua Academy.

Yinghua Academy was founded in 2006 as the first Chinese immersion public charter school in the United States. Yinghua started with 79 students and less than 10 staff members. Today, Yinghua has more than 800 students and more than 150 staff members.

I can still remember the first day I visited Yinghua Academy as if it were yesterday. I was given a tour of the school after an interview with the Executive Director, Ms. Sue Berg, and the Academic Director, Dr. Luyi Lien. Yinghua campus, at that time, consisted only the East wing of the building, or the current lower school. I heard songs that reminded me of my childhood. I saw projects hanging over me enriched with layers of Chinese cultures. I smelled the beauty of Chinese tradition in the air and was surrounded with the familiar sounds and tones of my hometown. I was home!

To simplify the definition of a Chinese immersion school, it is a place where our children grow safely. A place our children grow with love and care. A place our children receive guidance, knowledge and wisdom for life. Our children will grow to become engaged and productive global citizens within a nurturing and supportive Chinese immersion environment.

A famous Chinese fable – The Peach Blossom Spring 《桃花源记》 – was written by Tao Yuanming about a chance discovery of an ethereal utopia where people lead an ideal existence in harmony with nature. Yinghua Academy is today's peach blossom spring 英华就是今天的桃花源和我们心中的理想世界 where people lead an ideal education in harmony with Chinese language and culture.

I am a teacher at Yinghua Academy and am the head of the middle school math department. I am also a member of the finance committee. Finally, I am a parent of a student at Yinghua Academy. I am excited for today's opportunity. I look forward to working with you and serving our Yinghua community.

**(2) Parent: NATHAN BODE**

I am a father and Northeast Minneapolis resident interested in the long-term opportunities for Yinghua Academy. My wife Rachel and I have been excited about Yinghua since reading about the school in New York Times article in October 2014 and realizing this great school was located in my local neighborhood. After an agonizing few months on the lottery wait list a few years ago our oldest child Grant was admitted to the fall 2016 class. Grant is now enjoying 1st grade this school year. Our daughter Willa is excited to be starting kindergarten this fall 2018.

I am interested in serving on the board as I strongly believe in the school's mission. I strongly believe in school's rigorous academic approach and the Chinese language immersion. I want to defend those objectives while addressing the long-term growth and facility plans of the school. The school has had extraordinary success and with that comes a lot of tough choices. I want to be active in helping decide the long-term strategy of the school. I also understand that the board is actively seeking candidates with budget and finance strengths, which is an area I can also actively contribute to.

I live in the Audubon neighborhood with my wife, son and daughter. Rachel and I have lived in our current house for 10 years and I have lived in northeast Minneapolis the past 18 years. I've been at Cargill for the past 11 years and currently work as an IT Applications Manager. I graduated twice from the University of Minnesota with my undergrad degrees in Finance and Accounting and later my M.B.A. I have been on the Eastside Meals on Wheels board as treasurer the past 5 years.

I believe I can use my previous work and board volunteer experience to the benefit of Yinghua Academy. In my daily work I manage big picture project requirements. This includes engaging stakeholders across the business for their views and input on the final product. At the same time, I work on detailed sections of project work and advise teams in other areas. I have had budget responsibility for various teams during my career, and my project focus is almost entirely on implementing finance projects for large businesses. My volunteer experience on boards has taught me to listen to other people's views and work together for the best possible out of the organization.

**(3) Parent: PAUL HALLER**

My decision to apply for a position on the school board comes after two years of working with that group. I began serving on the Governance Committee in 2016. I was asked to fill an open position on the school board this past August. As part of my role on the Board, I now chair the Governance Committee. Thus, I make my application with the knowledge of the amount of time and effort required to be a productive board member.

I came to the school board from a background of medicine. I have worked over twenty years in the emergency medical field, providing hands on medical care but also working to educate residents, medical students and paramedics at a University of Minnesota-affiliated hospital. I think that this background in education helps me understand the needs of our school. We need to retain the quality teaching staff that currently fills our classrooms. They will benefit from a strong leadership team at Yinghua and from dedicated paraprofessionals. Our mission requires a stable financial picture and a continuity in both the teachers and also in the families who are trusting us with the development of their child.

I think there are some objective markers that tell us that we have our children in the best learning environment. Our students do extremely well on standardized tests. We have a high rate of retention of teachers. Additionally, our families have shown the willingness to travel from many parts of the cities to secure the best education for their child. But, I think the best indicator of how well our children are growing is by the enthusiasm that they have for learning. A walk through the excitement of the science fair shows the camaraderie of the kids. Attending the middle school concert shows how committed the students are at hard work. As a parent it is this enthusiasm that shows me that my daughter will thrive here.

It has been a privilege to serve on your school board. I enjoy the opportunity to be part of this dedicated team that is helping our children in their quest for knowledge and as they learn to become global citizens. I hope you will grant me three more years of this adventure.

**(4) Parent: JOEL LUEDTKE**

Thank you for electing me to serve on Yinghua’s School Board three years ago. Our school has always been blessed with a deep bench of great people who are willing to take up the complex challenge of board service. Our current board continues to uphold that legacy, and it would be my honor to continue as a member for another 3-year term.

A little about me. I live with my wife and two sons in northeast Minneapolis, a few blocks from school. We have a fifth and first graders at Yinghua. I’ve spent my entire career in the nonprofit sector, initially in the field of refugee resettlement and now in philanthropy. I have a master’s degree in nonprofit management.

In my current position, I manage the education grantmaking of the foundation where I work. This has afforded me the opportunity to gain a broad understanding of the financial, human resource, public policy and other issues that nonprofits, including charter schools, must master in order to produce great results. It has also enlightened me about the ways cutting-edge schools are preparing students.

Thinking back over the past three years, it's easy to point to highlights. We earned a national Blue Ribbon Award, were awarded two state innovation awards, increased our already-amazing student retention rate, and significantly grew our operating reserves. As Chair of our Development Committee, I'm also proud of the increasing generosity families have shown for events like Give to the Max and the Red Envelope campaign.

Staff, families and the Board have worked together to firmly establish Yinghua as one of the best public schools in the state. Although we are right to be proud of this achievement, we shouldn't be complacent. Our children face many uncertainties. Stable, rewarding careers are threatened as disruptive forces reshape the workplace. Civic engagement is challenged by public discourse that is increasingly disrespectful and antagonistic. Interpersonal relationships are being tested as we recognize and respect the complexity of individual identities.

In some ways, our schools is already answering these uncertainties. Our Chinese immersion curriculum affords our children the opportunity to understand the world from different perspectives – a vital skill for an increasingly diverse future. Our current push to incorporate more project-based learning provides a chance for students to show initiative, develop teamwork skills, and be creative. I think we can do more to create self-motivated, joyful, and socially-wise future citizens. If elected, I will continue to push the board and school leaders to creatively evolve our learning community to ensure its relevance in the future our children will inherit.

**(5) Parent: ANNIE NELSON**

My interest in the Yinghua school board is based on my experience as a Yinghua parent over the last five years. My two daughters who are in grades 2 and 5 have both flourished during their time at Yinghua. I view the school board as a way to use my professional skills to give back and to help strengthen the school's ability to build on its tradition of excellence.

I am a strong believer in Yinghua's mission to prepare students to be global citizens. I grew up about a mile from Yinghua, near the U of MN campus in a family that embraced diversity - locally and globally. We hosted many foreign exchange students, prioritized travel and learning about other cultures and created lifelong relationships with families around the globe. The ability to easily build cross-cultural connections has been an asset to me and I feel fortunate that my children experience this as part of their school day. As Yinghua grows, both in numbers and diversity of the student body, the opportunities to learn from differences and build cross-cultural understanding will multiply.

I am excited about Yinghua's vision and current strategic priorities. I would be interested as a board member, to help ensure that the school community continues to operate with the highest standards and has adequate resources to achieve its vision. I believe my professional experience would be helpful, specifically my background in fundraising and strategic planning and extensive work with board committees.

My professional experience includes over 20 years in nonprofit leadership, with roles ranging from Executive Director of a child and youth policy organization to Director of Development for Children's Theatre Company. In addition, I was principal of a consulting firm for eight years and provided management consulting – strategic planning and organizational development - to college athletics departments across the US. I am currently the Chief Advancement Officer at Summit Academy, an adult vocational school located in North Minneapolis. I serve as part of the executive team and oversee all development, marketing and communications activities. I hold a BA from the University of MN, a mini MBA in nonprofit management from the University of St. Thomas and a certificate from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

**(6) Parent: AMANDA SCHNEIDER**

My name is Amanda Schneider and I currently serve at Yinghua Academy as Board – Treasurer and am running for re-election. I have been on the Board for three years and on the Finance Committee for 4 years. In addition, I have served as a classroom coordinator for multiple years, most currently for 5A. I am the proud parent of Geneva (5A) and Isabella (2C).

I have enjoyed my time on the Board and Finance committee over the last few years and hope to have the opportunity to continue contributing my time and talent during a second term if re-elected. My most proud accomplishment has been working with school administration and fellow board members to compile an actionable long-range plan for Yinghua Academy. Countless hours were spent on this initiative and I would like to see us execute the plan over the next three years. More specifically, I want to continue the work we did relating to facilities capacity vs. financial needs as the school matures and reaches maximum space efficiency.

I have over 20 years of finance experience and am currently the Chief of Staff for the finance organization reporting directly to the CFO at Ameriprise Financial. In addition to my CFO Office duties, I also manage our two-year finance leadership development program for recent college graduates, manage our summer college internship program and manage our work study program with high school students from Cristo Rey high school. Not only am I passionate about Yinghua, I am passionate about supporting higher education as well.

I have a Master of Business Administration in international finance from Carlson School of Management, a Master of Arts degree in business management from Concordia University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in communications from Concordia University. I have previous Board of Director experience for the Minneapolis rowing club where I served a term as a general board member and ran the learn to row program.