

March 31, 2020

Announcement of 2020 Yinghua Academy School Board Candidates

The following FIVE individuals will stand for election to the Yinghua Academy School Board in April 2020 for terms running July 2020 through June 2023. Their names and affiliations are below, and their candidate statements appear on the following pages.

There are four open seats on the School Board to be filled by this election. On April 23, official ballots will be sent to all eligible voters via the email on file in Infinite Campus (or via U.S. mail if you have stated this communication preference). Ballots will be accepted by email from a Yinghua-recognized email address or by U.S. mail to Yinghua Academy. All ballots received by Yinghua Academy by 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 30 will be considered on time.

Voters will have the opportunity to hear from the candidates at the virtual (online) Annual Meeting of the School Board on Thursday, April 23, 2020, at 6:00 p.m.

The School Board relies on a diverse base of knowledge to provide good governance. The primary qualification is that the individual is a willing, committed, and objective leader. School Board responsibilities include supporting and evaluating the executive director, setting policy to ensure the school's ongoing viability, and overseeing the financial management of the school.

According to the Yinghua Academy bylaws, in compliance with state statutes, the Yinghua School Board follows the 1/1/1 governance model: At least one member of 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.

Each of the five 2020 candidates is in the parent/guardian category. Candidates are listed alphabetically below with their children's current grades in parentheses as well as their occupations.

2020 Candidates and Affiliations

- Parent/guardian Samantha Colai (K and 3): Therapist, Hope Rising
- Parent/guardian Brooke Darrah-Hage (1 and 3): Stay-at-Home Parent, Musician, Educator
- Parent/guardian Eric Foster (2 and 4): Stay-at-Home Parent; former Senior Tax Consultant, Deloitte Tax
- Parent/guardian Joel O'Malley (2, 6, and 7): Attorney, Nilan Johnson Lewis PA
- Parent/guardian Evan Owens (2 and 4): Data Strategist, 3M Company

2020 Candidate Statements

(1) Parent/Guardian SAMANTHA COLAI

I have a third grader and kindergartener at Yinghua. I have my masters in Marriage and Family Therapy. I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Registered Play Therapist, and Somatic Experiencing Practitioner. I work at Ascend Family Institute and I have my own private practice, Hope Rising. I work primarily with elementary and middle school aged children in my career as a play therapist. I would like the opportunity to utilize my knowledge about child development, stress, trauma, and resiliency to help Yinghua become the best it can be.

There is a certain type of student that thrives at Yinghua. One of my children does not fit into that category and struggles at Yinghua. As a result of this I have been able to see strengths and growth areas within Yinghua. I personally do not believe that a child struggling at Yinghua is a reason to leave the school. I would love to see Yinghua become a school that will collaborate with parents coming forward with concerns. I am committed to staying at Yinghua and helping to create a space where all children are welcome and supported. As Dr. Ross Greene states, "Kids do well when they can." When kids are struggling it is not because they do not WANT to do well. It means they need adults to support them and help figure out what is causing them to struggle. In addition, "Adults do well when they can." If a staff member is struggling with a student, it does not mean they are a bad teacher. It means they need more support and training to know how to effectively support students and manage difficult behaviors.

My hope and goals are to use my training and experience as a therapist to help Yinghua Academy utilize a whole brain approach to education. I believe this will benefit all students at Yinghua – gifted/talented students, students with learning disabilities, struggling students, happy students, engaged students, and students exhibiting difficult behaviors. I have learned through my education and experience the importance of children feeling safe, respected, and valued when at school. When a child does not feel safe emotionally, mentally, or physically their brain is not able to retain the information they learned.

I am thankful that my children have the privilege of learning a second language with educators that clearly love their students. The love, compassion, and kindness teachers have shown my children is one of the reasons we are committed to staying in this community. I would love to see Yinghua grow in increasing the emphasis on social emotional learning. Social emotional intelligence is a life skill that will greatly benefit all students at Yinghua once they graduate. Yinghua has a unique challenge in this area due to the challenges that come with being an immersion program. I believe Yinghua can meet that challenge and continue to grow and flourish as a community.

(2) Parent/Guardian BROOKE DARRAH-HAGE (incumbent)

I am a parent at Yinghua. My oldest daughter, Hollis Hage, is in Cheng Laoshi's 3rd grade class, and my youngest, Hanna Hage, is part of Long Laoshi's 1st grade class. Our family is very happy to be a part of the Yinghua community, and I am eager to help support it in any way I can. I have served as a Classroom Coordinator, and, for the last year and a half, I have been a member of the School Board. I am currently serving as the chair of the Board's Academic Committee. I am originally from Wichita, Kansas. I am the oldest of three with two younger brothers. Most of my immediately family still resides there, but Minnesota has been my fulltime home since 2001. I attended Macalester College, where my major was in astrophysics, and later the University of Minnesota School of Music, where I studied music education.

Macalester strives to give students a multi-cultural experience which has stayed with me. It is certainly one of the reasons my husband, also a Macalester alum, and I were attracted to Yinghua in the first place. The opportunity for bilingual and bicultural education is very important to us. While at Macalester, I had the incredible opportunity to study West African music under Sowah Mensah, and with his mentorship I was able to study music abroad in Accra, Ghana. Ethnomusicology and sharing it quickly became my passions. Both during and after my time at the U of M, I had the chance to do just that with Lower, Middle, and High School students. Some may call me crazy, but I enjoyed the middle schoolers the most. I have also coached Volleyball more than a decade. I worked as a Junior Varsity and Assistant Varsity coach at Mounds Park Academy for most of that time, and, most recently I have had the privilege of working with 5th-8th graders at St. Charles Borromeo.

Currently, my time is mostly taken up with my ever-surprising children, Hollis (9) and Hanna (6). My husband, Gordon, and I consider ourselves very lucky. The girls keep us on our toes but make our lives much richer. Like me, they have varied interests which makes for a hectic schedule. I have experience in the academic sphere, but I am always willing to apply myself to any area that is needed. I believe in pursuing goals without inhibition and working to make all things possible. In running again for the Yinghua School Board I am hoping to continue giving back to the community that has benefitted my children so much.

(3) Parent/Guardian ERIC FOSTER

I am the proud parent of two Yinghua Academy students, Peyton (4B) and Nolan (2A). I currently serve on the Finance Committee, and I am running for one of the available positions on the Yinghua Academy School Board. I received my undergraduate degrees from Augsburg University and my law degree from the University of St. Thomas. In my most recent position, I was a Senior Tax Consultant at a Big 4 accounting firm. I have experience advising non-profit organizations on issues of governance, compliance, and operations.

Currently, I am a stay-at-home dad and part-time homeschool teacher (thanks, Covid-19!). I strongly believe in Yinghua's mission to prepare students to be engaged and productive global citizens. I believe that we are all part of a global community and that our similarities outnumber our differences. Yinghua has a strong and active community, top-notch leadership, passionate teachers, and most importantly, amazing students. As an in-class volunteer, I have seen firsthand how special our school is. I watch the smiles on children's faces as they file into their classrooms, and I've seen the "light bulb" moments that happen every day. Yinghua is truly an extraordinary place. I am interested in serving on the Yinghua Academy School Board because I strongly believe in the excellent education available here, and I want to ensure that students for years to come are able to benefit from the unique opportunity an education at Yinghua provides. I am confident that my experience and background would be a great fit for the Yinghua Academy School Board, and I look forward to having an opportunity to serve our school community. Thank you for taking the time to consider my application.

(4) Parent/Guardian JOEL O'MALLEY

I am the parent of three Yinghua students. I am an ardent supporter of Yinghua, and it would be a privilege to serve on the Board. I would bring the Board my prior success serving on the Board, substantial board experience, specific legal skills, and passion for the school.

Prior Board success. I previously served on the Board during a critical period of Yinghua's growth. As a prior Board member, I helped in the search for a new Executive Director, leading to the hiring of Mrs. Berg, whom I consider to be a wonderful leader of the school. I was involved in important work surrounding Yinghua's facilities expansion. And, I took the lead in revising and

aligning all of Yinghua's written policies. All of this work set the school up for great continued success, and I would love the chance to serve again.

Board experience. My non-profit board experience would help me serve Yinghua. I served on the board of the Girl Scouts River Valleys, assisting in fundraising and recruitment efforts. I currently serve on the board of Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers, an organization that provides the Minnesota legal community assistance relating to addiction, mental health issues, and other quality-of-life issues. I can bring my knowledge of non-profit board operations to Yinghua.

Legal skills. In my day job, I help companies comply with employment laws. I advise on human resources and employee relations issues. I draft and negotiate contracts. I defend companies when disputes arise. I can use my legal skills to help the Board in its governance work and personnel supervision.

Passion for Yinghua. I love Yinghua and the experiences it has afforded my kids. I grew up in small-town Iowa where we had one small K-12 school and limited academic opportunities, so I am so appreciative of Yinghua's offerings to my kids and the global perspective it fosters. I continue to be amazed by the dedication of Yinghua's leadership, teachers, staff, and parents.

Thank you for considering my candidacy.

(5) Parent/Guardian EVAN OWENS

My daughter is in the fourth grade and my son is in the second grade at Yinghua. Watching them learn Chinese has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Contributing to Yinghua's mission and success—for the benefit of the school, all children, teachers, parents, and the community—would be a privilege. Please consider me for the Yinghua board of directors: I have the drive, passion for the school's mission, and desire to serve.

Early in my career I worked as a middle-school teacher. Even though I did not stay with the teaching profession, the experiences I had leading a classroom have left me with enduring respect and gratitude for the work that teachers and school administrators do every day.

Today, I am at 3M Company (Maplewood campus) where I have more than 20 years of experience, spanning roles in operations, product development, project management, sourcing (purchasing), and advanced analytics solution development.

While a manager with 3M Strategic Sourcing, I worked with 3M's global vendors, including Asia-based companies. I developed close working relationships with the leadership at Chinese companies in multiple provinces and with my 3M China colleagues. During these business trips, I was repeatedly impressed by the dynamic quality of the culture, and I will bring an appreciation of global business and technology change to the School Board role to aid in preparing our children for the future.

My education credentials include an MBA from the Carlson School at the University of Minnesota with an emphasis in finance and strategy and a bachelor's in chemical engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech).

The issues facing Yinghua of the greatest interest to me include financial and strategic planning, facilities and operations, STEM, and distance learning.