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# VOTING GUIDE

TO THE CANDIDATES  
FOR ELECTION  
TO THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ELECTION DAY  
APRIL 11, 2025

# 2025 Board Candidate Profile

**Michael Griesinger**

## **Please explain your connection to Cologne Academy.**

During the 2025-26 school year, I will have a 4th grader and a kindergartner attending CA.

## **Why should you be elected for a seat on the School Board?**

With soon to be two children attending Cologne Academy, I care deeply about not just the education my children receive, but the opportunities available to everyone at Cologne Academy. As a meteorologist, I would come to the school board with a strong background in science and math. Although I don't teach, I have a passion for teaching young (and old) what I know about the weather and climate in particular. So, besides the children, as a school board member, I would also work to ensure the teachers have the resources they need to effectively teach the children while also ensuring they have an environment where they feel safe to teach the material in a way they feel would best reach the children.

## **As a board member you'll be asked to make decisions where you must put aside what's best for you, your family, your friends and do what's best for the students and school. What does this mean to you?**

This is about trying to listen to a diverse range of voices, ensuring you have an understanding of multiple viewpoints of an issue before making a decision. Once you have a more holistic set of viewpoints, it comes down weighing all of the data before making as unbiased of a decision as you can make. It's about being a selfless leader and making a decision that will benefit the greater good of the school in its efforts to live up to the school's goals and mission, regardless of how this may line up with your personal preferences.

## **Do you have experience serving on other boards? Do you have any other leadership roles in your community?**

From 2012 to 2015, I was the President of the Twin Cities Chapter of the American Meteorological Society, responsible for organizing meeting topics and speakers and planning events and activities for the group.

In addition, since 2016, I have served the city of Carver as a Paid-on-call firefighter. In that role I have helped plan open houses, outreach events with Carver Elementary, and participated in other community outreach events with the department.

## **Working effectively with other school board members and the director requires skill in communication and decision-making. How do you see yourself working with other members of the leadership team? What is your vision for education in this community?**

As with any organization, the key to its success is effective communication between its members and teams. For me personally, the key to effective communication is to be open and honest with other members of the board, not being afraid to have some healthy disagreements. I would ensure that I'm available to meet with other board members, being as prompt with email or other forms of correspondence as my schedule allows. In addition, I would look to create some board events that aren't necessarily a part of official business. It would give board members to learn more about each other outside of what they do for the board and a lot of times, some of the best ideas come when there is no script or agenda to follow! With open communication between members and the development of goals, we can more effectively come together to ensure we have a school that not only teaches our students knowledge of traditional education topics such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also empowers them to become future leaders and helpful members of our communities.

# 2025 Board Candidate Profile

Michael Griesinger

## How do you view the relationship between the board of education and the administration?

I feel the school board provides the goals and broad vision for the school that the administration then executes. In addition, the board acts as a sort of regulatory body of the administration to ensure that they are meeting the goals and vision of the school. However, this is not a one-way street, it's also important for the board to listen to the administration to learn what the board can do to help the administration better complete their jobs and meet the goals and vision the board set out for them.

## What are your areas of expertise that would be helpful on a board? Do you have experience with HR, finance, marketing, policy writing, or school leadership?

My main expertise comes with my professional experience in the fields of math and science (so putting the M and S in STEM!). My job as a meteorologist is with the federal government and as a firefighter, I work for a municipal worker as well, so I have familiarity in working both with and within government type agencies. From the policy perspective, one of my duties as a meteorologist is to maintain the Annual Fire Weather Operating Plan between the National Weather Service and state and federal land management agencies in MN along with updating our local office policies and procedures covering the fire weather program.

## What contributions can you make to this school district?

As a parent and scientist, I would bring my energy, positive attitude, and passion to Cologne Academy to ensure that the school continues to create great students, develop great people, and be a place that is able to attract and retain great teachers and staff.

## What qualities, skills and experiences would you bring to the board?

The greatest quality I have is as a big thinker. I love digging into problems and developing multiple solutions, analyzing them and picking the best way forward. Paired with a strong planner, I can help develop the ideas and solutions that my stronger planning partner can then figure out how we can execute those ideas. Besides that, I'm easy to communicate with and don't just talk, but listen as well. I'm not someone that is intimidating and always open to hearing new ideas..

## What do you see as the roles and responsibilities of school board members?

As a school board member, you bring your knowledge and experiences to the table to help broaden the views of the board and ensure that multiple viewpoints are taken into consideration before making a decision about the future and direction that the school will take.

## 2025 Board Candidate Profile

**Michael Griesinger**

**Are you willing to pursue the skills, the knowledge and the training necessary to become a fully functioning and effective board member? Provide examples of how you might accomplish this.**

I love to learn, you don't just pick up training to be a firefighter while also maintaining your primary job and raising a toddler if you don't have a passion for learning! I'm always looking to broaden my knowledge and skills set and would seek out any training that I thought could improve my ability to be a school board member.

**An average month for a school board member includes roughly three scheduled meetings and perhaps another three school or community related activities. In addition, there is daily email correspondence, required reading and district updates. How will you fit this into your schedule?**

I am a rotating shift worker, so I'm used to getting creative to find time to do things outside of my ever-changing work schedule. Because I work evenings at times, there could be some conflicts with meeting times and my work schedule, but between working out shift swaps with co-workers and hopefully being able to remotely join meetings, I would be able to meet most of the meeting and event obligations of a school board member. I work 80 hours every two week pay period, which means there are still 256 hours every couple of weeks to do other things outside of work!

**Identify a recent board decision that you felt strongly about and describe how you would balance community concerns, student needs, state and federal law, staff considerations, and your personal values and beliefs to determine how to vote on the issue.**

The recent decisions that concern me most are around the fundraising events either the school or PAVE hold throughout the year. Although the fundraising is necessary and helps the school do and purchase things that traditional school funding sources may not cover, it's important ensure that we are getting a sufficient return to justify the time volunteers are investing in those events. Although I enjoy running, would a race be worth the effort. I enjoy golf, but is the golf tournament performing as strong as hoped? I really want to make sure we have events that the CA community feels invested in.

**What would you like to see changed in the district and how do you envision your role in that change?**

I would love to see some more cultural enrichment offered at the school. For instance, in December, holiday parties happen as many of the kids get in the mood for Christmas (as most students come from a Christian household of one flavor or another!). However, I would love to see students of non-Christian cultures have some of their traditions shared and celebrated throughout the school year. This would help ensure all students feel like they belong at the school and are a part of the community.

# 2025 Board Candidate Profile

**Jen Hedin**

## **Please explain your connection to Cologne Academy.**

I am the proud parent of a Kindergarten scholar.

## **Why should you be elected for a seat on the School Board?**

I have professional and personal experience that will support the needs of the School Board. Professionally, I have extensive consultant and project management experience at multiple Fortune 500 companies where I was responsible for the planning and execution of initiatives spanning numerous lines of business and multiple stakeholders, including with budgets over \$500M. Personally, I am the proud mom of five children with an age span of Kindergarten (Cologne Academy) through college. I have had children attend both public and private schools, and have seen first hand the benefits and challenges. I would love to apply my professional and personal knowledge to support and enhance Cologne Academy.

## **As a board member you'll be asked to make decisions where you must put aside what's best for you, your family, your friends and do what's best for the students and school. What does this mean to you?**

This means a commitment to knowing and understanding our school community and its diverse needs at both the staff and student levels so that decisions are made that support the mission and purpose of Cologne Academy.

## **Do you have experience serving on other boards? Do you have any other leadership roles in your community?**

I have not served on other boards. I have engaged in multiple volunteer roles in our community, including hands-on serving and also as a speaker.

## **Working effectively with other school board members and the director requires skill in communication and decision-making. How do you see yourself working with other members of the leadership team? What is your vision for education in this community?**

As an Executive Director for a multinational financial services company with expertise in project management, I understand the criticality of effective communication and the importance of listening, learning, advocating, and advising throughout the decision making process. I am known for my integrity, professionalism, and ability to seek and implement solutions that meet the needs of the business while supporting the interests of multiple various stakeholders. These are skills that are beneficial in any setting, and I look forward to developing positive and trusted relationships with all members of the leadership team so that I can support future decision-making.

My vision for education in our community is to support a holistic learning environment that knows each student as an individual, and empowers students, parents, and staff to partner for success, continuing the history of being a school of choice in MN.

# 2025 Board Candidate Profile

Jen Hedin

## How do you view the relationship between the board of education and the administration?

As the school board is more directly involved given the focus solely on Cologne Academy versus a full district in the public school setting, there are increased and unique opportunities to develop a closer relationship with the administration, capitalizing on opportunities for partnership while maintaining transparency in governance. I view the relationship as a synergistic team - one cannot be successful without the other.

## What are your areas of expertise that would be helpful on a board? Do you have experience with HR, finance, marketing, policy writing, or school leadership?

I have expertise in facilitation, project management, written communications, leadership, and risk management. I also have extensive experience in marketing, policy reviews, and team building.

## What contributions can you make to this school district?

I bring two decades of professional and parenting experience to our school. I look forward to generously investing my skills and experience, time, and passion for excellence.

## What qualities, skills and experiences would you bring to the board?

Professionally, I have expertise in facilitation, project management, written communications, leadership, and risk management. I also have extensive experience in marketing, policy reviews, and team building. Personally, I have 20 years of parenting experience with children ages Kindergarten through college, and have been a parent of both public and private school students (and now Charter). I have also been a small business owner, and understand the importance of community engagement and support.

## What do you see as the roles and responsibilities of school board members?

Ultimately, to understand the mission of Cologne Academy and to advocate for that mission in any and all decisions and activities. To steward the resources of Cologne Academy with integrity and the mission in mind.

## Are you willing to pursue the skills, the knowledge and the training necessary to become a fully functioning and effective board member? Provide examples of how you might accomplish this.

While I bring a strong skillset with me, there is always room to learn and grow, and I look forward to expanding my competencies in any ways needed to best support our school. I currently pursue ongoing education through classes and certifications that support my professional growth. I am also a part of two formal mentorship networks (one for women, and one for banking professionals). I am also an avid reader.

## 2025 Board Candidate Profile

Jen Hedin

**An average month for a school board member includes roughly three scheduled meetings and perhaps another three school or community related activities. In addition, there is daily email correspondence, required reading and district updates. How will you fit this into your schedule?**

As a project management professional, I excel in management and prioritization of responsibilities to meet (and exceed) client expectations. I will apply those same skills to all responsibilities related to the school board. I am a highly structured person, and have no concerns about managing additional responsibilities within my schedule.

**Identify a recent board decision that you felt strongly about and describe how you would balance community concerns, student needs, state and federal law, staff considerations, and your personal values and beliefs to determine how to vote on the issue.**

I do not have a recent CA decision to discuss where I felt strongly about the decision. However, as a general approach, student needs and state/federal law would be at the top of my decision-making hierarchy, supported by staff considerations and community input. My personal values and beliefs would not be a deciding factor. I understand I am not voting as an individual, but as a representative of our school community.

**What would you like to see changed in the district and how do you envision your role in that change?**

I am not approaching a potential school board seat with a list of changes that I want to be implemented. I more want to nurture, protect, and grow the qualities that make CA a top choice for students, parents, and teachers, and continue to strive for academic and enrichment opportunities for students and staff in our changing world.



# 2025 Board Candidate Profile

**John Zwanziger**

## **Please explain your connection to Cologne Academy.**

I am currently parent to a Kindergartener and next year we will have our second joining the PreK program.

## **Why should you be elected for a seat on the School Board?**

I am excited about the opportunity to be elected and serve on the Cologne Academy School Board because I have a deep passion for volunteering in my community and want to be involved with the school in a foundational way. As a parent with one kindergartener and two more who will eventually join the school, I am personally invested in the school's success and want to contribute to shaping its future as I will be in the Cologne Academy family for the next decade.

Beyond my personal connection, I am eager to be an advocate for Cologne Academy, its students, and the charter school system as a whole. I believe in the value of charter schools and want to help ensure that Cologne Academy continues to provide a high-quality education and a strong foundation for all students. I already have some ideas for how we can further strengthen the school, and I look forward to collaborating with other board members, staff, and families to support its growth and success.

Additionally, my professional experience in Corporate Finance at U.S. Bank equips me with skills that would be valuable to the board. I have a strong background in financial and credit analysis, risk assessment, financial modeling, which can help ensure the school remains financially sound and well-positioned for the future.

Ultimately, I see serving on the school board as an opportunity to give back, advocate for students, and use my professional expertise to make a lasting, positive impact on Cologne Academy.

## **As a board member you'll be asked to make decisions where you must put aside what's best for you, your family, your friends and do what's best for the students and school. What does this mean to you?**

As a husband and father of three children, I naturally want what's best for my family. However, as a school board member, I recognize that my responsibility extends beyond my own household to the entire Cologne Academy community. To me, this means approaching every decision and ask of the school board, with an open mind, integrity, and a commitment to what is best for the entire school community.

This means listening to diverse perspectives, relying on prior evidence and data and making choices that support the long-term success of the school. While there may be times when a decision is personally difficult, I will strive to always act in the best interest of the school (and it's students), ensuring they receive a high-quality education in a supportive and enriching environment.

I take this responsibility seriously because every student deserves the opportunity to grow, learn, and succeed. Making decisions that serve the greater community, even when they are difficult, is essential to maintaining trust in myself and upholding the communities confidence in the Cologne Academy School Board.

## **Do you have experience serving on other boards? Do you have any other leadership roles in your community?**

I am on the board of the largest Business Resource Group at U.S. Bank, the Twin Cities Development Network, serving as Community Director. In that role I am responsible for leading monthly meetings, coordinating events for employees to engage in the community and represent U.S. Bank at larger community events.



## 2025 Board Candidate Profile

**John Zwanziger**

**Working effectively with other school board members and the director requires skill in communication and decision-making. How do you see yourself working with other members of the leadership team? What is your vision for education in this community?**

I have extensive experience working in collaborative team environments, particularly in my role at U.S. Bank, where I assess new opportunities by effectively balancing risk and sales potential. Additionally, my leadership experience on the Development Network has strengthened my ability to work with diverse teams, communicate effectively, and drive programming forward. These experiences have taught me the importance of open dialogue, active listening, and making well-informed decisions that serve the broader goal of the team. As a school board member, I would bring this same approach—working closely with fellow board members to ensure that all decisions are made thoughtfully and with the best interest of Cologne Academy in mind.

My vision for education in the Cologne Academy community aligns with the school's key pillars and why my family chose CA for our children: a strong Core Knowledge curriculum and character development. The Core Knowledge curriculum ensures that all students build a solid foundation in essential subjects, helping them develop critical thinking skills that supports go forward learning. Equally important is instilling strong character development. By emphasizing both Core Knowledge and character development, students will be prepared for future academic success and also well rounded, thoughtful, engaged members of their community.

**How do you view the relationship between the board of education and the administration?**

I view the relationship between the board and the administration at Cologne Academy as a partnership where both groups work together to ensure the success of the school. The board is responsible for carrying out and keeping focus on the school's vision, ensuring financial stability, and making high-level decisions, while the administration is responsible for the day-to-day operations and implementation of policies. Administration should keep the board apprised of what is working and more importantly what is not working in the school community. The relationship is meant to be open and collaborative with transparency and constant communication.

The goal is to ensure that all decisions, whether made by the board or the administration support student success and the long-term health of the school.

**What are your areas of expertise that would be helpful on a board? Do you have experience with HR, finance, marketing, policy writing, or school leadership?**

As a corporate banker at U.S. Bank with expertise in portfolio management, financial analysis, and corporate banking, I bring strong financial acumen and strategic thinking to a board. My experience enables me to assess financial health, manage risk, and provide guidance on budgeting, forecasting, and capital allocation.

Additionally, my leadership role in a development network has honed my ability to build relationships, collaborate, and drive initiatives that promote employee engagement in their community. While my primary expertise is in finance, I also have experience in leadership and policy development, which are critical for governance and decision-making. I can contribute valuable insights to financial oversight, fundraising strategies, and long-term planning while ensuring that financial policies align with the organization's mission and objectives.

Additionally, in my role at the bank, I regularly speak with CEO's, CFO's and upper management of commercial and corporate clients. I am able to effectively communicate and interact with key decision makers in the corporate world.

# 2025 Board Candidate Profile

**John Zwanziger**

## What contributions can you make to this school district?

As a school board member I can contribute beyond that of volunteering on class field trips and after school events. As a school board member at Cologne Academy I can play an important role in shaping the district's future by providing leadership, oversight, and strategic direction in a collaborative environment. This might include financial review and oversight, policy discussion, community engagement and constant communication with the Cologne Academy population. Most importantly, I can continue to be an advocate for the school and all of its constituents.

## What qualities, skills and experiences would you bring to the board?

With my background in banking I can bring a financial acumen to the board. This would include ability to analyze financial statements and assess financial risks. With experience in completing thorough diligence of prospects, I have a good understanding of asking targeted questions to make sure financial decisions are sound and positive engagements are made. At a bank, we are extremely thoughtful with capital.

My participation on the development network board will also serve as a similar experience to the school board and something I can leverage experiences, communication, thought generation and collaboration against.

## What do you see as the roles and responsibilities of school board members?

The Cologne Academy school board members play a crucial role in ensuring the school's long-term success by providing financial oversight, policy direction, and strategic leadership. In addition to these general responsibilities it is important that board members are model parents, involved and a visible advocate for the students and school.

## Are you willing to pursue the skills, the knowledge and the training necessary to become a fully functioning and effective board member? Provide examples of how you might accomplish this.

Yes, absolutely. I am willing to complete personal research or attend classes/courses that prepare me for a role on the board. Getting up to speed on the current agenda items would be a priority as well. Not being prepared or having the necessary knowledge set, would not allow me to make the contributions I desire to make.

## 2025 Board Candidate Profile

**John Zwanziger**

**An average month for a school board member includes roughly three scheduled meetings and perhaps another three school or community related activities. In addition, there is daily email correspondence, required reading and district updates. How will you fit this into your schedule?**

Fortunately, I have a caring wife who is encouraging me to apply for this role. With both of us being working parents, we have a good system of teamwork when it comes to obligations outside the family. Additionally, our kids are lucky enough to have both sets of grandparents within 20 minutes of our house.

My work schedule is still hybrid, working from home 2 days a week. Additionally, I am very accustomed to finishing work and tasks late into the evening after my children have gone to bed.

**Identify a recent board decision that you felt strongly about and describe how you would balance community concerns, student needs, state and federal law, staff considerations, and your personal values and beliefs to determine how to vote on the issue.**

Speaking with board member, Amanda, I learned this year the board recommended a communication be sent out for medical emergencies.

Given the state of shock a student may feel seeing a situation like this (likely for the first time in their lives) it is important to set up a communication channel to notify parents. This encourages and allows for dialogue between a student and their parents regarding a situation they may cause uneasiness.

Also, given this is a medical issue, it is vital that the communication follows state laws regarding what can and cannot be released in this type of communication. There is a careful balance here of alerting the broader school body but protecting the privacy of the impacted individual.

I feel strongly the board made the right decision. As a parent I would want to be made aware in case my child comments. Additionally, I feel that the message goes out openly enough without giving out any specific details that would be detrimental to the impacted family.

**What would you like to see changed in the district and how do you envision your role in that change?**

Fortunately, from my seat as a parent, my experiences with Cologne Academy have been positive and rewarding. Initial ideas surround fundraising and marketing Cologne Academy (visible in the community and known through Minnesota).

My initial role in encouraging change would start with idea generation (of which I have a few) but then I would quickly pivot to listening to the thoughts and comments from other board members who have far more experience and time on the board than myself.

After discussion, it would be important to determine next steps and set up goals with timelines if it was decided to pursue.