



The Municipal League of King County

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2011 CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Municipal League of King County requests every candidate who participates in the candidate evaluation process **submit background information prior to his/her interview with a candidate evaluation committee.** The questionnaire is the basis of the League's research and interview process. The League's ratings are non-partisan; they are based on standards of Involvement, Effectiveness, Character, and Knowledge, all of which have been developed and refined over the past 100 years.

A copy of this questionnaire will be provided to Candidate Evaluation Committee members to help them prepare for your interview. Candidate responses, except the confidential section, will be available to the public on the League's website.

The Municipal League requests the following materials from candidates. Please check to make certain you have sent in your:

- Candidate Questionnaire**
Sent by: X Email US Mail Fax Not Sending
- Resume (education, employment, and professional activities)**
Sent by: X Email US Mail Fax Not Sending
- Campaign Materials**
Sent by: X Email (Logo only. Other materials not yet produced.) US
Mail Fax Not Sending
- Constituent Newsletters and other publications**
Sent by: Email US Mail Fax X Not Sending (Not applicable)
- Photograph**
Sent by: X Email US Mail Fax Not Sending

Note: Electronically submitted questionnaires are strongly preferred. All materials can be emailed to cec@munileague.org. They can be processed and made available on-line far more rapidly than handwritten or typed submissions.

For non-electronic submissions, please print clearly and legibly and return the application **as soon as possible in order to allow the committee the greatest amount of time to prepare a complete report on your skills and experience.**

If you have not yet been contacted to schedule an interview, or if you have questions about the candidate evaluation program, please contact the League office at 206-622-8333.

If you have a disability and require accommodation to participate in the candidate evaluation process, please contact the CEC Coordinator at the League office.

A League volunteer Candidate Investigator is waiting to receive your questionnaire to begin his or her work. Please complete and return the questionnaire to the League office at your earliest convenience.

Please have your materials to us no later than June 10th, 2011.

Email the completed questionnaire and other materials to:
cec@munileague.org

2011 Candidate Questionnaire

SECTION I

BASIC CANDIDATE INFORMATION

1. Name as it will appear on the ballot

First Name	Middle Initial or Nickname	Last Name
Michelle	C.	Buetow

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

Seattle

3. Are you the incumbent? Yes No

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

20 years

5. How long have you resided in King County?

20 years

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

7. If partisan, please indicate party:

CAMPAIGN CONTACTS

Campaign Website: <http://buetowforschoolboard.com>

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.)**

I believe public education is the fundamental underpinning of America's democracy. At its best, it enables our children, regardless of race, gender, family income, sexual preference, religion or disability the opportunity to define and to pursue their dreams and to become thoughtful members of our society. Seattle is in many ways a model American city. But to remain a shining example, both the reputation and the reality of Seattle Public Schools can and must be better...both for the sake of the children in our classrooms and for the future of the city as a whole. Every child in our city can learn. Every child can emerge from their K-12 SPS experience ready for secondary education (which may take many forms), and a meaningful place in society. I want Seattle to be known, instead of the Evergreen City, as the Education City. It can happen. But it will take greater civic engagement, stronger District educational and operational standards, additional resources and more collaboration between the many communities with a stake in public education to reach every child. I take my responsibility in moving forward personally. I have followed District business for more than a decade. I understand many of the moving parts that make administration of the District a challenge. I want to help resolve those challenges. I want to be part of the governing body – the Seattle School Board – charged with the leadership and stewardship of this District.

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

I am a leader in my personal and professional life. This is a baseline characteristic for someone wishing to participate in the governance of an organization.

The discerning question, then, is what sort of leader am I? The answer is, I am a collaborative one. I understand collaboration both from the role of a mother in an active family of four and as a manager and executive in the high tech world, where organizational charts are rarely hierarchical...instead, they are cross-functional. In both my family and professional life, little of worth has been accomplished without the initial input and ultimate involvement of others whose perspectives are not mirrors of my own.

I am a skilled negotiator (see question 3) who is diplomatic and friendly in my approach to problem-solving. Friends describe me as compassionate. With a journalism background, I am a newshound, and I read voraciously in seeking facts and opinions on topics. Curiosity is the foundation of effectively gathering input to shape policy.

I believe I am a somewhat unusual leader in my affinity for big picture thinking, but my need to see down to fine print details in my assessment of whether a project is successful. I generally find my compatriots to be either fish or fowl...macro or micro thinkers. While my duality of thought can have drawbacks, I believe they are ultimately a strong backbone for good governance...for effectively addressing fiscal and operational issues.

Finally, and this is critical for the particular office I am seeking, I love children. I am amazed every day by their innate imagination and their potential. I am looking for a way to provide them with the best possible tools in their own personal growth trajectories, and I believe a seat on the SPS Board of Directors is an effective means for me to help them.

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.

- 1) A decade ago, the Eastlake neighborhood was negatively impacted by SPS enrollment rules. Families could not reliably access TOPS, the school occupying the historical heart of the community. (It had admission by lottery only.) Because of the enrollment rules at the time, families also routinely were not admitted to Montlake, the reference school for the neighborhood. Often, families would be given a mandatory assignment to MLK elementary, which was the poorest-performing school on Capitol Hill. Eastlake families receiving this assignment inevitably chose one of two options...send their children to private school or (far more often) leave the neighborhood. Despite repeated calls to the district to help resolve a situation that made Eastlake unattractive to families, the District Board at the time did not address the issue. Neither did SPS Central Administration. Within TOPS there was hostility and fear from a number of parents worrying that community entrance to TOPS would undermine its alternative mission. In short, the situation was a hot potato politically and neighborhood/school relations degraded substantially, including prominent pamphleting around the school declaring "Welcome to Eastlake, the Neighborhood Without a School". There was almost no interaction between the school and the interesting community (lake, gardens, businesses, non-profits) near it.

I was appointed to the Eastlake Community Council as a liaison to the TOPS Site Council and ultimately spent 100s of hours trying to find a solution that would work for both the school community and the neighborhood community. Much of this time was spent working with both communities on a collaborative, instead of hostile, approach to figuring out the problem. Even when the school and neighborhood eventually negotiated an admissions policy that might work for them (20 percent of incoming kindergarteners assigned from the neighborhood) central administration and the Board showed little interest in making an exception to established admissions policies. Eventually my advocacy helped the two parties make a compelling case to the district, and the exception was made. But shortly thereafter the New Student Assignment Plan negated the compromise and forced both the school and community back to the drawing table, once again with fear and hostility from some members of both communities. By this time my own family, and a number of other Eastlake families, were attending TOPS, and I led efforts to show the school that community members could be an asset, instead of an impediment, to an alternative school. With two years of advocacy work within the school and additional leadership within the community and documentation to the District, a new solution was brokered. TOPS and the community thoughtfully partnered to recommend and shape the GeoZone admissions policy that is now used as an admissions consideration for all Alt Schools in the District. After 7 years of work, my stewardship helped my school embrace its community and my community embrace its school, and this solution is leading to stronger school/community ties throughout the city.

- 2) My most challenging workplace in the past 20 years also provided me with some of my strongest transferable skills to public work. At my high tech employer I learned the art of negotiation and advocacy. I learned how to be proactive in researching and following federal and state laws. I learned

how to move an organization-changing idea from conception to implementation, with minimum resources and without going over budget. I learned that strength and compassion are not exclusive domains. And I proved that I am a leader.

I was in the first week of a negotiated-and-approved 14-week maternity leave for my first child, when the company's COO called me at home. He had decided that he needed me back in the office immediately. He wanted some communications projects put on the front burner, and as I was Director of Communications, he felt that the fact that I had spent 6 weeks mapping out my leave and training a fill-in to handle my duties was not relevant. Only I could handle his issues, and he was not going to take no for an answer.

I immediately moved from post-partum weeping to self-advocacy. It did not take me long to realize that his request, in addition to being unwarranted, was illegal. I also understood that pressing the "stick" side of the law, only, would simply mean a multitude of problems for me upon my return. After a day of deliberation on a strategy to address his request -- that could keep him satisfied while still allowing me time with my newborn -- I did the following: I documented our initial conversation, notified our director of HR, and let it be known that I considered the COO's request to be a non-starter. I also asked that my documentation remain confidential unless I could not resolve the situation. Knowing I had the "stick" of the law on my side, I felt much more calm in using the "carrot" of diplomacy to move forward, and to assure that I could continue to move up within the company upon my return. I called the COO and asked him to detail his concerns. Everything about which he was worried, I had already covered in my leave of absence plan. I quickly understood that the real issue was not workflow, but an executive afraid of abandonment by a trusty manager. I understood not just what my customer wanted, but what he needed...2 key elements any strong marketing/communications leader must address in every project undertaken. And two elements that public officials need to understand in reaching out to constituents and shaping policy. After reassurance that his projects were already on my department's roadmap, I told the COO that while I could not legally put in office time while on leave, I would be more than happy to be available for informal check-ins -- at any hour of the day, since I wasn't sleeping anyhow -- should he have the need to seek my assistance. I also promised to return a weekend before my negotiated return date in order to give a speech at the company's annual meeting re: high level marketing plans for the coming year. Once I gave this reassurance, the COO backed off his initial demand that I return. In fact, he called me only once at home during my leave, and I did arrive at the hotel to give my speech ...with my baby in tow and cared for by a fellow staffer during my moment in the spotlight.

When I returned from leave, I convinced the COO that I could be a more-committed, long-term employee, if I could have some flexibility in my schedule. Continuity of program management was important to the COO at that time. I put my baby into childcare a block from my office, set up the company's first private space for nursing/breastpumping (I could give the company more of my time if they helped me with new-mom logistics) and worked a 4-day, 10-hour schedule. My employer was happy, and I paved the way for a wave of maternity leaves that followed mine...helping other women to negotiate the tricky path to balancing work and children. Upon return from my 2nd maternity leave at my company, my workload was such that a 4/10

schedule did my company a disservice. However, that benefit was the main reason I had stayed at the company. In that case, I negotiated leaving my communications director position to start a new online marketing department. Having done much brainstorming in the quiet hours of my leave, upon my return I repurposed some of the dollars from my old communications department and leveraged some IT monies to build internal and external online products. The only reason I was able to redirect these monies was because I had earned the trust and respect of co-workers. As I documented my successes, my budget grew, and eventually I had a Vice President title, was managing a \$1.5 million annual marketing spend, and had staff on 3 continents. Because I could envision what success for myself, for my customers and for my company looked like, and I had the discipline to stay focused on my goal, I was able to provide a great result for all three parties.

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.**

- Sole female exec at Allied Telesis – a Tokyo-based high tech company with worldwide offices. *2006-2007*
 - Shows leadership ability, esp. amongst differing constituencies
- At Allied Telesis managed \$1.5 million budget and people/projects on 3 continents...North America, Europe, Asia. *2003-2007*
 - Shows fiscal and organizational responsibility
 - Marketing background means I understand segmented points of view and am adept at asking “What do the stakeholders want? What do the stakeholders need?” These are two key questions the Board needs to ask more often for the District to function well.
- Member of first Seattle Times team to publish paper online in late ‘90s. *1997-1998*
 - Keenly aware of ways rapidly developing technology both enhances and hinders broader and deeper communication amongst citizens.
- Mom of children, current ages 6,8, in SPS. *2008-present*
 - Commitment to public education as a civic cornerstone and a personal family value.
- 100s of hours of classroom and school volunteer work, with special emphasis on reading/writing preparedness. *2008-present*
 - Commitment to causes of children and education
- Current homeroom volunteer coordinator for daughter’s classroom. 2010/2011 academic year
 - Demonstrates leadership (unpaid) of volunteers.
- Co-founder of Tops Swaps, a children and adults free clothing exchange among TOPS families, demonstrating school’s reduce/reuse/recycle principles and building school community through thoughtful giving/receiving. *2009*
 - Ability both to conceptualize project and see it to fruition
 - Outreach to multiple communities, some of which tend to be underrepresented in school engagement
- Multi-year stints as member of Seattle School District advisory committees Website Technology Access Group and Alternative School Advisory Group. *2009-present*. Past neighborhood (Eastlake) representative to SPS school (TOPS) site council. *Early 2000s*
 - Involvement at District Administrative level instead of solely at school level shows interest in and knowledge of SPS operational and policy issues.
- Door-to-door distributor of Eastlake’s print community newspaper *2000-2003*
 - Learned importance of building community via shared access to information in world around us.
- Longtime member of University Presbyterian Church *early ‘90s to present*
 - Reflects values of compassion and conviction

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

I am challenging an incumbent with whom I have worked in the past because Seattle parents deserve a strong, independent board that will lead the District, vs. reacting to superintendent priorities and/or staff actions. An incurious board played a role in two 2010 unacceptable state audits of SPS, as well as the financial scandal that led to the firing of our previous superintendent and CFO/COO. Last week brought new news that the state auditor is investigating the propriety of the sale of MLK elementary, which the Board approved last year. Ultimately, all of these very public failures of public trust roll up to governance that is not as strong as it needs to be.

The job of a strong School Board is to set the course of a District via policymaking. In supporting the academic education of our city's children, the "lens" of policymaking is to be sure "students come first". This must be the primary item in the long list of items that make up the everyday business of managing SPS. In contrast, the job of the superintendent is to implement the board's direction via operations. (Too often in past years, the roles of the Board and Superintendent appear to have been switched.)

After creating policy, the Board must then be committed to investigating, for itself, whether policy as enacted by staff is indeed both following direction and is working. This means feet on the ground in Seattle Schools during the daytime, and not simply fulfilling the obligation to attend Board meetings.. This follow-up is a key part of policy-making but with the current Board appears to lack priority. Some Board members hold full-time jobs outside the city of Seattle and logistically cannot spend their working hours within schools and the community. Others may have that time, but do not agree that they are to examine policy's effects nor do they feel it is the responsibility of the Board to apply critical thinking to SPS staff operations/recommendations. My opponent chided his colleagues in public session for not accepting statements by the previous Superintendent as fact. This is the opposite of the approach I believe is necessary. It is critical to examine, in a professional manner, the recommendations of District staff. In contrast, I will ask questions and work to gather full information when making a decision. I will be open to policy course corrections.

The Board has one primary employee...the District's Superintendent. It has stewardship of an annual budget of more than \$500 million in taxpayer dollars. It must manage both the Superintendent and its budget with hands-on priority-setting, with frequent assessment of effectiveness of the courses it has set, and always – of course – with compliance to local, state and federal laws.

It must balance this strong management with the "softer" but equally critical task of community engagement. I believe it is less the Board's job to bring the District's programs to the community than it is the Board's job to gather community input to run the District based on the community's values and priorities. Of course, the community consists of many groups, each with its own point of view. In some cases, there are communities that have no relationship with the District at all, and I believe it is the duty of the Board to seek that engagement. It means outreach to communities that cannot advocate for themselves. This time-consuming duty has been given short shrift in recent years, yet it is critical, especially because many of the students who struggle with learning come from communities which for a variety of reasons are not engaged at the SPS governance level. To reach the students in the classroom we must reach the parents/caregivers and leaders in their communities.

I am a professional communicator with many years of experience, and I can bring an innovative, interactive spirit to our District's reputation for poor communications with parents, teachers, students, and community members. If elected, I would also be the only Board member who is the parent of young children in the SPS system, which would provide an important point of reference for Board governance and a point of contact on the Board for young parents.

An additional, appropriate area of Director advocacy: Collectively and individually, Board members need to engage with our state lawmakers to maximize the state resources flowing to public education. Article IX, Section 1 of the Washington State Constitution says, "It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders." I do not believe the state is meeting its duty at this time, and I also recognize the issues presented by the state's current budget shortfall and its history of inconsistent revenue flow. Consequently, I am in favor of support for legislative efforts to find new, and consistent, revenue streams for public education.

Finished!

If at all possible, send your response to the Municipal League electronically as an email attachment, or insert it into an e-mail message (cec@munileague.org). Mail and fax numbers are listed below. If the League has not contacted you to schedule an interview, please call the League office at your earliest convenience.

Don't forget to send the following to the Municipal League: a resume, a photo, campaign literature, and, if you are an incumbent, constituent newsletters and other materials. Please use the check-off list on the cover sheet of this packet to indicate which items you have sent.

A League Volunteer Candidate Investigator is waiting to receive your questionnaire to begin his or her work. Please complete and return the questionnaire to the League office at your earliest convenience.

Please have your materials to us no later than June 10, 2011. May 31st is preferred!

Email the completed questionnaire and other materials to:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION AND GOOD LUCK IN YOUR CAMPAIGN!

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