

King County Democrats 2023 Endorsement Questionnaire

Name

Eliza Rankin

Email address

liza.rankin@gmail.com

Phone number

(206) 920-6471

Candidate name

Liza Rankin

Candidate pronouns

She/her

Candidate name pronunciation

Lie-zuh

Campaign Filer_Name

Community for Liza Rankin

Campaign email

Info@ElizaSRankin.com

Campaign phone

(503) 395-5253

Campaign website

<https://www.elizasrankin.com/>

Campaign Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/lizaforseattleschools>

LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/liza-rankin-54471011b/>

Treasurer name

Jason Bennett

Treasurer email

Info@argo.us

Treasurer phone

(206) 745-2010

Consultant name

Christian Sinderman

Consultant email

Info@nwpcconsulting.com

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?

No

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

Qualified

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?

No

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

I do not have campaign staff, but if I did, I would support union membership

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

I was elected to the Seattle School Board in 2019 and serve as the board's Vice President and Legislative Liaison, expanding from my work in community over the past decade. I have supported teachers and families in Seattle beginning when my older son started at the infant-toddler program at the EEU at UW, an early childhood school community that provides inclusive education to children with and without disabilities. I have served on the Boards of several community organizations, including SPACE in Magnuson Park, Seattle Council PTSA, and Wedgwood Elementary PTA. I have been to most of our 106 schools as a volunteer or invited visitor, absorbing the successes and the challenges of our district. Over the pandemic, I continued to build connections remotely and by distributing laptops, delivering lunches to families, working covid test sites, and volunteering for lunchroom and IA duties.

Professionally, I worked locally and on the east coast as a theater designer and painter and taught design at the post-secondary level with an MFA in Design for Theater. I have walked picket lines with educators and bus drivers and in 2019 was endorsed by SEA, MLK Labor, UFCW21, Teamsters Locals 763 and 174, Seattle's Building Trades Unions.

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

I ran in 2019 on a platform of educational equity to support the district's strategic plan focused on improving outcomes for students furthest from educational justice, and to elevate the needs of students with disabilities and especially students of color with disabilities. I am running again to continue progress in SPS policy and practice and provide institutional knowledge and continuity for our students and families and the district as a whole. The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted learning, impacted our kids' mental health, and has altered the relationship with district families. I want to rebuild not only trust and confidence, but joy and excitement throughout our education system. We can and must continue to improve equity and access throughout the district and provide all of Seattle's children with a great educational experience that prepares them for whatever path they choose upon graduation.

I will evaluate success by board adoption of more policy language that aligns to community vision and values and better clarifies responsibility of the board vs the superintendent and provides stronger direction to the superintendent and staff, work I have already been committed to, and by the progress of the district in meeting board-adopted goals on outcomes for students.

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

- Funding and Budget - WA districts have been chronically underfunded and while there were some gains this session for special education funding, there is much more to be done for the state to meet its obligation to fully fund services for students with disabilities without relying on local levies for basic education. SPS has a Fiscal Stability plan for the 2023-24 school year, and must immediately come together with community to build a multi-year budget plan to keep SPS solvent and meets the needs of students, while continuing to advocate for progressive revenue to fund public schools.

- Enrollment - Birth rate decline and lack of affordable family housing are having a compounding impact, and public and private school enrollment is declining. With only 18% of the Seattle population under the age of 20 as compared to a national average of 28%, we need to plan for students now and into the future when the student population grows, engage the public about constraints and possibilities, and prioritize equity in decision-making about any potential closure/consolidation/boundary changes.

- Equity and student outcomes - BIPOC students, students with disabilities, and multilingual students need more systemic support to access basic education and thrive alongside their peers.

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

Currently, the Board has two ad hoc committees doing work that will improve board-community engagement and accessibility to board decision-making. I am leading a policy manual review committee to structure our policies to clarify board vs superintendent responsibilities and to create regularly scheduled reviews of policies to better and more frequently check for alignment with the vision and values of community in core policies, in addition to policy work that pops up due to need/state law, and board president Hersey is leading a community engagement committee. This work will enable predictable, consistent engagement around the documents that provide direction to the superintendent, allowing community members to have more access and to see the ways in which their priorities are reflected in the work of the district. I will continue engaging with parents and community members to discuss issues, share information, way-find in the system, and support collective advocacy. I also look forward to furthering the development of our Student Board Member role and supporting more collaborative opportunities for them and the students we serve. Clarity is kindness, and I am excited about the work in progress to increase clarity, transparency, and accessibility in the work of the Board.

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

From the elementary school PTA to the position of School Board Vice President, I have centered inclusion and equity, and honored and celebrated diversity. I have served as a resource for PTA and educators on equity and inclusion for events and communications, provide educational information, promoted identity safety and honor/recognition of diversity, from bulletin boards with the school motto written in every home language spoken in that community, to ensuring that data on progress monitoring identifies marginalized groups and intersectionality to elevate the needs of those furthest from educational justice. Most enduring is policy - I have authored, co-authored, and provided amendments to many resolutions and policies for PTA and the school board, including the SCPTSA Black Lives Matter Resolution to urge Seattle PTAs to support and participate in BLM@School Week and policies to increase inclusion for students with disabilities in SPS, such as Policy 0010 Instructional Philosophy and Policy 3246 on Isolation and Restraint. I have also centered equity in my role as SPS Board Legislative Liaison in proposing legislative priorities and in advocacy and testimony in Olympia.

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

I will continue to work at the board level to prioritize physical, social-emotional, and identity safety for our students and staff in policy and practice, to adopt curriculum that reflects the identities and needs of our communities, and support legislation that protects the well-being of our kids and mitigates disproportionate impact or outcomes on marginalized

groups. I will remain steadfast in demanding that data is used to identify gaps in addressing needs and that our budget is aligned with closing those gaps, for improved and equitable student outcomes and experiences, and I will continue to engage with members of the impacted groups when making policy that impacts them. Equity is at the center of everything I work for, not a "nice to have" or side project.

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?

As Chair of the Board's Curriculum and Instruction Committee, I have done extensive policy work to support access and opportunity for our students. I worked with staff as soon as Covid shut down in-person school in March 2020 to propose changes in the SPS high school grading policy to minimize negative impact to students, and these recommendations were adopted by the board to provide more opportunity to complete course work and stay on track to graduate instead of penalizing already marginalized students when they struggled to connect in the last quarter of that year. This also pushed staff to consider long term changes to increase equity in grading and evaluation, and that work in grading for mastery is ongoing, using practices demonstrated to support equitable outcomes.

I have been a strong advocate for Ethnic Studies, testifying at the district and supporting curriculum development as a community member, and continue to use data from student climate surveys and outcome measures to support belonging and representation of our kids, proven to improve academic outcomes. I will continue to be a strong voice in policy work that centers on the needs and identities of our students, and align budget resources to meet them.

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

Equity in discipline in another area I have focused on in my first term on the board, especially in the use of Isolation and Restraint and the disproportionate use of these practices of students with disabilities and within that, students of color with disabilities, especially Black children. This is the school-to-prison pipeline. Not only do these practices traumatize students, increase the likelihood of physical injury to students and staff, and provide zero therapeutic or educational benefit, but children experiencing it are also missing huge amounts of instructional time, compounding the impact on access to education and growth as students and eventual adults. I will continue the work I have been engaged in on Board Policy 3246 and state-level advocacy to eliminate isolation completely and eliminate the use of restraint as a disciplinary measure. I will continue to defend against allowing any SPS staff to carry weapons (one of the primary reasons I voted to suspend SROs in SPS - they carried guns in our schools) and continue to fight for security measures that protect our students and support their mental health and well-being and do not add to a culture of fear and punishment that disproportionately impacts Black and brown youth.

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?

As the Board's Legislative Liaison, I work with SPS staff and state legislators, testify on behalf of SPS in Olympia, and elevate SPS priorities to the WA St. School Director Association (WSSDA) for state-wide advocacy. WA school districts struggle with funding provided via allocation formulas that are not connected to districts' costs to provide services, which includes salaries. I will continue to advocate for changes in the state's prototypical school funding model and special education allocation to increase staffing to meet the needs of students and provide professional wages in all WA school districts.

I will continue to leverage my extensive knowledge of special education, build on relationships with legislators for understanding and making progress in addressing funding gaps, and continue to work with community members, SEA/WEA, and school directors across WA to support collective advocacy for increased funding from progressive revenue at the state level. Ample evidence shows that relying on property tax for local AND state revenue streams is inequitable and inadequate for school funding. The state needs to stop the shell game of inadequate funding, and

commit fully and sustainably to our kids' education, including services required by federal law (IDEA) and wraparound supports.

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?

I am and will be open to listening and understanding specific objections and concerns. I will respond to concerns about diverse subject matter by providing information about the benefit of diverse and representative curriculum and library materials, opportunities and resources for growing understanding of cultural responsiveness and equity (DEI workshops, parent engagement, reading material, etc), context about state law, educational standards, curriculum adoption, and district policy, including Board policies 0010 and 0030, and if needed, my own personal commitments and equity platform when running for office and being elected by the city of Seattle with that platform.

I will be firm that the identities, experiences, and contributions of the diverse students, families, educators, staff, and greater community in SPS are seen, valued, and celebrated, and provide information about opting their own child out of certain instruction as allowed by state law (for example in law governing Sexual Health Education for K-12), emphasizing that they have options that respect the individual values of their family but do not infringe upon the broader educational objectives, rights, and community values of equity and identity safety in our public schools.

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.

From founding a chapter of Tremendous Seattle in high school, collecting signatures to oppose deforestation in college, to raising children who have marched with me for climate justice and unprompted at ages 7 & 4 wrote letters to President Obama and the Governor of North Dakota pleading with them to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline, environmental concerns have been a consistent part of my advocacy. On the school board, I have been proud to vote in support of the Board's Clean Energy Resolution in 2021 and for increase to a levy proposal package to include clean energy projects. I led the Board's Outdoor Education Task Force in 2020-21 and co-authored a graphic essay about outdoor education: <https://www.seattleschild.com/opinion-its-a-double-pandemic-lets-take-school-outside-and-beyond/>

I would like to make recommendations based on the 2021 Resolution and past board resolutions 2006/2007-18 and 2012/13-12 to include a Climate and Environment Policy in the Board's core set of governance policies, and build on the recommendations made by the Outdoor Education Task Force, and making learning about the land we live on and how to care for it and each other integral parts of education for all children in Seattle Public Schools.

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

Yes

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