

NAME: Michael D. Lee (Mike Lee on the ballot)

DISTRICT RUNNING FOR: 1

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

Over the last 4 years, we have laid the foundation to succeed here in Durham Public Schools. We have had transitions and changes that will help us grow as a district. As one of the leaders who helped to shape this new era in the district, I want to continue to lead and help the district keep this momentum and succeed.

Also, as a father of 3 DPS students, I want to continue to create a school system that paves a path for success in their lives, as well as the other 34,000 students we have in our district. I have enjoyed meeting and speaking to thousands of parents, students, teachers, custodians, staff, and administrators in my time on the board. I want to continue to advocate for their needs, and the needs of my children.

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?

As a father, I think about the safety of my children constantly, as a board member, I think about the safety of the 34,000 DPS students every day. I think we as a district must prioritize in securing our schools to prevent access to the buildings without making the children feel as though they are locked in or in a prison. In the election bond of 2016, the Durham community voted to allow Durham Public Schools to put in foyers in the entrance of each building to allow visitors to access only the office and not be able to walk into the school without registering first. This will prevent and/or delay unauthorized visitors from accessing the building. If we can do these sorts of re-enforcements without making the school feel unwelcoming, I am supportive of these changes.

Although I am not a fan of lock down drills, I think they are important to make sure everyone knows exactly what to do in the case of a real situation. I personally believe a drill in the beginning of the school year, and another at the beginning of spring as a refresher is sufficient.

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?

Two years ago, while speaking to Dr. L'Homme (our previous superintendent) about issues we were seeing as a district, I proposed an idea for an office of equity affairs to help to address how resources were distributed and suspensions were managed. From that day, I have been a full supporter of that role and team. I plan on continuing my support of this team by way of working to increase staff and working to develop a true formula based equity calculator to show the level of support each school needs based on various factors.

Funding this program must be a priority. I believe we should fund our needs in this area before funding other programs we support. It is important to grow this department to provide value to the

district and see results. I propose we fund this program as a very high priority in order to provide Dr. Bullock the support he needs.

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?

I think the more we, as a district and as parents, can help students understand their bodies, reproductive health, and emotions, the more we can address safety in all those areas. Growing up, students will experience different things with their bodies and emotions, and students should feel safe to discuss this with their teachers, counselors, and parents. Many times parents are not prepared to explain this, however, maybe schools can offer seminars or classes for parents to help them talk about these sorts of issues.

The program of health and human growth is a good foundational understanding of a student's body and emotions, however I think parents will need to fill in the blanks as far as questions from the students. Unfortunately, the school system is unable to be comprehensive in this sort of program, however, we should absolutely staff the schools with counselors and train teachers to help answer questions or concerns a student may have.

5. How do you plan to find and keep effective and qualified teachers, and what role do you see students playing in that evaluation?
- a. With the majority of teacher's pay coming from the state, there isn't much we can directly do as a district and county; however I do think there are things we can do here to support the recruiting and retention of highly qualified teachers.
    - i. For the last 3 years, I have been directly working on a project we are calling Teacher Housing. This would be an apartment complex with an initial focus on providing low cost housing to new teachers. The expanded project will be for other DPS staff, but the initial idea is to help recruit teachers. This project, and other ideas such as this, help to lower the cost of living for teachers.
    - ii. We will have to be the number one district in North Carolina to support our teachers with professional development, intra-classroom support, supplies, and other types of supports to help remove stress and allow them to focus on teaching. These types of supports will look like veteran teacher mentoring and mentoring, strong PLC support, high levels of customer service from central office when problems arise.
    - iii. Extra duty pay for hard to staff schools. We must be honest with ourselves that some of our schools are challenging. We can use this information for a more equitable distribution of resources and extra pay to help incentivize teachers in those schools.
    - iv. Focus recruitment on teachers who desire to be in an urban district like DPS. We can travel around the nation to seek out teachers and college students who want to help students with our demographics. We should put a hyper focus on finding those teachers.
  - b. As it relates to how students can help, I believe students should simply continue showing up for school, focusing in their studies, and maybe helping to hold each other accountable for their actions. Teachers are here to help guide students to success, and if students can help each other focus and participate by being engaged, I think we will have an overwhelming level of success in recruiting teachers.

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

We as a district have a long way to go. Over the last 4 years that I have served on the board, we have gone through a lot of transitions. Some of those transitions are bad, but most are good. I want to continue serving on the board of education because I think with the new superintendent and administration, we are on a path to high levels of success. As a father of three DPS students (10-year-old 5<sup>th</sup> grader, and two 7-year-old 1<sup>st</sup> graders) I want to help create an environment where they can succeed in school and in life. Specifically, I would like to address the following item in my next term:

- The creation of a formal equity calculator to balance the needs of our schools
- Equitable distribution of resources (financial and physical) throughout our district
- Increasing DPS's capacity for universal pre-k
- Finalizing the universal free lunch program
- Increased visibility and marketing for our district
- Update our district's systems to modern technology and automation
- Better program monitoring and measurements
- Implement more programs to reduce the cost of living for teachers and staff in our district.

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

- a. If I could have a super power, it would be to fly. My entire life I wanted to be in aviation and possibly join the military to be a pilot. Back then you had to have perfect vision and I had to wear glasses. That passion never left me. Every time I see an airplane flying, I think about my love for aviation. I think if I could fly, I would travel the world, to learn about other cultures and people whenever I wanted to. I would get to learn how other people live in all areas of the world. Flying has opened a lot of opportunities for people to visit other places and I would be able to do that all on my own. So, flying would be my superpower.



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