

King County Democrats 2023 Endorsement Questionnaire

Name

Debbie Carlsen

Email address

info@debbie4seattleschools.org

Phone number

(206) 930-6668

Candidate name

Debbie Carlsen

Candidate pronouns

she/they

Campaign Filer_Name

Debbie4SeattleSchools

Campaign email

info@debbie4seattleschools.org

Campaign phone

(206) 930-6668

Campaign website

<https://debbie4seattleschools.org/>

Link to candidate headshot

<https://Debbie4SeattleSchools.org>

What type of position are you running for?

School

What position are you running for?

Seattle School District No. 1

Are you a Democrat?

Yes

Have you ever been a member of another political party?

No

Have you ever been found in violation of a Public Disclosure Commission, Federal Election Commission, or Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission regulation?

No

Do you have a code of conduct for campaign staff and volunteers?

Qualified

If you have campaign staff, do you support them joining a labor union?

Yes

Do you support employees of your jurisdiction (e.g. your city's employees, the Port's employees, etc.) exercising their collective bargaining rights without fear of retaliation, including the right to bargain and strike for better working conditions and pay?

Yes

Are you willing to have yourself, your staff, and your peers undergo training to understand and combat institutional racism, implicit bias, and sexual harassment?

Yes

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate fossil fuel PACs?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate pharmaceutical PACs or corporate health insurance PACs?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate building industry PACs, including the Building Industry Association of Washington (BIAW) and the National Association of Home Builders?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from law enforcement or sheriffs' organizations?

No

Will you return contributions from companies or PACs who are aligned with the organizations listed above and others that conflict with Democratic Party values?

Yes

Have you made any donations to Republican candidates or Republican Party organizations in the last 5 years?

No

Have you previously participated, or will you be participating, in a candidate training program like Institute for a Democratic Future or Emerge?

Qualified

For any Yes/No questions you answered "qualified", please explain:

I do not have any staff yet, so I have not created a code of conduct for campaign staff.

I have taken the National Women's Political Caucus' candidate training a couple of times. We have great trainings!

Please describe your background (education, employment, community and civic activity, union affiliation, and political activity).

I am a small business owner as a consultant working within the nonprofit sector around organizational development, capacity building and advocacy. I am also a part-time early learning educator and a student, going back to school around early learning at North Seattle Community College. I have worked in the nonprofit sector for over 15 years, 10 of those years as an executive director of a LGBTQ+ economic and housing justice organization I co-founded called LGBTQ Allyship. Before entering the nonprofit sector, I taught for 5 years as an English as a Second Language Instructor at Renton Technical College and was a proud union member.

I am on the Olympic Hills Elementary PTA board as the Advocacy Chair. I am on the executive board of the 46th Democrats as a Co-Policy & Advocacy Chair and I am on the board of the National Women's Political Caucus as their Fundraising Chair. I have a BA from Western Washington University and a TESOL Certificate from Seattle University.

I am a former foster parent, queer and non-binary working class femme and I am running to be the next School Board Director of District 1.

What motivated you to run for this position and how would you evaluate your success?

1. I wanted to ensure there was an LGBTQ+ person (I am a non-binary, queer, working class, white femme) on the school board. With the anti-trans and anti- LGBTQ+ laws passing around the country targeting school age children we cannot stay complacent in Seattle. And SPS can reach much further in being a LGBTQ+ friendly district. I am a parent of a trans girl of color, a former foster parent and part of a neurodivergent and mixed race family. I have been navigating special education systems for a few years, as my child has an IEP. My lived experience in navigating systems for myself and family members has been a big motivation.

Success will look like more SPS programs for LGBTQ+ families and students, especially students of color. I would seek out what LGBTQ+ students and LGBTQ+ parents/guardians want and advocate for those budget decisions and policies. In addition, I would seek out organizations led by communities of color and LGBTQ+ organizations working on educational issues. I would do the same type of multi-pronged outreach for foster families and students in the child welfare system and families living with disabilities.

2. I want to see more transparency, accountability and community engagement from the Seattle School Board. I would do this by developing relationships with all board members and listen to their concerns around transparency, accountability and community engagement. And within my own district I would hold community meetings and seek out communities and organizations that represent families furthest from educational justice.

Success would like changing the current governing model of Student Focus Outcome Governance to incorporate more transparency for communities, more processes for community engagement and data collection that evaluates our achievement around goals. I believe any program always needs tweaking and we need to find the right balance of approaches, with community feedback and stories as well as data to determine what is working. As School Board Members we hold ourselves accountable by this process, data indicating progress and listen to educators and families on what needs to be tweaked.

3. Seattle Public Schools can do better around preschool to 3rd grade alignment. As an early learning educator and consultant within the early learning sector I know how important access to high-quality early learning is in eradicating the school to prison pipeline, K-12 educational achievement, post-graduation educational success and even economic prosperity later in life.

The Seattle School District can do better in pre-school to 3rd grade alignment by working more strategically with the early learning community. SPS can be a visionary school district and lead the way nationally on upstream solutions to systemic issues like racism and ableism.

By teaching the building blocks to students early on, skills like self-regulation, stress management and a growth mindset (social emotional skills), through inclusionary practices, children acquire a foundation of skills that allows them to excel academically. These skills are taught in high-quality childcare centers and continue in elementary school. The need for collaboration and communication between these two educational sectors benefits all families and students.

I want to bring my skills as an early learning educator who understands the need for better pre-school to 3rd grade alignment, while utilizing inclusionary practices, to the School Board.

What are the top three issues of urgency that you will address if elected?

My top issues are:

1. Updating the Student Outcomes Focused Governance model where community feedback is scheduled as soon as possible, which according to the school board's SOFG implementation timeline, they are behind in several areas in incorporating community feedback. Ensuring the board does not lose authority over operations to be handed over to the superintendent and prioritizing creating a strategy that supports the sustainable financial health of the school district.
2. Passing a budget that reflects a racial justice lens and pro-actively includes feedback from communities most impacted, including educators. To ensure the sustainable financial health of the district. Which must include planning ahead for future budget cycles now to advocate for deeper community engagement.
3. Building back trust from the community. This means deeper engagement with communities farthest away from educational justice. ie. students of color, student living with disabilities, indigenous students, foster students, homeless students, LGBTQ+ students and the adults that support them. It also means engaging with educators and principals. This feedback would identify 3 things the School Board can do within its power to build back trust.

How will you involve all residents and engage all communities in the decision-making process?

To include all residents and engage all communities in any decision-making process there has be sufficient planning and the process for inclusion needs to start early enough to include a planning stage, an implementation stage, an execution stage, a data collection and analysis stage, a sharing of the community recommendations to community and board, another opportunity for further feedback on those recommendations, a final dissemination of the community recommendations and then a board vote.

How have you promoted an enduring environment of inclusivity, diversity, and equity?

The way one proceeds with a program, project, policy development, or budget process matters. Centering community participation who are often the most challenging to get at certain tables, requires relationship and trust building and takes time. Ensuring a diverse body of leaders are part of the environment supports the work to be inclusive and equitable.

Here is an example of my community organizing work that endures an environment of inclusivity, diversity and equity is the North End PTA Legislative Debriefing in the 46th District.

I approached a few North end PTAs, local people of color led groups in the North End and parents of color-led groups at Olympic Hills Elementary where I am the Advocacy Chair on the PTA. For groups I was forming relationships with I also went to their events to build a repertoire. In addition, through my networks, I gathered contact information of key individuals in these groups.

I wanted to make sure a diverse group of families who care about education were at the table right from the beginning.

Group leaders were at the table to decide on the important aspects of the event.

Because of the diversity at the table here were some components of the event - it will be a hybrid event to make it easier on parents with small kids and to make it accessible for families with disabilities. Marketing flyers will be translated into several languages and distributed to all families at Olympic Hills Elementary and to other sponsoring groups. The event

itself will be bilingual with Spanish and English languages spoken and there will be a kid area so parents can bring their kids and participate in the Debriefing. Food will be culturally enticing to our communities. It will be catered by a local Mexican restaurant. Children will be centered by being encouraged to ask questions of legislators at the event and before the event.

If elected, how will you address inequalities experienced among BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, or other marginalized communities and advance an agenda of equality?

1. Ensuring marginalized communities are being engaged from the start in any decision-making process and advocating on the board for this strategy and implementation.
2. Invest my time in further building relationships with BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities and other marginalized communities.
3. Advocate for their voices to be heard and their experiences and recommendations be implemented in policy and budget decisions.
4. Do my own homework on the inequitable impact of educational injustice as well as successful models that have made a difference in advancing an agenda of equality for marginalized communities.
5. Build relationships with my fellow board members to ensure I can successfully advocate for the inclusion of marginalized voices, avoid unintended harm to marginalized communities and advance equality within our educational system.

Do you support charter schools and/or vouchers for private/religious school education?

No

Do you support supplemental funding for International Baccalaureate & Advanced Placement testing for low-income students?

Yes

Do you support salary increases for teachers and paraprofessionals?

Yes

Do you support continuing and expanding art, music, physical education, and library classes?

Yes

Do you support enhancing awareness of the option for parents to 'opt out' their students from military recruitment activities?

Yes

What policies or changes will you seek to ensure that all students receive an education that enables them to reach their fullest potential?

I am interested in addressing upstream approaches to address the school to prison pipeline, support families that speak English as their 2nd or 3rd language, and families that have a child with a diagnosed or undiagnosed disability. Investing in early learning and the alignment between early learning and K-12 is an important component in successfully setting up students for best possible academic outcomes later.

Changing policies that support the collaboration between early learning centers and K-12 schools in multiple ways is an upstream approach. Only concentrating on academic achievements and milestones in middle school and high school is almost too late. Innovative and visionary policy that educates and supports families early around the importance of early learning must be a top priority for SPS. Currently, early learning centers and school districts often do not coordinate together, and these 2 institutions do not 'hand over' students well from one institution to another. One tool that is available is Preschool Transition Report for New Kindergarten. This is a form that early learning educators can fill out to pass on critical academic and social emotional skills of students who are graduating to kindergarten.

Unfortunately, it is rare that early learning educators are paid to complete this report for students and so it isn't often completed. This is a missed opportunity for a kindergarten teacher to learn more about their incoming students so they can best understand their students' educational needs. A funded partnership between early learning providers and SPS is an important investment where both early learning educators and kindergarten teachers are paid for their time in writing and reviewing these reports to ensure a smoother transition. This transition is especially important for children who suffer from trauma, have a disability, behavior issues and/or mental health needs. These are the types of policies I am interested in advocating around to enable students to reach their fullest potential.

How will you address equity in discipline, particularly regarding school resource officers?

Currently, school resource officers are not present in the Seattle School District, if there are security staff, they are only to engage around safety issues and are not permitted to be involved in any disciplinary act.

If security staff are engaged in a safety incident the principal and administrative staff take the lead. All school staff should be trained in de-escalation strategies. Educators should be trained in inclusionary practices to preempt any unsafe behavior. School resource officers should never be used for restraining a student.

What will you do to advocate for ample and equitable funding for K-12 education including special education, school nurses, counselors, mental health professionals, and paraeducators?

I would like to work with Senator Wellman, Representative Tomiko-Santos, other educational legislative leaders, other partners, and educational funding workgroups during the interim to explore new strategies to fully fund education. Funding must be addressed at the state level.

There must be continual pressure and dialogue after the disappointing result of special education funding.

Nation-wide, we have seen examples of parents objecting to books in school libraries with subjects that include racial injustice, the experience of BIPOC communities, and LGBTQIA+ perspectives. How will you address the concerns of these parents and uphold your district's policies?

In the LGBTQ+ community there was a national program out of UC Berkeley that worked with religious communities that had LGBTQ+ children and how to be tolerant while not changing the beliefs of an individual. It was a program that educated communities about the impact of homophobia on families ie. substance abuse, mental health issues/depression, suicide and it moved communities to value their children's safety and wellbeing even if they did not agree with their children's sexual orientation or gender identity. They were learning to be 'tolerant'. Although this is not the ideal that we seek - LGBTQ+ people want to be accepted and celebrated. There is evidence that moving intolerant families to a place of tolerance had profound positive impacts for their children around their mental health and overall well-being.

In this very divided country, we as leaders must listen, provide lived experience stories to humanize people in the hopes that parents who are intolerant of race theory or LGBTQIA+ perspectives get to a place of tolerance and SPS can play a role in this while still upholding the district's policies.

Environmental concerns impact students differently depending on the location of their homes and the maintenance of their school buildings. Provide examples of your climate justice actions to date and your specific plans for school-related environmental equity for all enrolled students.

My climate justice actions have come out of my housing justice work. As the executive director of Allyship I advocated for equitable development citywide. I supported and testified in support of Seattle Equitable Development Initiative that gave communities of color agency in developing and building community-centered housing. This systems change approach helped to address the gentrification of communities of color in Seattle to places more affordable and sometimes less environmentally safe. I also support transit housing as the ED of Allyship in creating more affordable housing near transit centers in walkable neighborhoods.

I support the 2021 School Board's decision to transition to 100% clean and renewable energy by 2040 by eliminating all use of fossil fuels in district electricity, heating, cooling, cooking, and transportation. And I am supportive of tracking the progress of this transition and ensuring these plans are on track.

CERTIFICATION: I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.

Yes

Created on: May 19th, 2023

Changed on: May 19th, 2023