

Jennifer Cymbola – Candidate for the OAISD Board of Education

 Parent |  College Professor |  Public Education Advocate

About Me

I am a longtime advocate for strong public education, a parent of children in Jenison Public Schools, and a college biology professor at Grand Valley State University, where I work closely with first-year students – many of whom come from districts served by the OAISD. I have spent more than a decade engaged with education at every level, and I am passionate about helping all students access the opportunities they need to thrive.

Why I'm Running

The OAISD plays a critical role in ensuring that all students in our region – regardless of their zip code, life circumstances, or future goals – have access to the support systems they need. I am running because I believe deeply in the power of public education, and I want to help ensure that our ISD continues to provide exceptional services, advocate for every learner, and build a stronger future for Ottawa County.

My Qualifications

- **Higher Education Experience:** I teach biology at Grand Valley State University and serve on multiple university initiatives focused on student success, faculty development, and gateway course redesign.
 - **Policy & Governance Engagement:** I serve on my local district's Sex Education Advisory Board and have consistently engaged with district leadership and board members on a range of policy issues, transparency, and student well-being. At GVSU, I am heavily actively involved in faculty governance, serving at all levels of decision-making within the governance structure. I have experience, training, and skills in collaborative decision-making, policy evaluation, and aligning educational practices with student needs.
 - **Community Commitment:** I have been actively involved in my local schools for several years, serving on the parent club board, regularly attending board of education meetings, and advocating for inclusive, transparent, and evidence-based decision-making.
 - **Region-Wide Support:** Rather than pay a filing fee, I chose to gather nomination petition signatures and received support from community members within every single Ottawa County public school district.
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My Priorities

If elected, I will:

- Champion student-centered policies that prioritize access, equity, and academic and career success.
- Support and strengthen essential ISD services, including special education, early childhood education, and career/technical training.
- Promote transparent governance and build collaborative relationships with districts, families, and the community.
- Listen, learn, and lead with integrity, always keeping students at the center of every decision.