

Candidate Questionnaire for Michael D. Lee (Mike Lee) for Durham School Board Seat District 1



Michael Lee (Mike Lee)  
607 Fanning Way, Durham, NC 27704  
[micheaux@gmail.com](mailto:micheaux@gmail.com)  
919-241-8009

“Proven Leadership for DPS”

I am running for District Seat 1

1. Why do you want to serve on the Durham Public School Board of Education? What is the role of a board member?
  - a. *I've been honored to serve on this board for the last 4 years where I could meet thousands of teachers, students, staff, and parents. The platform I am afforded to advocate for the needs of these stakeholders is why it is my desire to serve on the board of education. As a parent of three young children in the DPS system, I want to help form a school system that provides my children with the foundation for the highest levels of success. DPS is that school system. We have come a long way in the last few years, but we have a long way to go. I want to continue to lead the way in that path.*
  - b. *A school board member is a representative of the community that compels action from the superintendent and administration by way of policy. A board member is not an action role, it is a governance role. We, by way of vote, tell the superintendent what the community wants, and what we feel is important. Board members are accountable to the community and the board is responsible for hiring and holding to account an excellent leader for the school system.*
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?
  - a. *As a school board member, it is my responsibility to hold the superintendent accountable for the successes and failures of the district. The interaction between board members and the superintendent should be that of a leader/employee relationship where the employee is compelled to produce certain results and/or deliverables, and the employee is accountable to successfully completing those tasks. The school board only has one employee, the superintendent. If the superintendent is not delivering on the needs of the community, by way of the board, then a new superintended would need to be sought.*
  - b. *The superintendent should be held to account for:*
    - i. *The hiring and managing of the very best people both in central office and leadership in the school buildings (read Principals).*
    - ii. *The measurement and evaluation of programs used throughout the district.*
    - iii. *The adherence to the goals set forth by the board.*
    - iv. *The ability to maintain 53 high quality Principals.*
  - c. *Many times, as a board member, problems within a school have come to my attention via phone, email, or in person from parents, staff, students, and teachers. Board members, inherently are not action oriented roles. It is the responsibility of the board*

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*member to listen to the stakeholder then update the superintendent about the problem being as confidential as possible. It is important to follow this process due to the leadership structure of the school system. We, as board members, can't disrupt the chain of command by approaching the principle or the employee accused of causing an issue. It is the sole responsibility for the superintendent to address the problem and report back to the board member with a resolution or update.*

3. How should teachers and administrators be evaluated? Are the current state standards effective?
  - a. *Teachers and Administrators must ultimately be evaluated by the performance of their students, however I don't think student performance should be the sole measurement nor do I think standardized test are the way to adequately measure teacher performance. I believe growth scores, 360 evaluations, and qualitative feedback by leadership on instructional observations should be included. We must avoid solely grading teachers on EVAAS data or class test scores.*
  - b. *Principals must be measured by factors other than school test scores. I think test scores and growth must be considered, but the environment that a principal creates in the building is important. I believe the teacher working conditions survey, 360 reviews, and school growth scores should be considered in the performance of principles. Qualitatively I think the relationships with the parents and students is important. If the students don't know who the principal is, or if parents have never heard from the principal, there may be a disconnect. I think the programs and ideas of the principal, outside of academics, is important to review and understand as a way to measure the success of the principal.*
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?
  - a. *Assessments are meant to give an idea of how much a student knows at a particular moment in time, however standardized test are not sufficient in doing this. There is one person who knows exactly where the student is at any given moment, the teacher. Even before the assessment is given, teachers know exactly how that student is going to perform by their daily interactions with the students. I think the assessment of students should be done by the teachers. When a standardized test is given, it is only a representation of one very specific point in time for that child. It doesn't take into consideration what type of environment or situation the student is coming from. If a child didn't get to sleep well, or the child didn't get to eat the night before or morning before, it can drastically affect the student's performance. It is my opinion that teachers should be responsible for assessing the student over a period of time to take into account outside influences for performance.*
  - b. *Dr. Mubenga is a data person. This means many of his successes and school improvements are based directly on the performance of those students on tests. This has worked for him in the past, mainly because it allowed very tight and measurable goals for each principle and teacher to address directly. It also allows him to shift priorities in an equitable way to the schools and students who need more support to achieve the state mandated assessments and improve scores for schools. Although as a father I do not believe these types of test are necessary and would rather my children not have to take them, I support Dr. Mubenga's use of these tests and assessments to advocate for*

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*equity among our schools and students. Part of the reason we hired him last year is because of his success in using this data, so I look forward to his ability to move our schools by reviewing testing data.*

5. Durham Public Schools have become increasingly segregated by socioeconomic status and race. What are your thoughts on this situation?
  - a. *There are many reasons for the segregation of socioeconomic statuses within DPS. As a correction to white flight out of Durham Public Schools, the school system introduced a plan involving increasing magnet programs. This was supposed to help attract more white and middle class families back to DPS. Although it had very limited effects, it exacerbated the problem of segregation in our system. What we were left with was neighborhood schools with an increasing number of students who were not able to participate in the lottery system for various reasons. This division has continued even today. Now we have a district that is over magnetized and over chartered. We as a district will need to review our magnets and take on the redistricting conversion to start fixing this overcorrection.*
  
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?
  - a. *Unfortunately, the problem with suspensions and the disproportionate nature of the suspensions toward black and brown male students continues to persist even after decades of working on this problem. With the onset of the district's new student code of conduct (done two years ago), we are in the process of attacking this problem in different ways. In order to get different results, we have to do some things different than we've ever done. We've started doing ongoing professional development for all of our staff to understand cultural and implicit biases ingrained in our district. If we continue to grow this training I believe referrals for suspensions will drop, and possible result in other types of discipline consequences outside of suspensions. We also have to hold teachers and principals accountable for justifications of suspension discrepancies. We as a district have to make sure level and equal punishments are given to students from different backgrounds to eliminate the disproportionate levels of consequences.*  
  
*I also think we need to change the way we handle alternatives-to-suspension programs. At our largest program Lakeview, many times students show up for the length of their suspension and go back to their school when completed. I think we, as a district, should be doing more to find the root of the problems by working one on one with the students in these programs. We should compel flexibility from the district, counselors, and schools to find something that works for an individual student, and work to connect the students with programs and opportunities tailored for the student. This would be the beginning of a fully restorative justice program for long term suspended students. It is important to connect with students and find their motivations to help mitigate future suspensions. We've never done anything like that before, and again, I believe in order to get different results, we need to do something different.*
  
7. What is your opinion about the Charter School movement in NC, especially in Durham?

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- a. Charter schools are here, and those who have chosen them have their reasons. We need to focus our efforts on creating an environment to supersede any other choices a parent might have, and make DPS the number one choice for their children. We currently have just under 34,000 students in DPS, charters have just over 8,000, we must fully focus on our students and create the best possible schools to educate them.*
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?
  - a. As a district, we must recognize that the traditional classroom is not a fit for every student. Teacher and school counselors are on the frontlines in identification of potential drop out students, and with the proper tools, we can prevent this from happening. I believe the resurgence of trade education in our system will help to prevent some students from dropping out. With the identification of at risk students and the connection of trade schools or a specific trade curriculum, we can work harder to save these students.*
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?
  - a. The decision of where to educate your child is an extremely personal and sensitive decision for a parent. Parents choose different environments for their children for many different reasons. I do not think there is one prominent reason to point to for an answer. What I will say is, I believe DPS is the right choice for my children. I have personally convinced families to take tours of DPS schools which eventually made them choose our system. It is the responsibility of the board, administration, leadership, teachers, and staff to create the best possible learning environment for our children. We must focus on the families that choose DPS as their place for learning. As we grow and as we as a system succeed, more and more families will choose us again. We have to grow our schools and services.*
10. If you could do three things to improve Durham Public Schools, what would they be?
  - a. I believe the first thing I would do is place a mental health professional and a full-time school nurse in each school to support our students. As we move through the years, the need for mental health services for our students continue to increase, however funding for these services within the school buildings continue to shrink. One of the ways to improve behavior and performance problems with our students, starts with mental health support.*
  - b. Secondly, I would restore teacher assistants for all classrooms from kindergarten to third grade. It is proven time and time again that additional support, by way of teacher assistants, provide for higher levels of proficiency in reading. It is important for our teachers to focus more time on each student while the assistant is able to handle other duties within the classroom.*
  - c. I would also provide universal free breakfast (which we already do) and universal free Lunch (which we do in 13 schools) for all our schools. At the very least, children learn better when they are not hungry. When there is no chance for breakfast or lunch, the students become uncomfortable and focusing on school work is the last thing on the student's mind. If we can provide two meals just for coming to school, I believe attendance and subsequently performance would rise.*
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?

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- a. *Should the state K-3 class size UNFUNDED mandate stay in place, even if phased in as proposed, it will be devastating to our district and state. As it stands, we would need around 60 new classrooms and 90 new teachers. This would all but eliminate dedicated space for arts and specials. My position about this UNFUNDED mandate is totally and fully against its implementation. Without any sort of capital funding for additional schools and classroom space, we cannot move forward with this. I believe a full spectrum of educational curriculums are important in learning and education. This means, I believe the arts are just as important as math, science and reading. I will continue to fight this UNFUNDED mandate for as long as we can. I am fully aware that the state lawmakers and force our hands via funding, however I will compel our administration to push back against this UNFUNDED mandate as much as they can, until they can't any further.*
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?
- a. *Fighting the state with the addition of due process for our teachers when the state took away career status*
- b. *Leading our fight to keep two of our schools from being taken over by the state*
- c. *Leading other school districts when we approved the resolutions on migrant families and LGBTQ students, staff, and community.*
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?
- a. *There are many challenges with providing pre-k for all 4-year-olds in Durham. One of the barriers is cost. I think it is reasonable to achieve this goal if develop partnerships with private providers as well as businesses to financially and sustainably support this project. As a board member on the Durham Partnership for Children, we have worked to identify the need of Durham in any given year. Durham Public Schools will not be able to afford the full implementation of this program on its own, but with strategic partnerships we can provide this service within 5 years.*
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?
- a. *My priorities in increased funding consist of the reintroduction of custodians within the DPS system, equitable resourcing for schools in need of additional services, revamp of the program at Lakeview Alternative School, increased pay for substitute teacher pay, the introduction and implementation of a new STEM middle school program, and the promotion and marketing of the DPS system.*
- b. *I believe there are places we can realize savings mainly by a true measurement and evaluation of programs adopted over time. By doing a true audit of these programs, we can eliminate the ineffective programs, while focusing only on programs that yield verifiable results.*

Personal Information

15. Please describe your educational background (skip if resume included)
- a. *Please see my attached resume*
16. Do you have children? If so, where do they, or did they, attend school?

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*a. I have three children, all in the DPS system, a 5<sup>th</sup> grader and two 1<sup>st</sup> graders. All of my children attend Sandy Ridge Elementary School. Next year the 5<sup>th</sup> grader will be at Lucas Middle School.*

17. Please describe your adult employment history (skip if resume included)

*a. Please see my attached resume*

# Michael Lee

(919) 768-2662 | micheaux@gmail.com

## Education

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UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS – Amherst, MA

**Masters of Business Administration, 2011**

FOCUS: Information Technology Management and Strategic Planning

ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY – Normal, AL

**Bachelors in Computer Science, 1997**

## Certifications

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CSPO – Certified Scrum Product Owner - 2017

CSM – Certified Scrum Master - 2016

ITIL Expert May 2015

PSM – Professional Scrum Master - 2014

PMP Certification 2014

Lean Six Sigma Greenbelt – 2014

## Profile

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**Professional with wide ranging experience** and a successful 20-year track record of successful high value projects, application development, systems administration, process design and improvement, including 8 years IT Service Management and 6 years of full lifecycle enterprise application development including, agile project management and framework maturation (Scrum and Kanban). High business knowledge backed by years of experience and a Masters of Business Administration. Talent for quickly researching and mastering new technologies, trends, and methodologies. In-depth understanding of developing organizational strategy and services from concept through retirement.

**Flexible and versatile, including the ability to maintain a strong composure under pressure.**

Poised and competent with demonstrated ability to easily translate highly technical problems into layman's terms, break down complex issues, ability to align synergies between internal teams and external acquired or merged companies, and solve difficult problems. Specialize in high impact issues needing in-depth research and creative thinking to solve. Thrive in deadline-driven environments and have the ability to communicate with everyone from customers to CEOs.

**Highly Technical – experience with many lines of technology.** In-depth hands on experience with technologies and server operating systems such as UNIX, Debian Linux, RedHat, Windows Server. Programming languages including C#, J2EE, VB.NET, HTML5. 10 years experience with specific systems such as SQL Server, Jira, Confluence, Apache, Documentum, Bamboo, Jenkins, Weblogic, MySQL, and Oracle up to 11g.

## Professional Experience

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### TECHNOLOGY: SYSTEMS/PROGRAMMING/NETWORKING

- Research, purchase, install, and implement large-scale infrastructure environments including Servers, Databases, Network setup, and front-end applications.
- Increased iContact's availability by architecting a load balancing architecture using F5 technology, NginX and SQUID.
- Lead large-scale enterprise agile application projects from concept to delivery.
  - NTP Electronic Library (NELI) Search application completed with Agile/Lead Development.
  - NTP Public Search application completed with Agile/Lead Development.
  - Process/Product Owner/ Architect for internal Platform as a Service offering "Data Hosting Platform" (DHP) for Credit Suisse.
  - Created and maintained four Aegis Mortgage web properties using the content management architecture of Documentum to manage server-side document retrieval and publishing functions. Project was completed using Kanban.

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- Lead Credit Suisse team using Kanban to convert all development and test environments (UAT, QA) for Data Hosting Platform to VMware vSphere servers targeted for MS SQL, Sybase, and Oracle implementations.
- Managed provisioning, mounting, regular and snapshot backups using various NetApp storage appliances in seven Motricity environments.
- Initiated and lead project of ant scripts for Motricity to automate server and commerce setup to reduce time to development and time to production for each environment from 3 weeks to 6 days.
- Lead development of North Carolina Mutual's Agents Portal to reduce need for general content delivery for over 3 hundred agents in the field. The project is estimated to have saved NC Mutual \$7 mm in administrative costs per year. Was developed in C# using SQL Server as a backend.
- Boosted uptime from 98.6% to 99.9%, eliminating 13 hours of downtime for iContact's infrastructure by adding redundancy and a new change management processes.
- Lead team as product owner to design a Credit Suisse database cluster provisioning process in its entirety. Saves Company 2.5 months of non-value add time in delivering database clusters globally.

## **MANAGEMENT: ITIL/AGILE/LEADERSHIP/PROCESS DESIGN**

- Introduced the Lean Development Methodology to the National Toxicology Program, successfully implemented four major projects turning the performance of the contract fully around.
- Awarded the NIEHS Merit Award (the highest award the institute director can give an employee) for the successful redesign and launch of the National Toxicology Program website and NELI applicaton.
- Agile Coach to my team of 18 (2 scrum teams, 1 Kanban team), transformed development methodology from waterfall to a matured version of Agile Scrum, using Lean Development Methodology.
- Contract leader of \$18.75mm government contract for the National Insitute of Health, where I manage employes, estimates to completion, employee goal and performance management.
- ITIL Expert, certified through PEOPLECERT.
- Awarded the Technology Services Star for innovative contributions in global ITIL process improvements including Change Management and Problem Management.
- Greenbelt project to reduce system generated email to support staff. Project is expected to save Credit Suisse over \$125 million in email storage and usage over a seven year period. (Currently in progress)
- Lead CS Plus portal incident and problem management group in identifying 13 vulnerable areas in our change and release management processes. This reduced change related outages by 43% in 2015.
- Regarded as an expert in identifying Critical Success Factors (CSF) and defining the associated Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for in-depth measuring of production processes.
- Appointed to the Credit Suisse Continuous Improvement Advisory Team, to focus on global improvements in problem, incident, major event, and capacity management processes.
- Project Manager of multiple Datacenter Migrations, Decommissions and Installations for iContact, and Motricity. Responsible for initial plan through hand off to Systems Engineers at the successful completion of each move.
- Managed teams varying in size, from 3 to 18 including:
  - iContact 11 (DBAs, System Administrators, Network Engineers, Service Desk)
  - Signature Consutling Group 18 (Developers, Project Managers, User Support, QA, Communications)
  - Motricity: 8 (Database Administrators, Application Engineers)
- Proven ability to design functioning ITIL based processes, including creating and implementation of a full Change Management Process and associated Change Advisory Board.
- Lead database service offerings as Manager of Database Administration at Motricity. Team managed, developed and administered over 1,200 instances of Oracle Databases ranging from 9i – 10g.

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## Employment History

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**SIGNATURE CONSULTING GROUP** – Durham, NC **Program Manager**, 2016 - present

**DURHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS** – Durham, NC **Board Member**, 2014 - present

**CREDIT SUISSE** – Durham, NC **Product Owner– Global Data Services**, 2012 to 2016

**ICONTACT** – Durham, NC **Manager, Infrastructure Services**, 2008 to 2009

**MOTRICITY** – Durham, NC **Lead, Production Applications Engineering**, 2005 to 2008

**ALPHANUMERIC SYSTEMS** – Durham, NC **Application Developer Contractor** 2000 to 2005

- **NORTH CAROLINA MUTUAL LIFE** – Durham, NC
- **R.H. DONELLEY** – Durham, NC
- **AEGIS MORTGAGE** – Baton Rouge, LA
- **METAMETRICS INC.** – Durham, NC
- **STEAMSERVE** – Raleigh, NC
- **EXPLORNET** – Raleigh, NC

**IBM** – RTP, NC **Java Developer**, 1997 to 2000

## Community Service

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**HILLANDALE SPORTS ASSOCIATION, BOARD MEMBER AND COACH** – 8 years

**DURHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BOARD MEMBER** – 4 years

**MENTOR, DURHAM PUBIC SCHOOLS** – 20 years

**VOLUNTEER, VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS** – 20 years

**DURHAM PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN, BOARD MEMEMBER** – 4 years

**DURHAM WORKFORCE AND DEVELOPMENT, BOARD MEMBER** – 3 years

**DURHAM YMCA, ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER** – 3 years

**WESTEND COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, BOARD MEMBER** – 2 years