

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 chrismbriggs@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: Bettina Umstead

Address: 100 Stratford Lakes Dr, #324 Durham, NC 27713

E-mail Address: umstead.bettina@gmail.com

Phone: 919-749-4296

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 know the transformative power public education has to change outcomes. That power must be realized for students attending Durham Public Schools. I am seeking re-election to continue our push towards a DPS where traditional markers of race, gender identity, language, socio-economic status (insert any other systemic injustice) no longer determine a child's outcome. We have made progress in my time on the board but we have so much more work to do. I believe my passion for the work, commitment to equity, work experience and ability to ask hard questions are assets to the Board of Education.

As a school board member, we have the responsibility to ensure that Durham Public Schools is working towards providing all students with a quality education. This role includes oversight in school operations including the budget, providing guidance to the superintendent/senior staff and most importantly representing the community in which we serve. This representation includes listening and engaging with students, parents, community members and staff.

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?

The relationship between the school board and superintendent must be one of mutual respect, honesty and open communication. It's important that the superintendent keeps the school board abreast of pressing issues in the district. As a board, we must be clear with our expectations and goals for the superintendent.

I believe that it's most important to hold the Superintendent accountable for the overall function of the school system, student growth and achievement, engagement with the community as well as progress towards the goals set forth for the year.

When problems at a school have come to my attention, I make sure to listen fully to the concern and ask if the person has utilized the proper channels to express their concern. I will either connect the person with the right resource or take the concern directly to the administration. It's important that as a board member, I rely on the administration to take care of problems in a schools.

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

Teachers and administrators should be evaluated through a combination of factors that include student growth, instruction, contributions to the school community/culture and professional growth. It is unfair to evaluate teachers solely on proficiency test scores. I also believe administrators should be evaluated on the effectiveness of their school building, the culture of their school, leadership of their team, teacher retention and engagement with families. My personal belief is that an evaluation should highlight the areas of strengths for a teacher or administrator as well as give concrete strategies for growth.

The current state evaluation system possesses some good bones – each standard is related to a part of the teaching profession. How the document is implemented is important to ensure it is reflective of a teacher or administrator's growth over the course of a year.

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?

Standardized test scores provide a common measure to which we can assess what students know. This measure allows us to compare students' knowledge across classes, schools, districts and demographics. When well designed, an assessment can help teachers unpack student

learning and assess areas of strength and growth for students. However, the mandated standardized tests have many limitations especially when it comes to students of color. Decades of research backs the disadvantages that standardized tests have for students of color yet we are mandated to give these assessments. I believe that standardized tests should be used as one data point in evaluating student performance. I believe we must be able to measure student growth during the school year as a part of a student's evaluation and utilize other student work to demonstrate mastery of the standards.

The new superintendent would like to increase student achievement which is measured by standardized tests. We need to increase student achievement. Despite the research that highlights the disadvantages of testing for black & brown children, we know that the standardized test score they receive in public schools can and will, change the trajectory of their educational experience.

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

It is problematic that Durham Public Schools has becoming increasingly segregated by socio-economic status and race. Although, unfortunate, this is not a new phenomenon and is a trend that is state and nation-wide. Integrated (not just diverse) schools increase achievement for all students and especially for students of color. This segregation is detrimental to our community and to our students.

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?

The disproportionate suspensions of black and brown students must be addressed. We need to ask ourselves a series of questions to understand: What policy violation are students suspended for the most? What teachers/administrators are submitting the referrals? Are students participating in interventions? What is the culture of the school community that has a high number of student referrals for black & brown boys? After examining this data, we must address the why students are suspended. Currently, there are a variety of interventions options for students to address the why. We must ensure the interventions are widely known and utilized by students and their families. Every child, no matter what school they attend, should have access to the same interventions. We have to address the inequities of suspensions and who participates in alternatives/interventions across the district.

We must also recognize the systemic racism that has socialized our brains to consider black & brown men as criminals. We must teach culturally relevant strategies. We must ensure that students are in academic rigorous classes. We must teach teachers about de-escalation strategies. We must change school cultures to support the uplifting of black and brown male students. We must engage our students, parents and community in this effort.

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

We have a General Assembly in North Carolina who is supportive of school choice and the charter school movement has grown due to this support. I believe the movement is designed to eventually privatize public school education as evidenced by the Innovation School District that has come to North Carolina. Durham has become an appealing place for charter schools to start and the increase of charters has contributed to the increasing segregation of our schools. It's important for us, as citizens of Durham County, to hold charter schools accountable for educating students well because our tax dollars are contributing to their schools. It's important for DPS to continue our work of educating all children in our district.

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?

We must employ early intervention measures to engage students who are at risk for low achievement and leaving high school before graduation. For example, a student who is leaving 8th grade, who is several grade levels in math and reading, may need to start high school in a Career & Technical Education (CTE) pathway that will engage the student in school and provide opportunities for employment post-graduation. DPS has a strong CTE program that is not utilized nearly enough to support students who may fall into this category. Adding to the options that are available as well as publicizing to students, families and staff is critical. As a board member, I see myself continuing to examine our high school dropout data to understand why students may dropout, pushing for earlier interventions for students who are at risk for low achievement and continuing to support our CTE department in developing career training opportunities for 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?

I believe that all parents choose their child's school wanting what is in the best interest for their child's educational experience. Parents opt-out of DPS schools for numerous reasons including fear, specialized educational experiences and a belief that their child cannot receive a quality education in our schools.

I believe it is important to dispel many of the myths about DPS schools by marketing the great things happening in DPS. I also believe it's important for us to acknowledge the areas of growth for DPS including student achievement for children of color. It's essential that we raise student achievement, develop strong teachers and leaders and market the great things happening in our schools.

10. If you could do three things to improve Durham Public Schools, what would they be?

Build Strong Leaders. I believe strong principal leadership is a major key to a school's success. It is critical that we recruit, retain and continue to grow principals through intentional professional development, coaching and providing the necessary resources and supports. Principals need to

be strong instructional leaders and build a collaborative, supportive and engaging school community that is a great place for students to learn.

Engage Students, Families & Community. Durham is a resource-rich community with people, companies and organizations who are willing to give of their time, talents and treasure. We must engage the community in the work of supporting our schools. We must empower students to feel ownership of their education and their school community. We must empower teachers to exhibit leadership, tenacity and persistence in their teaching abilities. We must empower parents to be equal team members with teachers and school staff to support their child's education.

Develop an Equity Framework. We have made some steps in the right direction by establishing the Office of Equity Affairs, providing opportunities for Groundwater Racial Equity Institute trainings and by putting in place specific initiatives to improve outcomes for boy of color. In isolation, this work will not succeed. We need equity to be a thread that is across all policies, practices and procedures. This must be the shift for our district of majority minority students.

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?

The state's class size mandate was an unfunded mandate given to schools to implement in an unrealistic timeframe. The mandate did not set up schools to succeed by immediately increasing the need for teachers and classroom spaces with no funds to support the work. The bill was signed into law by Governor Cooper and we will have to comply.

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?

As of last night, DPS voted to bring the custodial contract back in-house. I am most proud of this work for several reasons. One, the board was clear with the administration on how we wanted to go about this process using our Durham values as a guide. Two, DPS administration and custodians engaged in many conversations about the problems with the contracted services as well as talking about potential solutions. Third, by bringing custodians back in house, we are providing people with a fair wage plus benefits.

Hiring of our new superintendent. We have hired a new superintendent with a track record of increasing student achievement. He has experience working as a teacher, a principal, in the Department of Instruction and as a superintendent. He is committed to working with our community to improve our schools. I'm excited for where our district will go under his leadership.

The Creation of the Office of Equity Affairs. We can not talk about improving Durham Public Schools without discussing the role that race and racism play in the public school system. I see the work of this office touching every part of the school system to improve outcomes for our black and brown students, leading to improved outcomes for all children.

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 benefits of high quality pre-K are numerous with the most gains for children who come from families that are economically disadvantaged. Creating more high-quality options in Durham is a must to improve outcomes for our children. Durham County has supported the start of The Whitted School project to increase that increased the number of pre-K seats for the 2017-2018 school year. I believe we need to continue to explore all potential sources of funding to increase slots in pre-K programs. I also believe we can work to leverage the early childhood expertise of staff to teach caregivers and child care centers about the best practices in working with four-year old children. Ideally, there would be federal and state dollars to increase opportunities for pre-K opportunities for children.

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 need to increase our funding request to transition the custodial program to in-house. We will also need to plan in advance for the upcoming decrease in class sizes. Both are pressing priorities for this upcoming budget season. My wish list would also like to increased funding for our mentor teacher program, technology refreshes for schools, and investment in expanding the Office of Equity Affairs.

In the past couple of years, DPS has made significant cuts due to budget constraints. I believe our budget has become lean but also allows us to continue to run our school district.

Personal Information

15. Please describe your educational background (skip if resume included)

Resume included

16. Do you have children? If so, where do they, or did they, attend school?

I do not have any children although I consider the 550 students and families that I work with through Student U my babies. The students currently attend and have graduated from Durham Public Schools middle and high schools.

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

Resume included

Bettina Hope Umstead

100 Stratford Lakes Dr., Unit 324 Durham, NC 27713

919-749-4296 | umstead.bettina@gmail.com

www.linkedin.com/in/bettina-umstead

Work Experience

January 2017 – Present

Chief Program Officer

Student U, Durham, NC

- Cultivate the vision of Student U's strategic improvements to ensure high quality programming.
- Advise the Executive Director on strategic institutional decisions to reach organizational goals.
- Represent the organization externally with partner organizations, professional organizations, vendors and internally with parents, students, and staff.
- Identify and implement long-term goals and objectives for all program components that ensure alignment including partnerships, data evaluation, and programming.
- Directly supervise 7 program team members, facilitating professional and skill development.

June 2010 – January 2017

Middle School Program Director

Student U, Durham, NC

- Supported 156 middle school students and families through summer & after-school program.
- Supervise 2 full-time and over 45 part-time staff members providing trainings.
- Planned, implemented and evaluated 6-week summer academic enrichment and 15 weekly tutorial sessions for middle school students.
- Created programming to meet the needs of Student U's middle school families.
- Collaborated with support staff to create a college-ready program.
- Served on the Strategic Visioning Team for Student U.

August 2009 – June 2010

Class of 2016 Grade Head

Student U, Durham, NC

- Planned and implemented Student U's year-round and summer programming for the Class of 2016 students.
- Interviewed and trained teachers for the summer program.

June 2009 – July 2009

7th Grade Global Connect Teacher

Student U, Durham, NC

- Created and implemented daily lesson plans for 7th grade students using a curriculum.
- Evaluated students and conducted parent/student/teacher conferences.

January 2010 – May 2010

Student Teacher, 7th Grade Language Arts

Grey Culbreth Middle School, Chapel Hill, NC

- Taught 7th grade book study unit and led service project.
- Participated in student support team meetings, professional learning communities, and parent-teacher conferences.

Education

May 2010

University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill

Bachelor's of Arts in Middle Grades Education, Peabody School of Education

Licensed to teach 6-9 Language Arts/Social Studies in North Carolina

Community Engagement

October 2016 - Present

Board of Education Member, Durham Public Schools, Durham, NC

Advisory Board Member, Bull City Schools United

Guest Speaker, University Honors Program, Duke University

Speaker, Catalyst Conference, UNC-Chapel Hill

Guest Reader, African-American Read-In Day, Shepard Middle School