

PA-PAC Questionnaire for Durham Public School

Board of Education 2018

*When answering this questionnaire, please repeat the questions in your response document with their numbers as they are organized here. Type your responses in italics or a different font to distinguish your responses from the questions. Thank you for your participation! **Total number of pages should be limited to 10, including the questions. Please use at least 11 point font.***

Please return completed form along with your resume describing education, work history, community service and prior political experience AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, but by **March 09, 2018 at the latest**

Email responses to chrisbriggs@gmail.com

Please note that following above deadline, the Durham People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.

Candidate Name: Natalie Beyer

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I am running for District Seat 1 2 3 *4*

School Board

1. Why do you want to serve on the Durham Public School Board of Education? What is the role of a board member?

I have been honored to serve on the Durham Board of Education since 2010. I am a progressive leader dedicated to serving our community. I aspire to improve Durham Public Schools so our community schools are the best and first choice for every Durham student. During my service on the Board of Education the district has made steady improvements but we must accelerate this progress and bring families and community members together so that all Durham students can realize their dreams and goals. I am a thoughtful leader dedicated to excellence and equity for all students. I visit schools, attend community events and fulfill the behind-the-scenes school board duties. As our Board, Dr. Mubenga, and community stakeholders develop a strategic plan for our district my experience as a school board member, parent and volunteer is critical to focus our progress in Durham Public Schools. The role of a

school board member is to represent the residents of Durham in governance of the school district, setting policies and hiring and evaluating the Superintendent. I hold Superintendents to high standards and expect them to lead and inspire an innovative ethical team of student-centered principals, educators and staff. As a School Board member it is important to listen thoughtfully and lead the district towards a focus on equity and excellence for all.

2. In what ways do you see yourself and the school board interacting with the superintendent? What do you think the most important issues are to hold the superintendent accountable around? If as a school board member, problems in a school come to your attention, what steps have you taken or would you take to resolve them?

Elected board members should be friendly but not friends with a Superintendent. Together the Board governs and each member makes 1/7 of every decision. The Board is the collective boss of the Superintendent but should not direct the Superintendent or staff to do specific work or pet projects. The Board does business in meetings open to the public and follows all open meetings laws. I have Supervised and evaluated numerous Superintendents. As a Board we will be working with Dr. Mubenga to establish goals and targets for evaluation. I shared an evaluation document with our Board leadership that I helped develop and we previously used for evaluating DPS's Superintendent. It is an extensive tool that includes two major sections, one with quantitative and another with qualitative data. The quantitative includes nearly 30 metrics such as district test scores but also teacher working conditions, attendance data, percentage of nationally board certified teachers, discipline data, etc. Each measure includes current data and targets for improvements. In addition there is a qualitative section which measures relationship with the board of education, leadership within the community, human resource leadership, educational leadership, operational and fiscal leadership, and leadership ethics and personal qualities. In my experience trends from the data need several years to track but the qualitative issues such as micropolitical skills, ethical leadership, protects instructional time, and solicits input from all stakeholders are all evident quickly and critical for success in Durham. When problems come to my attention I obtain permission from the stakeholder and forward the concern to the appropriate staff member. I typically copy the Superintendent on these communications so they are informed of stakeholder concerns. The Board's Constituents Services policy 1115 governs this and states "Board members commit to providing service to constituents, but do not involve themselves in problem investigation and management."

3. How should teachers and administrators be evaluated? Are the current state standards effective?

Education is a people business. Therefore the most important work is the recruitment, training and retention of the right educators, administrators and staff to work in Durham Public Schools. The state has developed standardized McRel tools for teacher and administrator evaluations. I disagree with the inclusion of data from standardized testing on administrator and teacher evaluations (Standards 6 and 8). There efforts to attempt to use "Value Added Measurements" to identify effective teachers using test score data has been shown to be problematic across the nation. Otherwise the McRel instruments when used with fidelity are an

adequate tool for providing feedback for continuous improvement to teachers and administrators. If our district was not required to use these state evaluation tools, I believe a more comprehensive evaluation strategy is peer assistance and review. PAR is a “program of structured mentorship, observation and rigorous, standards-based evaluation of teachers by teachers, is among the strongest ways to develop great teachers.” (NEA) When done with fidelity Peer Assistance and Review provides valuable feedback for professional growth and increases teacher retention. Administrators are currently evaluated by their direct supervisors using the McRel instrument as a basis. Teacher working conditions data is also used to inform areas for growth. Durham public Schools has made progress in utilizing more 360 degree evaluation tools so that teachers and school staff have more direct input into the work of the school based administrators and central office leadership. We have made strides but there is still more work to do in this area. It is critical that after an evaluation there are supports and professional opportunities available to support growth and development.

During my time on the Board of Education we have revised the policy on principal selection. Durham is unique from most districts in having stakeholder involvement in the principal selection process. Teachers, certified staff, parents and other community members actually commit and serve on a Principal Selection Task Force staffed by Central Office staff. This process must be kept confidential and results in multiple candidates being sent to the Superintendent for review and final decision making. I fully support this Durham process. I also support the Durham Principal Leadership Academy that is developing and training strong internal candidates to fill future school administrator vacancies. Our district strategies have ensured that students of color in Durham see leadership that looks like them, including well over 70% of current principals are people of color. We need to continue to recruit from HBCUs and other schools of education and advertise at the national level. We particularly need to focus on hiring more Latinx principals and assistant principals who are bilingual. That recruiting would need to be targeted. I believe Teacher Working Conditions surveys are an opportunity to get feedback on principals and their strengths and areas for improvement. In addition internal informal 360 evaluations can give quick feedback for continuous improvement. In most cases beginning principals in Durham have been assigned a Principal mentor in an effort to build leadership capacity and support.

4. How should students be assessed? What role should standardized tests play in evaluating students? How do you feel about the new superintendent's approach to testing?

As a parent and advocate I am convinced that one of the worst consequences of the No Child Left Behind federal legislation is a generation of students who have been trained to discern answers on bubble tests. At a time of great social inequity amidst an unprecedented technological shift, our students need to learn to collaborate, write, problem solve and think critically. None of these higher order thinking skills can be assessed well via standardized testing. We even have computer algorithms evaluating student essays on entrance exams. Students should be assessed using multiple measures including portfolios of their work. This requires more of an investment from teachers and the state of North Carolina. Some of my children's most informative report cards included a written self-assessment with areas for growth.

In the midst of this high-stakes testing culture, public schools in the United States still operate within a climate of test and punish. Our community and the State Board of Education judge our schools based on standardized test scores and school letter grades. Many of our schools are on a "low-performing schools" list and may be the target of future state takeover. It is important to educate community members and prospective families about the limitations of data and school letter grades based on standardized test data. Schools that are fully representative of the entire community and include racial and socioeconomic diversity have been shown to be beneficial for all students.

I believe that each and every student is capable of learning, excelling and thriving. If DPS protects instructional time, provides a culturally relevant curriculum and we don't fall into the trap of "teaching to the test", I know our students will learn, excel and test scores will rise.

Dr. Mubenga has a record of involving the community to collaborate to improve schools. Dr. Mubenga is still listening and learning Durham in his first few months as Superintendent. He wants teachers and administrators to have high quality formative data to inform instruction. He and his team are currently evaluating the district assessment plans and are listening to feedback from educators and principals. If any specific district initiatives are not effective or are wasting instructional time, teachers and principals should share that feedback so that changes can be made.

5. Durham Public Schools have become increasingly segregated by socioeconomic status and race. What are your thoughts on this situation?

Durham County White 29%/ Black 37%/Hispanic 26%/Asian 4%/ Other 4% (2017 State of Durham County's Young Children Full Report)

DPS White 19%/Black 45%/Hispanic 31%/Asian 2%/Other 3%

Durham went through the challenging process of merging our separate but unequal City and County schools systems in 1992 in order to increase equity for all. It is heartbreaking to some and perhaps unknown to newcomers that that are significantly fewer White and Asian students enrolled in Durham Public Schools than live in our community. This is a fundamental issue for student achievement. For the common good of all students we should work to ensure that our

school demographics mirror the diversity of our community at large. This issue is largely rooted in race and class. Many newcomers do not even understand the history of Durham but are swayed by negative school rankings or news reports. Our state and federal policymakers have developed a system funding charter schools and vouchers for private schools. In this unaccountable system families can always default back to the public schools anytime without consequence. It is imperative to highlight the quality of DPS teachers, the enriched curriculum, the focus on critical thinking, and the universal benefit of integrated schools. Research shows that integrated schools bring higher student achievement for all students. Research also shows that public school students outperform private school students. In this area I believe that DPS and the Durham community can lead frank conversations about advantage, privilege and our local history. I would like to invite Nikole Hannah-Jones to speak in Durham and encourage Durham families to visit and tour their neighborhood community school as their first best option. I know our district can redouble our outreach efforts to highlight the great work of DPS students and educators through social media and traditional media outlets. I appreciate our Mayor and other elected leaders encouraging families to enroll in Durham Public Schools.

6. Recent data has suggested that, despite the programming implemented to decrease suspensions in DPS, the numbers of suspensions in some of our schools continues to rise at concerning rates. It is also clear that suspensions disproportionately affect black and brown male students. What do you think the district should do to address this issue?

School discipline is the most complex work of being a member of the Board of Education. I have served on numerous discipline hearings during my time on the Board and each one requires preparation, time, thoughtful judgement and discernment. Positive school climates require the work of experienced principals and teachers trained in restorative justice practices and working collaboratively to prevent discipline issues and address the root issues. Engaged students are key. Our community focus on high quality universal Pre-K will help improve school climates. Our focus on truancy courts in every DPS school has been an attempt to identify challenges families are facing and identify resources to support students. I was heartbroken to learn that after many years of positive trends our discipline data saw a significant uptick last year. Our student support staff is focusing on the small group of schools that showed significant disproportionalities in order to urgently identify solutions.

The members of the Task Force are meeting to review the data and make more targeted recommendations. I asked that our experienced principals share best practices throughout the district. We have developed more restorative practices, in school consequences and alternative settings such as New Directions and community non-profit partners like Rebound. We have co-located mental health services in every DPS school. Our administrators are offering drug counseling and misdemeanor diversion court at every opportunity. We need to continue to build relationships with parents as partners in this work. I am heartened to have DPS Superintendents who take this issue so seriously that they personally review each long term suspension. Our staff gave a thorough update on discipline disparities at our work session on March 8th. We must continue to be transparent about the issues and disproportionalities while we come together with our community to address these concerns.

7. What is your opinion about the Charter School movement in NC, especially in Durham?

The charter school movement undermines the work of local school districts. Durham County currently has 15 charter schools including two virtual charter schools and an additional charter school has already been approved. In addition students from Durham taxpayers pay for students to attend an additional 33 charter schools outside of Durham County. Charter schools are publicly funded but privately managed. Dr. Helen Ladd's research has shown that charter schools in NC tend to be racially isolated and some charter schools exacerbate racial isolation by policies that create barriers to students like lack of transportation or healthy school meals.

North Carolina's charter school legislation should be modified to permit existing charter schools to be governed by local boards of education. In most states, charter schools are actually authorized by local elected boards of education and operate like magnet schools. NC could strengthen charter school legislation by allowing local boards of education to govern charter schools in their local education agency. This would improve accountability and transparency.

I worked with former DPS Board of Education Chair Heidi Carter and charter school representatives to draft "Our Vision of Public Education in Durham: Quality Schools for All Children". This vision statement was approved by the Durham Board of Education but never by the Boards of any charter schools in Durham. It was reported that charter schools did not agree with the sentiments "We envision a community that will equitably confront, together, our fundamental challenge of weakening the powerful link between socioeconomic disadvantage and student learning. All of our public schools will share equally in this challenge to educate our impoverished children, with no barriers to admission, retention, and success."

I hope that DPS could find an existing local charter school that would be willing to be governed by the local board of education. We could then work with our local legislative delegation to get a bill passed that would enable this pilot. In this work Durham could lead the state in innovating while increasing charter school accountability and transparency. In the meantime, DPS will continue to co-exist with local charter schools and encourage better state and local oversight for students and taxpayers. DPS currently provides child nutrition services to 3 Durham charter schools as a contracted service.

8. As a board member how would you address the needs of the students who are at risk for low achievement and leaving high school before graduation? How do you see yourself working on this as a district-wide issue?

Those that say this Board of Education and Administration is satisfied with the status quo have not been paying attention. Since I was first elected in 2010 our graduation rate has increased from 70% to over 81%. I am committed to any and all evidence-based strategies that will help students learn, graduate and reach their future dreams. We created a 22 credit diploma targeted for students at-risk of dropping out. We developed several Latino Dropout Prevention Specialists to work with at-risk students. We are partnering with Durham Tech and local universities to advise students in high school. Our schools have developed academies for freshmen to nurture students through this transition. Our guidance counselors are reviewing high school transcripts earlier to reach out to students at risk and offer summer credit recovery. Our staff developed co-located mental health services in every

DPS school. We need to work to increase student and community awareness of the importance of school attendance. Our Career and Technical Education pathway completers have a graduation rate over 95%. We are exploring additional vocational pathways with area industries for expansion. Our staff and students are working with Made in Durham to identify internships and job skills for students to increase engagement. Immigrant and refugee children need to a special focus like expanding on the programs at Performance Learning Center. I asked staff for an update on the programs at Lakeview school to identify improvements for at-risk students. Our community non-profits and faith community are excellent partners. Our Board welcomes ideas from the community and I look forward to expanding these relationships to partner to support students towards graduation and beyond.

9. Why do you think that parents choose to take their children out of the public schools in Durham or don't choose them at all? How would you address this issue?

Choice and competition. In school policy we have created a paradigm of choice. In this pyramid the most affluent and privileged parents have the time and resource to homeschool or pay more for private schools. Charter schools, publicly funded but privately managed, represent another layer of choice. Magnet schools offer more equitable choice within local school districts. At the base of this pyramid are local community schools - no longer the "neighborhood" schools of yesteryear but a catch-all for parents and students who don't take advantage of other "choice" schools. Local community schools typically have a higher proportion of challenging students including Exceptional Students and students whose first language is not English. Some choice schools are smaller or more convenient for family schedules. Some have policies that prevent all students from attending. We created this paradigm of choice and our parenting books and cultural practices urge us to seek the "best" for our children.

Public schools are places (like neighborhoods), where issues of race and class collide. We have an opportunity in Durham to build community schools that represent the rich diversity of Durham and neighborhoods with housing for all. It is up to us how we choose the common good for all students and families rather than the traditional choice paradigm. Nikole Hannah-Jones urges us to consider the alternative of community schools. "True integration, true equality, requires a surrendering of advantage. And when it comes to our own children, that can feel almost unnatural." Durham must continue to strive towards equity and excellence for all.

10. If you could do three things to improve Durham Public Schools, what would they be?
- 1. Keep a Superintendent longer than the national average of 3.2 years to focus the work of excellence and equity in Durham Public Schools.*
 - 2. Support beginning and veteran teachers as respected, well compensated professional leaders.*
 - 3. Have an equity focused Principal leading each and every DPS school.*

11. What is your position about the state class size mandate for grades k-3? If it passes, should DPS adopt the legislation financially and logistically?

Thanks to advocacy from parents, teachers and community members in Durham and across the state, the NC General Assembly provided a short-term “pause button” to the challenges of the unfunded K-3 class size mandate. I believe that there are proven benefits to small class sizes, particularly in the early grades and school districts in North Carolina would love to comply. The frustrations arise because the General Assembly did not provide additional funding for the teachers, facilities costs or enhancement (music/art/PE) teachers. In addition at a time when enrollment of college students in schools of education in the UNC system has dropped 30%, there is no ready solution for filling these new teacher positions across the state. Already large districts like Wake and Chapel Hill have raised their local supplements to attract teachers. DPS is evaluating our local supplement in order to retain teachers. Most recent estimates were that Durham would have to hire 90 new teachers and build 63 additional classrooms to accommodate this mandate. The chart below represents the ongoing challenges with the K-3 class size mandate. None of this is possible in the timeframe the General Assembly has proposed and we will have to organize next year to advocate for another solution.

School Year	Grade(s)	District Average	Individual Maximum
2018-19	K-3	20	23
2019-20	K-3	19	22
2020-21	K-3	18	21
2021-22	K	18	21
	1	16	19
	2-3	17	20

12. If you are an incumbent, what are the three things that have happened during your term that you are the most proud of? If you are a new candidate, what are three positive things that you have observed happening in DPS?

Increased Pre-K availability and community commitment to expanding universal Pre-K.

Revised student code of conduct and the community Task Force that leads this critical work.

Focus on equity including establishment of the Office of Equity Affairs and groundwater training for principals and staff.

13. What do you think is a reasonable and realistic pathway and timeline for achieving universal pre-k for four-year-old children in Durham?

The Pre- K Task Force estimated that Durham has approximately 1,136 four year olds every year that should qualify for public pre-K but are not currently being served. While the Task Force aggressively recommended all four year olds could be served by August of 2019, I believe a more realistic timeline is by August of 2021. The K-3 class size mandates have significantly reduced the available classroom spaces we have for serving additional Pre-K students within Durham Public Schools. The Board has maintained our commitment to universal pre-K and will not displace existing pre-K students to meet the K-3 class size mandates but the lack of flexibility has been a challenge to expansion. Our County Commissioners and Manager publicly committed to raising taxes this year by one penny exclusively for pre-K expansion. This revenue could fund significant expansion in community pre-K sites. We know and are committed to the positive long-term impacts of high quality early childhood education.

14. The School Board will be asking our board of county commissioners for local funds for DPS this spring. What is your top priority for increased funding? Do you see places for realizing savings in the current budget?

We will be scrutinizing our budget this year to plan for instructional needs and protect the classrooms. We need to continue to review our district allocation formulas to ensure that equity is driving every budget decision. Our staff is reviewing contracts and open positions within our central office services in order to identify savings. Of particular concern is the loss of funding from the City of Durham for 5 school resource officers. I would like to advocate for the City to replace this funding to cover wellness and equity staff for our district so that we can continue to focus on early local investments in our students. Our finance department is also evaluating local salary supplements to make sure we are competitive with surrounding districts. Increases to local salary supplements for teachers are my top priority. We have to make every effort to retain excellent teachers in every school. At our March 8th meeting I voted to direct staff to bring custodial employees back as in-house employees. This decision will cost an estimated extra \$1.1 million annually in addition to equipment and supplies.

Unfortunately the district is often unable to fill mid-year teacher vacancies during the academic year so we do accumulate several million dollars in savings from lapsed salaries. Our human resources staff is working to fill every vacancy with at least a qualified long-term substitute.

Personal Information

15. Please describe your educational background. *See resume.*
16. Do you have children? If so, where do they, or did they, attend school?

My three children all attended Durham Public Schools from kindergarten through high school. They were students at Club Boulevard Humanities Magnet, W.G. Pearson Magnet Middle School, Lakewood Montessori Middle School, Riverside High School and Durham School of the

Arts. My younger son graduated from Durham School of the Arts and my oldest son graduated from the North Carolina School of Science & Mathematics (a public residential high school that is part of the UNC System of schools). My daughter will graduate from NCSSM this May.

17. Please describe your adult employment history. *See resume.*

Natalie J. Beyer

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Education

MASTER OF HEALTHCARE ADMINISTRATION | 1993 | UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

- School of Public Health
- Financial Management & International Health

BACHELOR OF ARTS | 1990 | RICE UNIVERSITY, HOUSTON, TEXAS

- Double Major: English & Behavioral Science
- National Merit Scholar

Experience

BOARD OF EDUCATION | DURHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS | 2010-PRESENT

- Elected representative for District 4, Legislative Liaison

TEACHER | CROSSROADS, MOUNT BETHEL UMC, BAHAMA, NC | 2018-PRESENT

- Co-Teacher in four year old classroom

ASSISTANT | SMITH & ASSOCIATES | 2009-PRESENT

- Compile and edit data, maps and sales for commercial real estate appraisals.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER | DURHAM EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER | 2017-2017

- Call Taker for Durham 911 Certified in Emergency Medical Dispatch, Police Dispatch & Fire Dispatch

KINDERGARTEN MARKETING | DURHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS | 2005-2007

- Developed new programs and materials for prospective students and families.

INTERIM DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL ANALYST | VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER | 1993-1995

- Managed team in the Office of Managed Care to optimize reimbursement from third party payers.

Boards & Community Service

- Guardian Ad Litem, Durham County
- Public Schools First NC, Founding Board Member, Statewide public education advocacy organization
- Parents Across America, Founding Board Member, National public education advocacy organization
- Project Graduation, Board Member, Safe celebration for all Durham Public School graduates
- Durham Arts Advisory Council, Board Member, Connecting local arts organizations with schools
- Former PTA President, WG Pearson Magnet Middle School & Club Boulevard Humanities Magnet