

NAME: Bettina Umstead

DISTRICT RUNNING FOR: District 2

1. What are two specific reasons you want to serve as a leader of Durham?

*After living in both Raleigh & Chapel Hill, I'm proud to choose Durham as the place I call home. As a member of this community, it is important for me to give back. I care deeply about providing students with the best opportunities to succeed and serving on the school board gives me the opportunity to think about how to create opportunities for the approximately 34,000 students in the public school system.*

2. Given recent and past school shootings, students are concerned about their safety. How would you improve staff and student training and what other measures would you take? How would you balance safety with student privacy and other rights?

*I remember starting to practice lockout and lockdown drills as a student and the scary thought that someone could enter our building to cause harm. I believe our students and teachers should be at central in the conversations regarding how to keep our schools safe.*

*To improve training for staff and students, we must include pro-active measures for preventing school violence. We must teach staff and students alike about how to identify warning signs when a person may be a threat to themselves. We need a good reporting and referral process to catch potential threats before they actualize. I also believe in developing really strong positive school cultures that support and affirm all students as a proactive measure. We should continue to train staff and students in reactive measures for if a threat happens around or inside of a school.*

*I do not believe the answer to increasing school safety includes putting more guns on school campuses. Adults need to make sure that we do not solve the issue of school safety with over-policing our schools.*

3. Often, there are racial and other disparities in suspensions in Durham Public Schools (DPS). How would you support the new Equity Affairs department and other ways to address this? How would you fund these efforts?

*The new Office of Equity Affairs has provided Racial Equity Institute training for our senior staff and principals which is a first step in understanding the role that race and power play in a system. DPS has implemented a series of initiatives under the Cultural Transformation model to improve school climates, provide alternatives to suspensions and provide counseling and therapy for students. Even with these initiatives, we must continue to carefully examine our data and work to address the why of student suspension. I believe this includes fostering better relationships between teachers and students, establishing school communities that implement restorative practices and developing collective ownership of school climate between students and school staff. I support the expansion of this office to continue their initiatives in making sure that all DPS schools are operating using an equity mindset.*

4. How do you think Durham Public Schools can better talk about consent and reproductive health and safety with their students? Do you think the current education program DPS offers is adequate?

*Durham Public Schools should teach all students about consent. I would like to see lessons on consent and healthy relationships starting in our pre-K and kindergarten classrooms with lessons on how to ask permission before touching or embracing others, honoring when someone says no and developing empathy. These lessons must be taught early and should be reinforced through elementary, middle and high school. I do not believe the responsibility to teach consent belongs to one teacher (ex: the health & PE teacher). The responsibility is to the whole school – all staff and students. I know that many parents have advocated to improve DPS' current health curriculum to include lessons on consent and we can continue to improve in this area.*

5. How do you plan to find and keep effective and qualified teachers, and what role do you see students playing in that evaluation?

*It is crucial that we hire and retain effective and qualified teachers. Attending job fairs across the country, creating lateral entry opportunities and ensuring that teachers receive the necessary resources and supports is key to keeping qualified teachers. I believe that having a collaborative and supportive school culture will keep teachers in classrooms. Currently, student data and how students are performing in a class during an observation are the only metrics captured in teacher evaluations. I could see students providing additional feedback to help teachers understand how to best engage students and deliver content that is relevant and engaging. From my experience, students give really good feedback and this increases students' level of engagement.*

6. What issues influenced your decision to run for school board this year?

*I would like to see Durham Public Schools to be a place where all students, no matter your race, gender identity, documentation status, family income, ability level or zip code, receive a quality education that prepares each student for life after high school graduation. Serving on the school board gives me the opportunity to advocate for policies and procedures that will create the best opportunities for our students.*

7. If you could have any super power, what would it be and why?

*I would want the ability to create empathy in others. Our world could be a better place if we were able to truly understand others perspectives. A close second is the ability to teleport from one place to another!*



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