

King County Democrats 2025 Endorsement Questionnaire

Candidate name
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Candidate name pronunciation
Sar-ruh
Candidate pronouns
she/her/hers
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Link to candidate headshot
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What type of position are you running for?
School District
Which position are you running for?
Seattle SD Director District No. 2
Are you a Democrat?
Yes
Have you ever been a member of another political party?

No

Does your campaign have a code of conduct for staff and volunteers?

Yes

Will you share a link to your code of conduct?

<https://www.sarah4schoolboard.org/volunteer-code-of-conduct>

What are your views on charter schools and voucher systems?

I support school choice however, locally we are finding that charter schools are unfortunately siphoning resources from our public schools, exacerbating segregation and excluding students with disabilities. Typically charter school systems and voucher programs end up subsidizing families who can already afford private school tuition and don't increase access/affordability where it's been executed in other cities/states. Another criticism is that charter schools often don't have the same academic standards (so that they can participate in fundamentally religious education). So, I want to ensure any charter school system would focus on increasing access ((rather than discounting tuition for those that can already afford it) and would want to ensure high standards/requirements for academic outcomes would exist for schools in any system. I would like to see equitable distribution of taxpayer dollars to every school (rather than basing it on property taxes), and an updated student allocation formula, so that all our public schools could have innovative programs and services and actually compete with charter and private schools

What are your top three priorities for allocating limited dollars in your district?

My top three priorities for allocating the limited dollars in Seattle School District are:

1. Expanding academic programs and services that will equitably serve students furthest from education justice, including students with different learning needs, like special education students (with IEPs or 504s), highly capable and advanced learning students, and English language learners.
2. Ensuring Seattle Public School students are physically and emotionally safe at school, and working with our local government partners to ensure students are safe in transit to and from school throughout the region. We need to invest in the people and resources that will keep our students safe so they can focus on learning while they are in our care.
3. Auditing our transportation system and other downtown specific costs to gain deeper understanding of the challenges, engage the community and implement recommendations and suggestions to make our transportation services work better for our students. We also need to ensure we have June enrollment updates as we are making budgeting decisions to ensure we are allocating the proper amount of money for the next school year.

What are the major barriers to effective learning in the classroom in your district?

There are several major barriers to effective learning in the classrooms in the Seattle School District.

1. A few years back, the Board passed a policy requiring students of different academic levels in the same grade to be taught in the same classroom and the process of training educators, acquiring support and professional development and compliance has led to learning barriers for many students. To be clear, I don't believe inclusive classrooms are inherently bad, but the implementation process has not only increased the deficit, but also made teaching harder.
2. The \$100M budget deficit is a major barrier to effective learning in the classroom. We simply don't have the expendable resources to make the changes necessary to make inclusion classrooms successful for all students. We are also unable to provide academic programs, services, and resources at every school and have had to increase class sizes for several grade bands, which further impacts classroom learning.
3. Underfunding from WA State legislature is also a barrier to effective learning. More resources from the state would allow us the ability to provide more resources in the classroom for students, small class size

What is the role of religion in public schools?

Religion does not have a formal role in our public schools, per Washington State and Federal Law . However, at Seattle Public Schools, we have a policy of support and respect, and we actively affirm students and staff from all faith or religious backgrounds. As such, we allow students and staff to request religious accommodations. Additionally, we allow our schools to host community events and have a policy of non-discrimination against such events based on religion, creed, gender, race or identity.

What are the primary issues with school capacity in your district and how would you like to see them addressed?

Our biggest capacity issue in Seattle School District is that we have excess capacity in many of our schools, our enrollment numbers are shrinking instead of growing and we are losing 20-30% of new students due to uncertainty with waitlists, burdensome Highly Capable and Advanced Learning qualification requirements, and cutting access to advanced courses. I would like to see SPS open the waitlists to option schools, change HC and AL qualifying requirements, bring back access to advanced courses, and allow students and families to enroll their children at any school of their choosing. While this may create some pockets of inequity or severally under enrolled schools, those are challenges we can deal with if and when they arise. For instance, we can put desirable programs and services at smaller neighborhood schools to draw in more students. Families have made it clear they want choice, and we need to provide that. I'm in favor of the district providing a multi-year plan for the high capacity schools they're building or do an audit of this practice to ensure it aligns with the district's overall enrollment projections and the community's opinion on school size.

Describe a time—professionally or personally—when you've led through conflict or controversy. How did you reach a conclusion and how did it advance the issue being addressed?

It was clear to me from the start of the well-resourced school (WRS) conversation, that the school board lacked the leadership skills and experience to manage a change process of the size and scope proposed, there was a lack of buy in from stakeholders, and the rational was unreliable. After joining the board, my ability to access any real information about the process was or even get simple questions answered was stifled by board leadership and after we saw the closure lists and rational it became abundantly clear that it was going to be a massive failure. In the fall of 2024, after being appointed to the school board for 6 months, I led the charge on the board (with the help of community) to stop the WRS plan and make it clear to families that the District was no longer seeking to close any schools for 2025-2026. Using an op-ed and engagement with my colleagues, I was able to successfully stop the proposal. As the sole board member to publicly call for the board to abandon WRS, I took a lot of heat from my colleagues and pressure to conform to their ideology. I've also ushered in a new period of direct community engagement to prevent this kind of vacuum from occurring again.

Certification

- The candidate hereby certifies that, to the best of their knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.

