

# VOTERS GUIDE

## 2009

**ISD 181 School Board Candidates**

BRAINERDLAKES  
 CHAMBER

*Connect. Lead. Grow.<sup>®</sup>*



As a public policy advocate for the business community, the Brainerd Lakes Chamber is committed to providing information you need about local candidates running in the 2009 election so you can make an educated choice when you vote on November 3. The Chamber emailed surveys and called all candidates that filed for school board positions with ISD 181 asking them to respond with a 50-word limit for each question. The Chamber reserved the right to edit responses if they exceed 50 words; but notified candidates we would not correct spelling or grammatical errors. There are **three regular four-year positions** up for election and **one special two-year position** for the ISD 181 School Board.

### Can't get to the polls on Election Day?

- You are eligible to vote by absentee ballot, if you are:
- Away from your precinct
- Ill or disabled
- Prevented by a religious discipline or holiday
- Serving as an election judge in another precinct

Absentee ballot applications are available at the same locations as your voter registration forms.

### Election Do's & Don'ts for Business

#### Do...

- Do encourage your employees to vote, regardless of their political preference.
- Do publicize voter information to employees.
- Do make voter registration cards and absentee ballot applications available at work.
- Do invite local and state legislative candidates from all political parties to speak to management and employee gatherings at your company.
- Do invite candidates to tour your place of business.
- Do allow employees a reasonable amount of time off from work to vote without loss of pay on November 3. (It's the law!)

#### Don't...

- Do not tell your employees which candidate or political party to support or vote for in an election.
- Do not make contributions to candidates from company or business funds.
- Do not place campaign signs on corporate property without payment for such use.
- Do not force employees to vote or make voting participation or political activity a factor in employee performance evaluations.
- Do not coordinate voter registration or get-out-the-vote efforts with any candidate or political party.

If you have questions or concerns about election protocol at your business, contact the Secretary of State at 651-296-2803.

## 1. Why are you the best candidate for this job?

### Two-Year Position, School Board District #181 (one open position):

- James Hunt** I believe that, as a former school administrator, I have the insights necessary to step into this two year position and become productive right away. As a parent, I valued the opportunities that my children had in this school district and I want to assure that these opportunities continue for all students.
- Theresa Knierim** I am a good candidate for school board because I am a mother and a community member. I received my formal education in business and criminal justice. I have a long history of volunteering with our community and more recently with our schools. I feel that being active with my community keeps me in touch with current issues.
- Bob Nystrom** I'm a life-time resident of the Brainerd-Baxter area and received my education in ISD 181. I owned and operated Nystrom Drug in Brainerd for 15 years. I've served on the Brainerd School Board for 8 years and served as it's finance chairman for 3 years and part of that committee for 8 years.
- Tom Peterson** I am a strong advocate for public education with 35 years experience as an educational administrator and businessman. I have worked in Districts in Minnesota and South Dakota and my current job puts me in contact with leading Districts across the US. I have fresh ideas that emphasize communication, leadership, planning and fiscal responsibility.

### Four-Year Position, School Board District #181 (three open positions):

- Howard Brewer** I feel I would be a qualified candidate because of my 45 years of experience in management/supervisory capacities. I have extensive training in leadership and know the value of teamwork to complete an assigned mission.
- Nancy Cross** With each decision will be important to me. I have been taught to problem solve by looking at all aspects of the question, investigate the issue and list the possible solutions.
- Todd Froemming** As a business owner and college instructor I have a breadth of knowledge which will lead me to make informed and practical decisions on issues that are facing the district. No current board members live in the city boundaries of Brainerd. I do, and believe this perspective is needed to truly have a representative school board.
- Tom Haglin** As a product of our school system with a vision, business owner, community involvement, husband and father of three school aged children, my experiences will provide me with the skills needed to make practical and sound decisions. I have great ability to listen and hear what all sides of issues are, sort through information, and make sound decisions.

**Ruth Nelson** My decisions are based on doing what is best for our students and our community. I work well with the other board members and administration. My strong business background enables me to critically review solutions to problems. I have two children in this district and volunteer/visit our schools regularly.

**Chris Robinson** I believe that an extensive background in civic and community service (East Gull Lake City Council, Brainerd Lakes Chamber Board, and Brainerd Kiwanis Club) makes me a qualified candidate for a school board seat. Those experiences have prepared me to provide leadership on the difficult issues facing the District.

## 2. What are your top priorities and your strategy for implementation?

### Two-Year Position, School Board District #181 (one open position):

**Theresa Knierim** Our children are our community's greatest resource and they are my top priority. We are charged with giving them the education they need. As a school board member, the decisions I make would reflect my belief in the importance of our children's education and how that effects the future of our community.

**Bob Nystrom** Continue to build on the lessons learned form 2007 referendum failure. Hold the line on expenses, smaller class sizes as a top priority and change the way we pay salaries and benefits to our teachers and other unions.

**Tom Peterson** My top priorities are increasing student achievement and maintaining a healthy fiscal picture for district finances. Student achievement involves aligning District curriculum with state and national standards, then measuring success. Fiscal planning involves more state advocacy for funding and concentrated local planning with heavy community involvement to efficiently steward those funds.

**James Hunt** Financial priorities, long-range planning and class size are top issues. I think the school district has taken positive steps to begin the process of dealing with finances, but much work still needs to be done and it is imperative to continue this process. Government leaders must be brought together to assist in streamlining the confusing systems of funding and equalizing funding between districts.

### Four-Year Position, School Board District #181 (three open positions):

**Nancy Cross** My top priorities are to get teachers teaching, parents parenting and children to be responsible for their actions. My strategy for implementation is to use those priorities in my decision making. Another priority is to bring back some of the vocational classes that were eliminated and to reduce classroom size.

**Todd Froemming** I don't have an agenda. It is more important to have an open mind to the possibilities that exist in our community to strengthen the educational opportunities for our kids. I would work to implement any positive, affordable opportunities by actively promoting more community input to the district decision making processes.

- Tom Haglin** 1) Fiscal management. Continually remove non-essential waste within the system to maximize each dollar invested. We must operate within budget and be pro-active for future growth. 2) Facilities management. Protect class size by utilizing current structures, while reducing operational costs. 3) Affordable extra curricular activities and increased participation by non-active students.
- Ruth Nelson** My top priority is to continue to invest in the classroom and lower class size. We must be fiscally conservative and become even more creative in using our limited resources. We must be data driven so we know what programs are most effective. We must remain a high quality district.
- Chris Robinson** As a member of the school board, my top priority will be to continue the District's efforts to maximize student achievement while conserving limited resources. I will support continued implementation of the District's expense cutting program and promote long-range planning for expected funding shortfalls in the future.
- Howard Brewer** I feel the top priority is education, that's a no brainer. Secondly, this district needs to learn how to tighten the belt in these economic times and eliminate all the bells and whistles that are not needed. If it's truly for the education of the children is one thing. Frills are another which needs extensive scrutiny.

### 3. Describe the role of K-12 education in preparing our future workforce.

#### Two-Year Position, School Board District #181 (one open position):

- Bob Nystrom** A strong public K-12 education is important for laying the building blocks necessary for a solid, future work force. This includes collaborative ventures with our business community, which have been strong in the past and present.
- Tom Peterson** We need to emphasize paths for ALL students, including appropriate school-to-work programs and preparation for post High education. I would focus on the District's adoption of a set of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for all students to be implemented in curriculum K-12. Key to this is staff development for teaching and administrative staff.
- James Hunt** I believe our young people need to be solidly grounded in the basics of Oral and Written Communication, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Science and Reading. In addition, students need confidence building skills, social skills, work-related skills and opportunities for mentoring, especially in vocational areas.
- Theresa Knierim** I believe in preparing our children for the education and the training that most will seek after they leave our schools. Whether our students go on to a university, a vocational training school, or an occupational skills program, their education after high school graduation prepares them to fill vital rolls in our community.

**Four-Year Position, School Board District #181 (three open positions):**

- Todd Froemming** K-12 education should be a pre-cursor to additional education/training that will help us develop a skilled work force. This education needs to promote leadership and team building skills through curriculum as well as extra-curricular activities. K-12 education should teach our children responsibility, consequences of failure and help them develop a strong work ethic.
- Tom Haglin** It is imperative that our school equip all students with the proper education and soft skills to be able to enter into their own perspective areas of interest after graduation. We must prepare students for careers by integrating businesses and organizations to be involved in formation of school curriculum and activities.
- Ruth Nelson** Quality K-12 education is imperative to the quality of our workforce. Our district must prepare students for the highly competitive world by continuing to offer increased rigor. Most importantly, we need to teach our students how to think creatively so they can continue to succeed when they leave our schools.
- Chris Robinson** K-12 education is the key to preparing the majority of the workforce. Recent employer feedback demonstrates that a foundation in work skills is critical to the success of businesses and future employees. I will support efforts to continue and expand the ISD 181 and Chamber workforce development initiative.
- Howard Brewer** Well, I think the proper role is to just get back to the basics and truly teach and educate. This idea of just showing up and getting a diploma is nonsense. That's just dumbing down. To compete in the future economy one will be needing more than a high school education.
- Nancy Cross** K-12 is the foundation for the child's future. Everything is based on how strong your foundation becomes. Courses of study, the learning atmosphere, and having a strong discipline policy are all elements that secures that foundation

Thank you to the candidates for responding to our questions.

Visit [www.isd181.org](http://www.isd181.org) for information on polling places. Polls are open Tuesday, November 3 from noon to 8 p.m.