

From: The Oconee Enterprise
highlighting and emphasis added

Hammond qualifies for BOE

By [Michael Prochaska](#) | March 13, 2024 | [0](#)



After **eighth**-generation Oconee Countian Adam Hammond qualified to run as a Republican for the Oconee Board of Education in the May 21 Primary, one of the first calls he made was to his daughter's bus driver.

"We need to value and elevate our support staff," he said. "My daughter [who is a fifth grader at Colham Ferry Elementary] couldn't get to school safely without him."

Hammond, who is running against Republicans Russell Toms and Andy Phippen and Democrat Sheri Ward Long for Post 4, said he was glad that the BOE raised the pay of bus drivers and school nutrition workers. Paraprofessionals, he said, should be next on that list.

"Our school employees are producing results," he said. "And we need to stay competitive with all the other counties."

Hammond said he has several unique perspectives that set him apart. In addition to his wife being a former paraprofessional, he is an Oconee native who is plugged into **multiple nonprofits and civic organizations** in the community.

For example, Hammond is president of the Oconee County High Schools Alumni Association, board member for the Oconee Area Resource Council (OARC) and chair of its Community Engagement Committee, mentor at Oconee County Elementary School, member of the school system's Volunteer

Instructional Leadership Learning Academy and a member of the Oconee County Farmland Preservation Committee. He is also plugged in with the **Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club**.

Hammond is the executive director of Georgia 4-H Foundation, which covers all 159 counties in the state. Prior to that role, he made a living in broadcasting, marketing, entrepreneurship and public speaking. His family lived in Memphis, Denver and Nashville, and he won **three Emmys** during his broadcast career.

“Because of my experience as an Oconee County resident, I was able to pursue career goals and dreams I had for myself,” Hammond said, explaining that he wants that for his own daughter and other children. “We have always had this desire to move back home, invest in the community and raise our daughter here with family.”

Hammond said he is running on a platform of communication, transparency and the safety and wellness of Oconee County students.

In terms of communication and transparency, Hammond said the “county commissioners have found success in quarterly town halls,” so that could be replicated with the school board.

There also needs to be continued planning and a shared strategy between the county commission and school board over future growth.

“I don’t believe we are at a place to make a firm decision to make a third high school,” he said, but, he added, it’s important to consider the financial implications and what the community wants.

“Every decision the school board makes needs to take two things into consideration: how it impacts the classroom and how it impacts the taxpayer,” he said. “I vow to work tirelessly to keep the board accountable as it spends taxpayer dollars.”

“The school board,” he continued, “represents the community and is a voice for the community. It’s not an extension of the central office.”

Hammond said the board should be creative in thinking with “innovative ways to stay on **the cutting edge** of education” To achieve that goal, partnerships with the Chamber and other community programs and agencies are paramount.

“[OCS] is doing a great job preparing students with a well-rounded education,” he said, speaking of existing work-based learning opportunities and career pathways. He said it’s important to continue and improve upon relationships with larger companies like Caterpillar and locally owned businesses so that students can get professional experience.

As for as safety, Hammond said that he recently witnessed a safety demonstration at a school and was impressed with how the Oconee County Sheriff's Office is prepared for emergencies.

"The process they have in place and procedure is effective and they are on it," Hammond said of the Sheriff's Office. "The system they have would be more effective in ways than if they had **[school-employed resource officers]."**

Hammond underscored his family background. His great grandmother, Eula Mae Higginbotham, taught first grade at Bogart Elementary School for decades. His mother, Vickie, and aunt, June, were also teachers. And his roots in Oconee County Schools go back so far that he helped pick out the mascot for Malcom Bridge Elementary School when he was in the fifth grade and the school was brand new.

Hammond said he's running as a Republican because the party "represents a limited government with the opportunity for individuals to create their destiny."

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