

Edmonds Education Association School Board Director Candidate Questionnaire 2017—Cathy Baylor

Please answer the following questions and return to Andi Nofziger at anofziger@washingtonea.org no later than 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 29, 2017.

1. What do you believe are the purposes and responsibilities of school board members?

The main function of the board as a whole is to establish a vision and/or strategic direction for the school district, to direct the Superintendent to execute this vision/strategic direction, and to hold the Superintendent accountable for results.

Board members are elected from among the community members because they are expected to be a bridge between the community and the hired School District Administration. The board examines all major decisions that affect the District, to ensure that they align with community values and standards.

As such, it is important that school board members maintain close ties with the community, so they understand and represent the community well.

2. What skills, talents, and experiences qualify you to be a school board member?

- I am an educator, who understands how children are educated and what teachers need to work effectively. My current work as a music educator and Nationally Certified Teacher of Music is supported by:
 - a. My employment with the school district, where I worked first as a tutor and then as a Program Director for the Indian Education Program;
 - b. My experience as a student-teacher at Edmonds High School;
 - c. My work as an educator in the business world. I had a small business whose mission was to teach office workers how to run computer software.
 - d. My heavy involvement as a classroom volunteer for 15 years, when my own children attended the Madrona Non-Graded program, the Terrace Park K-8 Challenge program, the College Place Middle School Challenge program, and the Edmonds-Woodway IB program.
 - e. My work in the ESD as a team manager for the Destination Imagination creative problem solving academic teams. I facilitated teams for 11 years. Many of my teams competed at the state and international levels.

- f. My work as a program developer for Destination Imagination throughout the district. I visited several schools to promote the program, recruit teams and provide support to new team managers.
- I have deep, long-term experience with the community.

I have lived in the Edmonds School District community for 49 years. I graduated from Lynnwood High School, as did my husband. My two daughters graduated from the Edmonds-Woodway IB Program.

I have worked on the leadership committees of five different educational entities: 1) the Edmonds Community College Inter-Coop Council; 2) the Organization for Parent Education, a grass roots lobbying group; 3) the Lynnwood Library Board; 4) The MoodSwings Jazz Band Board; 5) the Edmonds Music Teachers Association.

This experience in community leadership has taught me how to identify problems, build consensus, garner outside resources, and move forward with creative solutions. It has also been an opportunity for me to build many longstanding relationships with community members.

- My experience doing Marketing in a Consulting Engineering firm. I have experience being on large construction projects teams and know how to communicate with engineers and construction personnel. This is especially helpful now, as the school district will be building 6 new schools in the next three years. I was also on the Library Board during the construction of the latest Lynnwood Library.

3. When you consider that the majority of community members in the city of Lynnwood are persons of color, what will you do to include their voices and perspectives in district decision making? What do you believe are the best ways to ensure culturally responsive practices in our schools and our district office?

MY BACKGROUND

I am a Native American. My father was a tribal council member for the Confederated Salish, Pend O'Reille and Kootenai tribe for 8 years. A large part of my extended family lives on the reservation.

I understand intimately the perspectives of people of color. I have been a student in this district, and have had district teachers say racist things to me, personally.

I also was a tutor and the Program Director for the district's Indian Education program, which was at that time a subdivision of the district's Multicultural Education department. Because of my personal ethnic background, multicultural education and racial justice have been passions of mine for most of my life.

I chose at one point in my life to be a foreign language teacher because I wanted to show high school students how to view the perspective of other cultures through second language acquisition.

ACTION

This is a very interesting point in time for the Edmonds School District. Our current school board and administration are in the process *right now* of making comprehensive changes to the way our students are educated. They recently commissioned the *Racing to Equity* consulting group to perform a Racial Equity Environmental Assessment, with the goal of eliminating opportunity gaps in student learning.

In this assessment, *Racing to Equity* makes comprehensive recommendations to the School board for including the voices and perspectives of people of color in district decision making, and ensuring culturally responsive practices in our schools and our district office.

I have studied this document in detail, and have included a synopsis of the recommendations below. The district has spent a great amount of time, energy and money having this study done. I am very impressed by their dedication, and am excited at the potential of being able to take part in the execution of the project.

I don't intend to make changes from the recommendations made. It is time now for the Board to work as a team to implement these recommendations. Because of my personal background, however, I have an intense interest in seeing this racial equity program come to fruition. If I am chosen to be a school board director, I will make it a very high priority to hold the district accountable for successful execution.

RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY RACING TO EQUITY IN THEIR RACIAL EQUITY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE EDMONDS SCHOOL DISTRICT.

To include the voices and perspectives of students and parents of color in district decision making:

- Student surveys and district hosted forums attended by middle and high school students, teachers, school administrators and central office staff
- Staff surveys regarding cultural responsiveness of building leadership, professional development and coaching.

- Strengthening the existing Family Engagement Program by increasing the number of family engagement liaisons so that each school has at least one
- Starting a Family University to teach families how to effectively advocate for their children's education.

Insofar as involving the citizens of Lynnwood specifically, the recommendations are:

- To build partnerships with the Mayors of all cities located within the district boundaries: to improve educational and social emotional opportunities and outcomes of their students; to strengthen family and community engagement; to align school and community resources; to combine quality education with enrichment opportunities, health services, and early childhood and adult education.

To ensure cultural responsive practices in our schools and our district office:

- Hire four Equity and Race Specialists to support and coach staff and principals and to develop and sustain Racial Equity Teams at every school.
- Hiring new staff that have strong backgrounds in culturally responsive leadership and instruction.
- Monthly meetings of Superintendent and educators of color to enhance communication and strengthen teachers sense of support so they will stay, thus providing role models for students of color.
- Professional development opportunities for central office staff that focuses on being culturally responsive.
- Increased support to existing School Racial Equity Teams.
- Professional for all staff, at all levels, in all schools and the central office, that focuses on being culturally responsive

4. How do you intend to gather information on the most critical issues facing education today? How will you use this information to address the needs of students and educators in the Edmonds School District?

There are good resources available in this state for School Board Directors.

* The Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) is a strong resource formed solely for

the purpose of ensuring that Washington State School Board Directors are educated and informed about critical issues facing education today. It is one of the strongest organizations of its type in the country. WSDDA also publishes frequent legislative bulletins.

* I have attended every school board meeting since April. Many critical issues are discussed at these meetings. The Superintendent and staff provide study resources for the board members, and board members collaborate together to find and share resources.

* It is crucial that school board members engage with and listen to parents. They are an excellent resource. Many of them are highly knowledgeable about education issues; of course they can also tell you what they do and don't think is working in the district - which is eminently worthy of research.

* It is equally important that school board members engage and listen to teachers. Along with School District Administrators, they are on the front lines, and since education is their profession, they stay apprised of resources and issues. I feel very fortunate in that I have developed good relationships with many district teachers throughout the years.

* The OSPI website has regular bulletins that deal with current issues, as well as an archive of resources.

* I have built relationships with community members from the community college and past school board members who are available to provide advice.

I feel that it is important to try to draw from resources outside the central office administration as often as possible. It is important to keep a sense of independence, rather than relying completely on hired staff's information and recommendations. It is important to trust the staff; however, it is also important to listen to points of view and gather information from the community at large.

I am also positive that if I am missing anything technical here, that as a School Board Director I will learn of it shortly after beginning my job. My experience is that the staff is very efficient in providing any information Board members request.

5. Overcrowded classrooms and lack of space for instruction are critical issues facing Edmonds schools. If elected, what will you do about this?

I attended two board meetings where multiple teachers testified before the board about how difficult it is to do their jobs when classrooms are overcrowded, and space is scarce.

My personal experience with the schools bears out their testimony. I visited Martha Lake Elementary on a Superintendent's tour in the spring. The classrooms have been built small in the newer buildings

to save on construction costs. There wasn't enough room for an orchestra class, so the orchestra met in the library. There was, in general, a sense of "crowdedness."

My children went to the old Terrace Park School where, for most of their elementary school years there were 50 Gallon rain drums in the hallways. Every single winter, the rain drums would be lined down the middle, while the kids walked in lines on either side!

It is a testimony to the professionalism and passion of the teachers that I can say, in retrospect and in all sincerity, that even still my daughters received some of the best education the state had to offer.

I feel that the problem stems from long term neglect. The state has not been adequately funding basic education for many years. According to the OSPI, Washington state ranks 46th in the percentage of GDP it pays for education. It ranks in the 30s for per pupil spending. This despite the fact that fully funding basic education is the Paramount Duty of the state government as per the state constitution. Levies have helped, but local levies can only go so far.

So I have to say that I believe that this is not a local issue. I believe our Superintendent, staff and board members are doing everything they can with the money they have been given. There are some shifts that can be made, but I don't believe any shift would result in extra funds sufficient to make substantial resources available elsewhere.

My specific actions, then, are to listen to the teachers and parents, hear what they are saying, and to work with our local legislators and our legislative liaison to get things changed. I do not believe the latest budget changes made in response to the McCleary mandates will be enough.

I will be working with the Superintendent, the school board's legislative liaison, local political party organizations, WSDDA and other professional organizations, and citizens of our community, including teachers and parents, to advocate for change in Olympia. And I will do this until our legislature truly starts doing its Paramount Duty.

6. What role, if any, do you believe standardized tests play in our education system?

I think standardized tests can be valuable in taking a "dip stick" reading that tells us how well students are achieving objectives. However, they should take away from instruction time in only a limited way - perhaps three days a year.

Standardized tests should NOT be used to determine whether or not a student is allowed to graduate from high school, or to be the terminal evaluation of a specific program. They were never designed to be used in this way, and doing so is a travesty to students in several ways.

First of all, if programs live or die by tests, teachers will "teach to the test," instead of spending instruction time teaching more valuable concepts. Creativity, teamwork skills, social skills, motivation

....these are important parts of learning, and can't be evaluated by multiple choice questions and answers.

There are also students who simply don't do well on tests, so standardized tests are not a good tool for evaluating their learning. It is doubly wrong to withhold graduation for these students, because long-term repercussions to the LIVES could be damaging in a tragic way.

So I do believe annual, short-term, standardized testing is a good idea. It should not, however, be so pervasive (and invasive) as to become a way of life in the classroom.

7. As a school board member, would you work or vote to bring charter schools to the Edmonds School District?

While charter schools may have been a good idea in the beginning, they have now been around long enough for us to know what it is about them that works, and what doesn't.

The National Education Association adopted a new charter school policy in their June, 2017 meeting in Boston. This policy emphasizes that charter schools:

- must prove they are necessary to meet the needs of students,
- must be authorized by the local school board,
- must be constantly monitored by the local public school board to ensure accountability
- must help public schools adopt any successful strategies discovered
- must comply with the same rules and regulations as public schools, including open meetings, public records laws, prohibitions against for-profit operations and the same civil rights, employment, labor, health and safety laws and staff qualification and certification requirements as public schools.

I think our public schools work very well, and have heard no compelling argument that leads me to believe we should have charter schools in our community. If, however, we decide as a community that we SHOULD establish them, I believe it is imperative that we adopt all the policies set forth by the NEA.

I, personally, would not work or vote to bring charter schools to the Edmonds School District under the current circumstances.

8. What are your views on collective bargaining and the role of unions in public education? Would you support bargaining sessions being open to the public?

I am a passionate supporter of labor unions for all workers. My family members have been blue collar workers and strong union members on all sides for at least three generations.

In proof of this, I offer my endorsements by the Pacific NW Council of Carpenters, and the Snohomish County Labor Council, who required the completion of rigorous questionnaires and endorsement interviews prior to endorsement.

I believe that strong unions are crucial. While it is true that they give workers a chance at a better standard of living, it is also true that they ensure a balance of economic power between business owners/managers and workers. I firmly believe that the imbalance in economic strength that we experience in our country today is a result of the weakening of unions that has gradually been occurring since the 1980s.

So unless there is some egregious behavior perpetrated by some specific union, I will absolutely support any union any time to the greatest degree possible, for the health of our country's economy if for no other reason.

And therefore I believe that collective bargaining and unions play a crucial role in our schools today. Teachers must face school management as a unified force if they are to maintain working conditions that will result in an acceptable quality of life for themselves, and the ability to teach effectively. If they don't advocate for this, as a group, no one else will. They are on the front lines; they know what they need.

As in most labor/management situations, it is up to the School Administration to manage the financial health of the district. And it's good that they do this. But unions have to push against them so there is balance.

Insofar as bargaining sessions being open to the public is concerned: In general, I am a proponent of transparency. The research I have done tells me that school districts who have gone to open sessions have done well.

However, I have never been part of a bargaining team, and am not sure what the repercussions of this type of change would be. I am definitely open to further education on this subject from parties on both sides of the table.

9. As more money becomes available from the State, what are your priorities for allocating additional resources to have the greatest impact on student learning?

There are three major things I would like to see addressed, should more money become available.

- * Fewer students in each class, so that teachers have more time to spend with each students.

- * More professional development opportunities for teachers, especially in the area of equity training, culturally responsive practices, and social/emotional learning.

- * More planning time for teachers, so they can attend classes and so their personal lives will be more manageable. Teachers stress affects students. Teachers, in general, will do whatever they can so their students learn, even if working conditions are untenable. It is inappropriate to exploit their philanthropy.

Thank you!

Cathy Baylor