

# 2009 Candidate Questionnaire

## SECTION I

### BASIC CANDIDATE INFORMATION

1. Name as it will appear on the ballot

First Name	Middle Initial or Nickname	Last Name
Kay		Smith-Blum

2. Office sought (include office, jurisdiction, position/district number):

Seattle School District NO. 1 / Position 5

3. Are you the incumbent?       Yes      xxxx No

4. How long have you resided in this district/city?

28 years

5. How long have you resided in King County?

28 years

6. Is the office sought partisan or nonpartisan?       Partisan      XX Nonpartisan

7. If partisan, please indicate party:

### CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Campaign Name:      electKSB.com

Address:      PO Box 868

City/State/Zip:      Seattle WA 98111

Campaign Phone:      206 901 1114

Campaign Fax:      206 622-6664

Campaign E-mail:      electkaysmithblum@gmail.com

Campaign Website:      electKSB.com (will be in operation by June 20<sup>th</sup>)

### POLITICAL BACKGROUND

1. Beginning with the most recent position, please list public offices you have held. Include positions on appointive boards or commissions.

Public Office	Elective or Appointive?	Dates Held	Leadership Role (if any)
NA			


2. If you ran for public office but were not elected, please list those races below:

Office Title	Year of Run
NA	

## SECTION II

In this section, we are seeking responses that reflect the four ratings criteria: involvement, effectiveness, character, and knowledge. These are defined as follows:

- **Involvement:** What has the candidate done previously in family, neighborhood, community, volunteer work, employment or public life to suggest readiness to accomplish challenging objectives? How do these activities demonstrate readiness for the challenges unique to the office sought?
  - **Effectiveness:** Has the candidate demonstrated promise of being productive in the office sought? Has the candidate shown the ability to work with other people?
  - **Character:** Do the candidate's personal traits show the ability to take on the responsibilities of campaigning for and holding the public office she or he is seeking? Is the candidate a leader, participant or observer? Is the candidate trustworthy, reliable and candid?
  - **Knowledge:** Has the candidate demonstrated the willingness and ability to learn and adapt? Does the candidate understand the duties and challenges of the office sought? Does the candidate have a firm grasp of the issues important to his or her constituency and their potential effects?
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1. In one page or less, why are you running for this office? (Note: the interview committee will be given a copy of this statement before your interview; at the beginning of your interview you will have the opportunity to expand on this statement in any way you wish.)

We need to reframe the conversation. The problem is definitely an achievement gap –but it is not a 4th grader's failing test score – it is a city not providing a 21st century education for its children.

I know we can bridge the gap by engaging ALL stakeholders NOW if we make BOLD decisions to change the education of our children to prepare them for today's workplace and global challenges. The school board must hear the community's voice PRIOR to policy proposals that affect the client – our students. Parents need consistency and predictability in school assignments. EVERY school should be a great school so that parents don't have to look outside their neighborhoods for a better education. Parents should not have to feel a need to "go private" because they feel the curriculum between schools is inconsistent or not rigorous enough. AND parents should be responsible for supporting their children and the school at any level of which they are capable. We can use our schools to school parents too.

The site based versus central control tug of war is senseless. There is a third choice: use best practices, constantly changing and upgrading of our curriculum. Early childhood learning is the KEY to lowering drop out rates and raising graduation rates. We must fund this as a city. Family Levy monies could provide early childhood learning to level the playing field between the north and south regions of our district. A FULL school day would eliminate "latch key" kids, most juvenile crime, teenage pregnancy and juvenile drug abuse AND save our city millions of dollars in the social service arena. We can extend the school day to provide all below, with public private partnerships. Opportunities for this abound in our city.

From kindergarten on we need to require: Foreign language immersion \*Rigorous academics \* Daily PE, Arts & Music curriculum \* Fiscal literacy \*Citizenship training (tolerance and diversity appreciation) \*Vocational strands \* Entrepreneurial competitions \*Environmental protocol and horticultural training \*Wellness classes (nutrition, exercise, dental hygiene, etc.). Until every child has an education that includes all of these things, we are failing as a community.

As a small business owner for 28 years, I have seen this city rise to the "occasion" on many different levels. In my heart, I know that THIS is our time to make these bold changes. We CAN give our children the BEST education possible, and in doing so, we will bring our city, and our region, all it deserves for its future. In doing so, we might change more than we imagine.

2. Describe your most important personal characteristics or traits as they relate to the office you seek.

I am a doer. I am someone who comes with a plan, creates consensus, then executes. I would provide substantive policy proposals to move us quickly into a customer-oriented district with intensified community engagement. I know how to connect with folks. I know how to create enthusiastic support for a cause. People want to be inspired. I know how to do that.

I am a numbers and data driven person, having been a statistics and marketing major in college. I set high standards for myself and others. I was the “meanest mother on Capitol Hill” who always had the largest group of kids at her house. I set boundaries and high expectations for my children and their friends. Never be afraid to parent, I say. Now as young adults, I am so proud of them. I “coached” many young people to follow their dreams, holding all to a high standard that I knew they could meet. I learned that children want boundaries and will rise to the occasion when it is demanded of them. . Why aren’t we holding all children in our schools to higher academic expectations?

I am not thrown by obstacles in my path. In my conversations with minority business owners, they all cited the feeling that our district instructors have lower expectations of children of color. They felt this was the single most damaging element in our school district. We need to recognize this elephant in the living room and deal with it in our district by creating rigorous curriculum standards at ALL schools. Race is the distraction. We can deal with the real problem of inconsistency.

I see the big picture, but also know how to manage the details. While the board needs to set broad policy, we also need to have a sense of what happens “on the ground” because of our decisions. The way to create community support for our decisions is to provide better avenues for parent and other stakeholders to participate PRIOR to decisions being made. Collaboration is the key. We should move away from an “us” versus “them” in all negotiations and by doing so, we can refocus on the students, our client.

3. Please describe, in sufficient detail, one to three accomplishments or contributions of which you are most proud. These examples should illustrate skills and capabilities you think apply to the office you are seeking. These accomplishments may have occurred at any time in your personal, professional, or public life.

My husband, Butch Blum and I, are Capitol Hill residents, with 3 sons, Case (graduate of Miami of Ohio, recruited by Callison Architects in July of 2008, still has his job!), Kyle (entering senior at Colgate University, summer intern, Wa. Budget and Policy Center) and Bryce (entering senior at Trinity College, summer intern, Center for Children and Youth Justice). When growing up on the hill, we strolled past the richest and the poorest, the heavily pierced and dyed and the most conservative. They have an appreciation for diversity that only comes from living in the heart of our city. They have a sense of community that only comes from being a part of a public system. They have a value system that is predicated on honesty and tolerance. Without question, being a successful parent is my biggest accomplishment.

I have changed many organizations community building and fundraising strategies. I conceived and served as executive director of The Perfect Solution (a coalition board modeled on PONCHO) for medical research and health services organizations (see resume). I personally brought in corporate sponsorships of more than \$200,000 in value in 1990-91. I redesigned the Seattle Symphony's largest fundraiser, Symphoneve, doubling their net revenues in 1985. I have written and helped coordinate 2 different Dept. of Neighborhood grants, creating a horticultural program at Montlake Elementary school, extending the Central Trail past WMS and various improvements to the Central Area that benefit the broader community. I have used Butch Blum's anniversary celebrations to bring hundreds of thousands of dollars to vital non-profits, particularly for children. In conjunction with our 1994 Celebration of Excellence (see resume), I created a Heroes video with over 60 internationally acclaimed celebrities (all with ties to Seattle) We donated it to all middle school and high schools in the Puget Sound region. Ninety percent of the celebrity participants cited a teacher as their hero.

I am an astute businesswoman. I have balanced multi-million dollar budgets since I was in my 20's and became the youngest buyer in the history of Neiman Marcus, the first woman in their Men's division. I have convinced folks twice my age to follow my plan because it was based on solid research and the numbers. Finally and most importantly, as a business owner of 28 years, I predicted the economic downturn 10 months prior to the "breakdown" in Fall of 2008. Consequently, Butch Blum Inc. had trimmed our expenses and inventories to position ourselves to continue to be a profitable business despite sales decreases prior to 2009. Most businesses continue to struggle in this difficult economy. While we are by no means "out of the woods," our business has very little debt and we are one of a very few specialty stores across the U.S. that still has excellent credit and are paying our invoices in a timely manner. Had the previous board enacted the CPPE (the committee that worked for Superintendent Manjas) plan 4 years ago, we would not be in the fiscal crisis we are today. I believe my insights would prevent such situations from occurring in the future.

4. Please list or describe current and past activities in the community in which you have acquired skills that relate to the office you seek. Include your role in the activity and the year(s) in which you were involved. Involvement consists of many areas such as family, neighborhood, community, employment, or public life.

Since 1992, when my son Case entered Kindergarten at Stevens Elementary, I have created community-building strategies that have generated thousands of volunteer hours and poured millions of dollars into our Seattle Public Schools. Specifically, I established the first annual fund in a public school in Seattle, when I joined the PTSA board at Montlake Elementary in 1993. I understood that the teaching model (split grade level home rooms with break out small classes of 16 for reading and math) was in jeopardy because of impending budget cuts – and I knew the parents and community would invest. They did not only invest their dollars, but we created a systematic volunteer tutoring program, a public relations campaign with a student visual art program (Artwalk), partnered with the Dept. of Neighborhoods to instate a horticultural program and turned our end of the year carnival into a successful community building event for the entire area, as well as a terrific fundraiser by restructuring our silent auction with family oriented product and services. Montlake continues to be an oversubscribed school to this day.

As my children moved through the system, I experienced inconsistencies in curricula, causing us to send our oldest son to private middle school. I was a founding board member (1983) of the private school (SAAS) he attended. I quickly realized that what Seattle Academy was providing, existed in our public schools, just not ALL of them. This is why I believe so strongly that we must provide a structure for EVERY school in EVERY neighborhood to be GREAT. We have incredibly successful International Baccalaureate (IB) schools now, but only 2 elementary. The current strategic plan creates a total of 9 IB schools in the next 5 years. These schools cost an additional \$200,000 over the average elementary school budget. We need to find a way to fund at least 20 of these schools in the next THREE years, and I believe public private partnerships is the way to do that.

I noted when both APP and Spectrum kids were around my dining room table (during early 2000-03) with their school work – that there was little difference, yet test scores to be accepted into APP were required to be at 99%. I saw that the fund raising strategies I put in place at Lowell Elementary, Washington Middle School, Garfield and 20 other schools where I helped structure campaigns, raised up EVERY child's experience at that school because of programs like Read Right and CAN (College Access Now) for students who never thought they could go to college....and so much more that raised the bar for every student. Most of the dollars raised were from upper middle class families that had their children in the APL programs. Imagine how many volunteers we could glean if we could bring more of these families back into our schools from the private schools. The reason Washington Middle School's regular is so popular is in large part due to the funds raised privately (over \$150,000 per year). BUT, this is not a model I believe in!

I believe after years of fundraising for public schools, it is time to create revenue streams that self support our educational needs, as well as work with both the city and the state to provide adequate funding for our children's 21<sup>st</sup> century education.

5. Please describe the duties of the office you seek. Which are the most important duties and why?

The most important duty of the board is to set our strategic goals. In setting our goals high, we can achieve the education our children deserve. If we continue to set our goals "within reach" we will never solve our educational crisis. We must think "out of the box" NOW. We need to dream BIG. And set our sights on the highest possible standards.

The second most important duty is to set policy or review proposed policy that focuses on achieving these goals. We need to look at the expense side of things with regard to all policy proposals and create a budget that reflects our most critical needs: more money in the classroom, supporting best practices and enhancing successful schools. We have multiple ways of approaching the problem that have not even been put on the table during the last 8 years. We need to hone our skills not only as decision makers, but as a collaborative unit. Rigorous debate is an important part of the process, but once a policy has been set, we need to support it as a board. On the other hand, if a mistake has been made ( I happen to believe the Math text choice was a mistake), we need to stand up and say, let's correct that poor decision.

The third important function of the board is to hire a stellar Superintendent. No other decision has a bigger impact on the children's future. The board needs to develop an excellent and honest working relationship with the Superintendent. The board should also hold the Superintendent responsible for implementing policy in an effective manner and for evaluating her team in a timely and transparent manner.

Finally, board members should be the ambassadors of the school district. At their core, the current Seattle School Board of Directors are dedicated and intelligent citizens who have made some excellent decisions in the past 2 years. I believe that my communication and marketing skills would compliment their strengths. My ability to create excitement, enthusiasm and passion for educating our children would enhance our relevance as a board. I would work to create a positive image for our schools which they so readily deserve.