

# King County Democrats

## 2019 Candidate Questionnaire

### School Board Level



<b>Candidate Name</b>	Eric Blumhagen	
<b>Position Sought</b>	Seattle School Board Director, Position 1	
Home Legislative District	36th	
<b>Are you a Democrat?</b>	Yes	
<b>Campaign Name</b>	People for Eric Blumhagen	
<b>Campaign Contact Information</b>	Mailing address: 2400 NW 80 <sup>th</sup> St, PMB 601 Seattle, WA 98117	Phone: 206-225-6098 Fax:
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Campaign manager or point of contact		
Consultant(s)	Michael Fertakis, CD Strategic	

### Part I – Candidate Background

*Please limit each answer to **no more than** 250 words.*

Please briefly summarize and highlight your qualifications, education, employment, community and civic activity, union affiliation, and other relevant experience.

I am a parent of one student and one graduate from Seattle Public Schools. Both of my children attended SPS schools since kindergarten. I served as the legislative chair for my children's elementary school PTA and as advocacy chair and vice president for their high school PTO, holding all three positions for multiple years each. I was a community representative on the SPS Facilities and Capacity Management Advisory Committee and the High School Boundaries Task Force.

I graduated from the University of Washington with a BS Civil Engineering in 1997. I am currently employed as a registered Professional Engineer at Hockema Whalen Myers Associates, a small naval architecture firm that designs working boats such as fishing boats and barges.

I have been on speaker's bureaus for two major campaigns: Yes on the SPS BEX V and Operations levies and No on I-1240, the charter schools initiative. I also am a parent mentor for the Ingraham Rocketry Club, teaching students STEM skills.

Describe your history of political involvement, if any, in the Democratic Party, particularly in Washington state politics. In what offices have you served or previously sought to be elected or appointed?

I have focused my political involvement and advocacy on the School Board, so I have relatively little formal involvement with the Democratic Party. I have not previously sought to be elected or appointed to any public office.

What prompted you to run for this office? What priorities are you seeking to address with your campaign?

I saw three major issues:

Data is hidden from the public and at times the School Board. There were multiple times when staff said they had data to back up a decision, but that data was not made available to the public until after the School Board had voted. In some of those cases, the data did not support the decision. I want to see data, analyses, and budgets made available to the public.

There have been several recent instances where District staff have actively violated district policy and procedure. One example was freezing school waitlists for staffing capacity and another was the Amplify science curriculum pilot. There are also many cases where school or District staff denied special education students services that they were entitled to by law. In some cases, parents were only able to get their students those services by knowing the law and citing it to staff. We need to follow the law, established policies, and procedures.

There have been many cases where we are not learning from our successes. For example, Mercer Middle School in SPS made tremendous strides in improving math education and closing the opportunity gap in math. That program does not appear to be replicated in any other middle school in Seattle. Everett schools dramatically improved attendance in high school and increased graduation rates. Again, that program doesn't appear to be replicated anywhere else in the Puget Sound region. I want to learn from successes and replicate those programs so all schools benefit.

All of these issues tie back to equity. If we don't learn from successes and replicate them, we will not close opportunity gaps quickly. Students are held back from their potential if we don't provide them the services they are entitled to.

From whom are you planning to ask for an endorsement? If you have received endorsements to date, please list them.

I seek endorsements from Democratic Legislative Districts, current and former School Board Directors, PTA/PTO leaders, education leaders, unions, and news organizations.

I am honored to be endorsed by the following:

President of the Seattle School Board, Leslie Harris

Former Seattle School Board Presidents Sue Peters, Sharon Peaslee, and Kay Smith-Blum

32<sup>nd</sup>, 36<sup>th</sup>, and 46<sup>th</sup> District Democrats

King County Young Democrats

Please describe your campaign strategy - provide in writing your campaign goals and present progress towards them to your KCDCC endorsement interview.

I intend to campaign by reaching local community leaders. I don't know the successes and challenges of every school in my director district, so I will meet with PTA and PTO boards to learn. In the process, I hope to earn endorsements of leaders across the district. In the general election, I will repeat the process outside my region so that I can more effectively represent every student and parent city-wide.

I intend to raise approximately \$40,000 over the course of the campaign. I have raised approximately \$2200 so far.

Have you ever been a member of any other political party? If so, what party? Have you ever given money to a candidate from another party in a partisan race? If so, to whom and when?

No

**Please answer the following questions.** Your answers will not disqualify you from consideration for endorsement by KCDCC.

**Yes\***

**No**

1	Have you ever failed to pay any taxes or comply with any court ordered judgments?		X
2	Have you ever been found in violation of a Public Disclosure Commission, Federal Election Commission or Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission regulation?		X
3	Is there anything in your professional or personal life that has occurred regarding drug/alcohol abuse or domestic violence/abuse of vulnerable populations such as children, the disabled or the elderly?		X
4	Are there current allegations, ongoing lawsuits, or criminal convictions about which we should be aware?		X

\* If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, please explain your answer:

## Part II – Education and School District Issues

#	Question	Yes	No	Qualify your response
1	Do you support the right of public school employees to bargain and strike for better working conditions and pay?	X		
2	Do you support increased instruction time and a concurrent reduction of student testing?	X		
3	Do you support the right of parents to opt their children out of standardized testing?	X		
4	Do you support linking teacher evaluations to standardized test scores?		X	
5	Do you support charter schools and/or vouchers for private school education?		X	
6	Do you support amending the Washington State Constitution to allow a simple majority of voters to approve school bonds?	X		
7	Do you support supplemental funding for International Baccalaureate & Advanced Placement testing for low-income students?	X		
8	Do you support increases in salary for teachers who attain additional relevant degrees and certification?	X		Provided that this is not used as an excuse to reduce pay for teachers without an additional degree or certification
9	Are you willing to have yourself, your staff and your peers undergo training to understand and combat institutional racism and implicit bias?	X		
10	Are you willing to have yourself, your staff and your peers undergo training to understand and combat sexual harassment?	X		

11	Will your campaign be accepting contributions from corporate PACs such as, but not limited to, fossil fuel, pharmaceutical, or health insurance companies?		X	
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### Part III – Free Response Questions

*Please limit each response to **no more than 500 words**.*

Please review the King County Democratic Platform at <https://www.kcdems.org/d/platform/platform.xml>. Which platform planks do you believe are most relevant to schools and your school district? What relevant specific actions would you promote to improve public education?

Education planks supported:

#1: Without increases in education funding, we will only be able to take steps forward, not leaps. I will advocate with the School Board for increased funding from the State.

#3: If we are following the law in special education, more students will receive services and more funding will be needed.

#9 and Arts and Culture #1: We must be a school district for all, not just for the historically privileged. I will continue SPS' programs to improve equity and representation. Replicating successful programs such as restorative justice programs can help reduce disproportionate discipline and close the opportunity gap. The current African-American male initiative should be expanded to all marginalized communities.

#7 and #15: Vocational education and apprenticeship programs provide ladders to living wage union jobs for our students. SPS should work to expand CTE programs.

Education planks opposed:

#2: Charter schools drain resources from our public schools. By providing more flexibility in our system, we can reduce the appeal of charter schools by giving our students more school choices.

#4: Excessive standardized testing is expensive and disruptive to schools. We should limit standardized testing to state-required tests unless there are clear, demonstrated educational benefits to all students.

Which specific curricular courses or programs do you believe are most important? Which specific curricular courses or programs are you concerned might be eliminated with reduced funding or time in the school day?

I believe that every student is different and every student will have a different set of "most important" courses. That's why it's so important for schools to offer a diverse course offering and for the District to be flexible enough to allow students to attend the school that best meets their needs.

With school budget cuts, we have seen art, music, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes cut from the course offerings. All of these are important classes for developing well-rounded students.

What should schools and school districts do to support the physical and mental health of students? Provide specific examples.

At the elementary level, school districts should have counselors and nurses at every school. They should also have adequate time for lunch, recess, and unstructured play.

Every middle and high school should have dedicated health professionals on staff, covering both mental and physical well-being. Schools should be consistent and liberal in their granting of PE waivers for out of school physical activity, so that students can have an opportunity to choose what physical activity suits them best.

At every level, school and district staff should treat all students with compassion and dignity.

Minority, low, income and ESL (English as a Second Language) students are currently disproportionately disciplined within the public school system. What actions and/or programs would you promote to improve outcomes for these students?

We should continue implicit bias training for all staff. We should also carefully monitor schools for disproportionate discipline, identify where it exists, and take corrective action with school staff. Finally, we should identify schools that are eliminating disproportionate discipline and work to replicate their success in other schools. We should fully fund restorative justice programs in all schools and remove policy barriers to implementation of these programs.

Do you support classes in place, as part of a middle and high school curriculum, regarding both civics and about how our government works?

Yes. An educated electorate is the key to a functioning democracy.

Are there any other issues concerning public education you would like to address? Any suggestions for adoption of specific innovations?

We need to be cautious about implementing technology-based curricula. If an online curriculum is proposed, it needs to have an evaluation period with measures of success established ahead of time. If the curriculum doesn't meet those measures, we shouldn't move the goalposts. The evaluation should also take into account the available number of computers available to students to make sure we don't increase the digital divide.

Do you believe elected officials have a responsibility to bring up the next generation of leadership? If so, how do you plan on doing so?

Yes. By involving youth in decisions, we can encourage them to become more active in the District.

What is your definition of diversity? What experience do you have promoting diversity?

Diversity is the fact that every person is different due to their race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, life experiences, etc. Each person brings a different viewpoint to the world. What I think is more important than diversity itself is equity and inclusion. Equity means that more resources will be devoted to people with greater needs so that everyone has an equal chance to succeed regardless of their level of privilege. Inclusion means recognizing that each person's unique viewpoint is equally valid and has equal

value in determining the best course forward. We will not be able to please all of the people all of the time, but we can work toward equitable solutions.

One recent example of working to promote equity was my advocacy to move waitlists at schools across the district. The decision not to move waitlists meant that several schools were disproportionately affected. Students at Rainier Beach High School were not generally given their choice of schools. Franklin and Cleveland High Schools saw significant reductions in enrollment, causing them to limit course offerings. Both schools were also unable to admit students who were forced from the District by gentrification. In the end, the only schools benefiting from this policy were the charter schools that took in students leaving the District.

**I affirm that all the information provided in response to this questionnaire is true, complete and correct, to the best of my ability, and that no relevant matter has been omitted.**

Signature



Date: 5/31/19

Printed Name

Eric Blumhagen