

I will tell you that I began answering the questions you asked on the same day you sent them. I thought about them, and I put them into a document that I am still giving thought to. I don't believe anyone can answer any of those questions rapidly. If I have learned anything, it is that quick responses are not thorough ones.

You also need to know that it is not my job to speak for the entire board. None of us have the sole say in any of the many issues we face. It is our job to work together, weigh the law and the needs of our community and, ultimately, let Roger be the voice of the district once the entire board comes to a conclusion. We contribute ideas and discussions, but we all respect, follow, and support the final say of Roger in all district matters.

It is my understanding and experience that this board has always achieved unanimous decisions - from what we get paid annually to the recent use of ESSR funds for educational remediation.

I will be frank when I say that writing any of these answers is not the best approach for any of us. Let me explain why.

Read this one word: "Okay."

Am I really fine? Am I being sarcastic? Am I understanding you or just trying to end an uncomfortable talk? Did I forget a question mark and that means the statement becomes a question?

You cannot tell in text what "okay" means.

And too often one word or phrase is taken out of context and used inappropriately. Case in point: I reached out to former friends to try to have private written conversations, but my words were taken out/turned around and — in several cases — used to say the exact opposite of my stance. (I have our original exchange and I still stand by my words. But those same words are being used improperly.) Since the beginning of my run for the board I have experienced misinterpretation from many folks I have never even met. I just don't want you to experience my written communication in the same way.

Mark, over the last year and a half I have been trolled, lied about, cursed at, cursed about, made fun of, called names, been assigned untrue motives, and even had my child as the target of angry adults on a public social media account. I simply wanted to start outdoor education. That's it. I was not even going to run. But I did. And I am not a quitter because I still believe in this vision and I have seen what outdoor education can do for all children.

I do not understand how people I have never met (or those who I had once claimed as close friends) could feel so free to attack me. Sadly, it has limited what I am willing to write.

Mark, I am willing to answer your questions face to face, but I do not want to offend you in the process of writing. It's not so I can be duplicitous. It is because I TRULY never intend to offend folks, and writing has that chance.

My goal is unity, not drawing lines in the sand.

For now you can know that I am a woman of deep faith. I am a woman who loves her family. I am a woman who adores the Grandville community. I am a woman committed to service of others.

I grew up in a small town of 200 in north central Indiana, and we moved here because Grandville felt (and still feels) like home. And just like my hometown, I want relationships to overcome pat answers. I want depth of conversation to triumph over what has become a catch phrase.

If you would like to meet, please let me know. I have made this offer often because I believe the school board is the epitome of local control. You can speak directly to me and know me. In turn, I get the honor of knowing you.

**\*\*Note: Many members offered to have a cup of coffee. Private meetings result in private answers. I declined all invitations because of this.**

**Amy's response rings genuine, but it seems she found her voice when answering questions for the Michigan Education Justice Coalition (keep scrolling). Amy isn't being recalled at the moment, however, I think she should feel the need to put as much effort into answering our questions as she did the Michigan Education Justice Coalition. I know I personally want Amy's answers to our questions. You should too.**

Amy sent an additional e-mail to me:

I noticed that there has been some activity on my Grandville school board Facebook page. I'm hoping that you were able to look through it, look through my website, and get a little bit more information about when I was running. I also would like to direct you to the Grandville Parks and Recreation Facebook Page. I also run that and have also done several write ups for our Parks and Recreation board president to go to the city. I believe that we can do much work between the schools and the parks department, along with the city. You asked what my passion is, and my passion is getting students outside, growing their own food, learning through plant-based sciences, and working together. Here is the link for the Facebook page for the parks and recreation department.

<https://www.facebook.com/Grandville-Parks-and-Recreation-103259935348702/>

Best Regards,  
Amy

**I sent a response to Amy (below), and received an email back (below)**

Good afternoon Amy,  
I appreciate your response. I apologize for the delay in recognition. Too much to do, not enough time. On a positive note, I agree with your vision for outdoor education. My nieces and nephews attended a Forest Hills school called "[Goodwilly](#)". They had a fantastic experience.

I'll be honest, while your answers are important to me, I'm more concerned about getting answers from those involved in the recall. I think emotions are running high and I am all about informed dialog, which is why I'm looking for specific answers to specific questions. I am already frustrated with the level of deliberate obfuscation and what I view as condescension and 'dismissal' from the members that should most want the truth of their beliefs known. Absent any meaningful/cogent documented answers I'll be throwing as much support as I can muster behind this recall effort and setting up a system that is more responsive to the community.

I did get on your Facebook site, but frankly don't have time to read posts not germane to my immediate interest in this recall. I didn't find anything of substance regarding those interests in the 3 minutes I trolled. If you can direct me to specific posts I'd be glad to look at them.

I am sorry you've had bad experiences. It's my belief we can agree to disagree, but not be disagreeable. I truly don't know what your beliefs are regarding the issues I set forth in my original email. If I did, that may mean I don't want you being a board member, but that doesn't mean I want to be adversarial with you. I have many friends I disagree with on some of these issues. We don't change hearts or minds with acrimony.

I appreciate your response. I will be pressing for more specific answers from those being recalled.

AMYS RESPONSE:

They have already threatened to recall me in January. I have made no votes or policies that would be controversial.

Just thought you should know.

Probably my best answer to you is that almost every question you asked (maybe even all, since I am still in my first year) has a policy set in the schools already. This is why you truly should speak with Roger.

Again, board members have the power to change policy. Roger technically answers to them. I'm concerned with a fair amount of what I would consider 'subversive' action by teachers allowed by Grandville management and board. I'm not as concerned about where we are now (what's done is done) as I am about our trajectory. Amy (and all board members) have an open invitation to answer the questions that were asked. Should they decide to post them, their updates will be posted on this website.

Amy apparently didn't have a problem finding adequate words to answer the Michigan Education Justice Coalition, although I really don't know what she said...



- SCHOOL BOARDS
- TAKE ACTION
  - PRESS
  - FUNDING

# Amy Gardine

Pronouns: She/Her

***How long have you lived in your district?***

6

***Have you received any endorsements?***

Yes. MEA and GEA

***Are you an incumbent?***

No

***Why do you want to be a school board member?***

I am passionate about education and how this leads to better citizens, socioeconomic equity, and social justice.

## ***What does education justice mean to you? What does it mean specifically in the context of your school district?***

I believe that educational justice looks like programs that help children at all levels of the spectrum: from special education to advance placement courses. It looks like economic aid, enriched cultural and personal experiences, as well as attention to the whole child — from mental health to physical wellbeing. It also looks like the interplay between teacher creativity, student engagement, and community support for all children.

## ***If you could completely reimagine the way schools look after this public health crisis, what would they look like?***

When I moved to Grandville in 2014, I proposed an outdoor education program for my sons' elementary building. We had come from a Montessori in Indiana that used farm-based curriculum to teach every subject. This not only created engaged learners, but also reduced daily anxiety, taught social justice regarding food security, and allowed students to learn at their own pace. This dream from six years ago has become a reality. We now have a 12-tree orchard, enormous garden, a greenhouse, and an outdoor classroom in the woods. This year, during COVID19, our students did not miss a step. They were not just learning, they were also thriving in the outdoors. Anxiety is low and every student — from our most fragile to our strongest — is feeling safe and engaged.

## ***Describe how you think parents, students, and families should be involved in making decisions within your school district?***

Relationship is key to strong schools. In the pursuit to create positive school district policies, the school board takes on the vital role as the ears of the community. It is the job of the school board to listen, discern, and implement the best practices for all children. In order to do our best for the community at large, we must seek enriching, safe, inclusive educational experiences where all students, teachers, and parents are valued. \*What does "Safe" mean? Is it vaccinated, Masked?

## ***Who (if any) are your top financial supporters for your campaign?***

I was mostly given small donations from friends, teachers, and even the mayor of Grandville.

## ***What are your top 3 educational priorities/goals within your school district?***

I am a firm believer that education is the great leveler. If social and economic issues are addressed (what does this mean? What social and economic issues will Amy address and how?), then students feel safe. If mental health issues (what mental health issue will Amy as a board member tackle and how?) are met, students feel heard. And if academic excellence is provided, students feel empowered. These three areas of education are extremely important to me.

## ***What are your top 3 educational priorities/goals at a state level?***

I would say that my priorities are the same at the state level as they have been for the local schools: social and economic justice (What do social and economic justice mean to a school board member? What specifically are we talking about? How is Amy going to tackle these?); mental health; and academic excellence.

## ***What challenges do you anticipate this school year to COVID and what do you think your school district must do to keep students & staff safe?***

So far we have been doing very well in this district. There is a strict adherence to the CDC standards (how's this been working for us?) and we spend a lot of time outside. Both of these approaches are serving us well. As we head into the winter months, it is my hope that we can find creative and safe spaces for additional outdoor time. As we move forward, strict adherence to cleanliness and keeping students home for illness will be even more important. I also believe that the flu shot and helping students and teachers with PPE will aid in the process. (The 'flu' shot and PPE? So take your shots and put your mask on?)

## ***What should be your school district's top spending priorities in their budget? Alternatively, what***

## ***should not be prioritized your district's budget?***

I believe that Grandville would benefit from additional mental health initiatives and social justice work programming in the Grand Rapids community at large. (Are you seeing a pattern? Amy is hammering these phrases. Just what is she proposing?)

## ***What role do you think standardized tests should play in your school district?***

I believe that we over-test our youngest students. The idea that we test more and are given less human interaction and teaching time is a bit ludicrous.

## ***If you could have an impact on your school district's curriculum , what changes would you make? What, if anything, would you keep the same?***

I would keep the vast opportunities afforded our students — from AP and advance classes to the many music and technology programs available in the district. I would, however, invest in alternative options like middle college curriculum and/or trade classes.

## ***What responsibility do you believe your school district has in***



## ***supporting students' and staffs' mental and emotional health/wellbeing?***

Mental health is one of my priorities. School age children are truly facing unprecedented times. The pressures and exposure to real world trauma has increased exponentially. But teachers are also under enormous stress. I believe counselors and mental health advisors should be an integral resource for our entire school population. (Or maybe stop the all the relativistic gender, white privilege, racist, Covid nonsense, and focus on grounding our children with basic education and TRUTH again).

## ***How do you think your school district should handle student discipline/and make schools a safe place for students and staff?***

School safety goes hand in hand with mental health work. At Grandville we have resource officers, and the best thing I have seen with these officers has been their willingness to participate in **mental health training** Working alongside counselors and the whole community, we can work toward every child feeling heard and being safe. (Again, what does this mean? Are you talking 'restorative justice Amy?').

## ***What are your top priorities around special education in your district?***

The elementary where I helped start the outdoor classrooms is also home to our ASD students. The **inclusion (?)** and enrichment offered for these students is marvelous. From the garden to the classroom, we embrace each student for his or her own unique gifts.

Many of our mainstream students end up feeling very comfortable with difference and will often be the students who participate in the LINKS program in the middle school and high school. I hope to see this continue and expand as the needs of our community grow and we all continue to enjoy the community of inclusion. (Amy, tell us what inclusion means here.)

## ***What is your perspective on working towards achieving equity within your school district?***

The current atmosphere around racial, economic, and identity equity is quite disheartening. I do not think it is without hope, but I do believe that the best place to begin and implement the conversation of equity is in the schools. We must do better for all students if we hope to build the fabric of our nation as a whole. (Starting to understand now Amy. Those of us paying attention understand what "Equity" means).

## ***Any other information you want to include or share?***

I love public education and believe it is our best hope at encouraging an equitable and just society: