

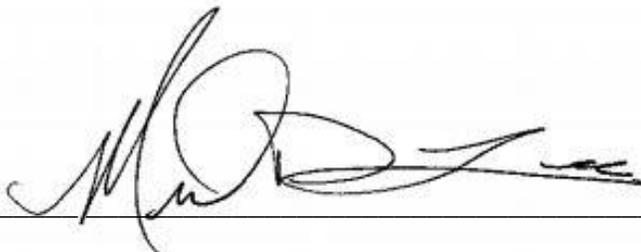


**OUR ENDORSEMENT PROCESS:**

1. **Please return completed questionnaires to DAE by 5pm on Tuesday, March 6, 2018.**
  - o Answers may be typed or written in legible handwriting.
  - o Please include your written signature to authenticate your responses.
  - o Please scan and submit responses in .pdf format to Michelle Burton at: thelibraryteacher@gmail.com
  - o If you prefer, you may instead mail a hard copy of your response to:  
DAE PAC % **Michelle Burton**  
3009 Stone Fence Court  
Durham NC 27704
  
2. **DAE PAC will hold candidate interviews on Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup> between 10am-3pm. (location TBD).**
  - a. Please keep this time period clear on your calendar. DAE PAC intends to interview every candidate who submits a completed questionnaire.
  - b. DAE PAC reserves the right to endorse or not endorse candidates for any particular office based on their response to this questionnaire, the candidate's existing record, our interview and other interactions with the candidate, and other relevant factors.
  - c. DAE PAC plans to publish and share with the general public the responses we receive, beginning with the next page of this document. We will include the name of each candidate, along with our original questions and the answers that you provide.
  - d. Questionnaires will be published in full, without editing.
  
3. **Please indicate the best methods for DAE PAC to be in touch with you. Provide contact information for your campaign and separate contact information that you would use if you are elected to the position that you seek.**
  - a. Note: This personal contact information is for DAE PAC use, and will not be shared with the general public.

<i>Name: Michael Lee</i>	<i>Position Sought: Durham County School Board District 1 Seat</i>
<i>Personal Cell Phone: 919-241-8009</i>	<i>Personal email address: micheaux@gmail.com</i>

4. **Please sign below to indicate that you understand the endorsement process that DAE PAC will use and that you agree to our process as you seek our endorsement.**

Signature:  DATE: 3/6/2018



**Please respond to each of the following questions.**

1. Provide your name as it will appear on the ballot and the specific elected position you seek.

Name: Mike Lee	Position Sought: Durham County School Board District 1 Seat
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2. Briefly describe your involvement with public schools in Durham or elsewhere.
- a. *I am a Durham Public Schools parent (three students, 10-year-old in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and two 7-year-old 1<sup>st</sup> graders). Over the last 21 years, I have had various relationships with DPS including mentoring, tutoring, volunteering, coaching, and being elected to the school board in 2014 (vice chair for 1 year, and chair for 2 years).*
3. If you are an incumbent, describe what you feel your most significant contributions have been and tell us why you feel your service should be rewarded with another term. Provide specific examples.
- a. *I think the efforts that would be considered most significant would be (in no particular order):*
- i. *Fighting the state with the addition of due process for our staff when the state removed career status*
  - ii. *Participating, approving and pushing for the new student code of conduct*
  - iii. *Leading the process for the selection of a new school board member*
  - iv. *Helping to iron out the details of the universal free breakfast program as well as push for a universal free lunch program (13 schools so far in the free lunch program)*
  - v. *Pushing for increased transparency in our budgeting process by requesting the maturation of the Budget Advisory Committee*
  - vi. *Leading our fight to keep two of our schools from being taken over by the state.*
  - vii. *Leading other school districts when we approved resolutions on migrant families and LGBTQ concerns.*
  - viii. *Leading the process for a new superintendent*
- b. *I believe I should be rewarded with another term because of my proven commitment to the improvement of the lives of our students, teachers, and staff. From the moment I started my campaign in 2014, I have expressed my belief that traditional public schools are the foundation of our society in general, but especially in Durham. I believe that every adult (with children in the system or not) have a vested interest in the success of the public-school system. I have visited 45 of the 53 schools, I have met with hundreds of teachers and administrators, I continue to talk directly with students about how to improve, and I advocate for the successes of DPS in interviews, conferences as well as person to person.*

*We still have a long way to go, to be where we all know DPS can be, and with the new administration and the momentum we are seeing, I want to continue to help lead the way to our victories.*

4. If you are challenging an incumbent, please provide specific reasons why you feel you would do a better job on the board of education than the individual you are running to replace. Please be specific.
- a. *This answer was intentionally left blank.*
5. What is DPS doing well?
- a. *DPS has done many things well over my time on the school board. Currently Durham Public Schools is #1 in the state for the identification of Black and Brown students for AIG. This is due to a concerted effort to identify underrepresented groups for advanced academics. I think we, as a district, have worked to support our teachers and staff. The board has made it clear that we are serious about protecting our teachers' careers and ability to grow. I think DPS prepares teachers for success, I don't*



*believe it is a coincidence that other districts target our teachers for recruitment. DPS supports members of the LGBTQ community well. We welcome and support immigrant families and those who are considered in the DACA program. The district continues to be a leader in support of homeless students, and those who need various services. DPS also provides universal free breakfast, and has provided free lunch to 13 of our schools with the Community Eligibility Program (CEP).*

6. What could DPS do better?

- a. *We are not where we want to be in DPS. There are various things we can do to continue our growth and successes such as:*
  - i. *Measurements and evaluations of all programs and initiatives while using that information to cancel or extend the said programs*
  - ii. *We must do better in circumventing the causes and actions resulting in our high level of suspensions. This is a persistent problem that has affected our district and students in a negative way. We should work with our teachers to understand what is happening in the classroom and find a way to support them in the ongoing discipline issues they are seeing.*
  - iii. *I think we can work harder to get parental involvement increases throughout our district.*
  - iv. *We should also work to review the layers of leadership and management in the district to empower building level leadership on initiatives, programs, and program evaluations*
  - v. *The district can work to recruit more substitutes, teachers of color, Latinx resources, and excellent principles.*

7. Evaluate the effect of the NC General Assembly's approach to public education over the last several years. Provide specific examples of legislation that you support or oppose and explain why.

- a. *Over the last few years, the NC General Assembly has declared an all-out war on traditional public schools. Bill after bill, law after law, they have worked to undermine the mission of public school. Some of these efforts include the removal of career status, removal of the teacher fellows program, the increase in funding for Teach For America, the continued assault on school funding, using the lottery funds in place of (instead of in addition to) the school funding budget line item, the K-3 class size unfunded mandate, Vouchers for private schools, etc. Specifically, I will point out the following:*
  - i. *Unlimited Charter School Growth: Currently we are poised to hand over \$21 million to charter schools in the coming year. Much of this is due to the explosion of charter schools here in Durham. The legislators effectively have developed a multi-tier education society and will continue to negatively affect traditional public schools as long there is an unlimited number of charters that can open in any district.*
  - ii. *School Letter Grades (happened after the 2013-2014 school year). These grades were another front on the war against traditional public school. With the 80/20 ratio of tests or growth formula, the state is helping present the narrative that traditional public schools are failing our children.*
  - iii. *Cutting of Teacher Assistants: They have cut TAs by nearly 8000 since 2008. Although we here in Durham have fought (mainly with fund balance) to keep them, there is a point in time where we can no longer protect them. This puts a strain on our early grade teachers to support the different levels of children coming into the system.*

8. To what extent should local policy makers stretch their budgets to fill in the gaps left by inadequate state appropriations?

- a. *In an education perfect world, I would say local policy makers should fully fund anything the state doesn't, however in the real world there are priorities other than education. We are blessed to have a board of county commissioners that support our public schools. They are generous on their funding, and continue to maintain our budget. Even with that support of the BOCC, our schools are severely*



*underfunded and we continue to have need. I don't think we should break local government's banks, however when needs arise from state unfunded mandates, I think special considerations should be made to help the school system meet the needs.*

9. What can we learn from standardized test scores? What can we learn from the School Performance Grades assigned by NC DPI?
- There are things to learn from standardized test such as the mastery levels of educational topics by individual students. These tests allow teachers and administrators to get some sorts of insights into how a student is understanding material, but this snap shot does not give a full picture of how a child is performing. As I stated earlier, these tests should be looked at as individual performance, not school, class, nor teacher performances.*
  - I do not feel that school grades given by NC DPI is an accurate descriptor of anything that happens in a school.*
10. What steps do you think DPS should take to better recruit and retain highly qualified staff, and in particular highly qualified staff of color and / or bilingual staff?
- 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.*
    - 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.*
    - 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 teachers. These types of supports will look like veteran teacher parenting and mentoring, strong PLC support, high levels of customer service from central office when problems arise.*
    - 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.*
    - 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.*
    - As far as bilingual a staff, our HR department has to put together a package and a program to specifically focus on our partnerships with community organizations and groups to find highly qualified bilingual teachers and staff. I understand that our HR group is working with programs to place, displaced Puerto Rico teachers here in our classrooms who are multilingual. It is work with these sorts of groups and programs that will allow us to bring more language speakers here to DPS.*
11. Describe how you believe the Board of Education should evaluate the performance of the Superintendent. Be specific about both qualitative and quantitative factors that you believe are important in evaluating the person charged with leading and managing Durham Public Schools. (question by Nicholas)
- The evaluation of the superintendent of the DPS superintendent must be comprised of both quantitative as well as qualitative. A superintendent must be measured on their ability to hire and retain the right leaders in the buildings as well for the district. The superintendent also must be held*



*accountable to making sure everyone in the district understands and moves towards their vision. The quantitatively data such as teacher working conditions, 360 evaluations, teacher retention metrics, equity measurements, and standard performance should be used. With qualitative data such as adherence to the strategic plan, community partner feedback, and business partner feedback.*

12. Describe the best practices you believe DPS should follow to recruit, retain, and evaluate highly qualified school administrators at the school level? Be specific about both qualitative and quantitative factors that you believe are useful in evaluating a principal's leadership at the school level. Similarly, how should assistant principals be evaluated?

- a. *The quality of school administrators is a large determining factor in the success of the school. It is very important to recruit and retain excellence in Principals and Assistant Principals. DPS can do this by continuing to participate and lead in the administrator program Dr. Mubenga used to teach in at NC State. We have a partnership with Pat Ashely in where she worked with and identifies rising starts in administration. The candidates are trained over years and placed in our schools. By all accounts, these placements are top of the line and creates a pipeline experience and "bench" for leaders in our school. I think we should work to expand this program to directly build our list of candidates to move into principalships.*

*Principals must be measured by factors other than test scores. I think test scores and growth must be considered, but the environment that a principal create in the building is important. I believe the teacher working conditions survey, 360 reviews, school growth scores should be considered in the performance of principles. Qualitatively I think the relationships with the parents and students is important. If the students don't know who the principal is, or if parents have never heard from the principal, there may be a disconnect. I think the programs and ideas the principal, outside of academics, is important to review and understand as a way to measure the success of the principal.*

13. Describe the best practices you believe DPS should follow to recruit, retain, and evaluate highly qualified central office personnel? Be specific about both qualitative and quantitative factors that you believe are useful in evaluating the contributions of central office staff

- a. *Central office staff are there solely to support the work and needs in the buildings. This is important to understand when looking to hire and recruit staff for central office. Everyone in the building should have a directly line mission to support the schools with high levels of customer service, and without question, do what it takes to make schools successful. The recruitment of central office staff needs to start with that understanding. When looking to evaluate the performance of central office personally, their work with the schools, feedback from the teachers, principals, teachers, and/or parents they serve should be weighted higher than quantitative factors. Our deliverables are successful students, the support from central office should enhance that work, if it doesn't, new resources should be sought and recruited.*

14. How would you balance school stakeholder concerns about high suspension rates and the school-to-prison pipeline with concerns about adequate safety and discipline in schools?

- a. *I absolutely think we can disrupt the school to prison pipeline by investing in alternatives to suspensions that are hosted away from the school. We currently have Lakeview as a long-term suspension alternative, but this solution is ineffective in its current state. I would want us to focus the programing there to include restorative justice and 1 to 1 counseling to help the student focus on actual goals and needs to customize their learning environment direct to address their specific needs.*



*If we can reach each child and develop a customized path to their desired outcome, I believe we can greatly reduce repetitive suspensions.*

*There is also a need for continuous training for teachers and staff related to handling of students. I think there need to be training beyond the code of student conduct. I think there needs to be an understanding of culture to connect some of the things seen in the classroom in the form of behavior with what the student is experiencing away from school. I think this type of understand can help to meet the student where they may be coming from. We as a community can work together to address this, as it is not only a school issue.*

15. The racial demographics of DPS enrollment do not reflect those of Durham County. Is this a problem? If so, what should the district do differently?
- In DPS, we are just over 80% Black and Brown, however the county is only about 49% Black and Brown. This discrepancy is noted by many different groups and organizations, however I do not see this as a problem. Those want to be at DPS are at DPS, and the reverse is true as well. We need to focus our efforts on those who choose to support our schools. We will continue to grow our schools, and continue to succeed, and as we do, those who have chosen to go elsewhere will find their way back to DPS. When we improve ourselves for our students, Durham, as a county, improves.*
16. The rights of LGBTQ students and staff have been a controversial topic debated fiercely at all levels. As a board member, how do you plan to support LGBTQ staff and students? In your view, what specific responsibilities (if any) do individual educators at the school level have to LGBTQ students?
- There should be no difference in how LGBTQ students and staff are treated versus their peers. This should not be a topic of discussion. We are a district have the responsibility to provide and truly support EVERY student in their place of education. Just as with racial understanding and training, there should be training about the challenges and lives of those in the LGBTQ community. If we are able to provide this level of understanding within our community and schools, those students can and will no longer have to hide who they are, and will be able to fully focus on one of the most important things they need at this time, their education.*
17. Many parents and educators are excited about transforming Durham Public Schools using the community school model. Describe what you believe are the potential costs and benefits of adopting the community school model in Durham. If you are not familiar with the community school model, please review these documents before responding to this question.
- [Link to Report from Center for Popular Democracy](#)
  - I am a supporter of the community school model in all of its aspects. There are a lot of areas the traditional school model cannot address in its current state. When community schools, things such as food insecurity, medical and dental needs, mental health, and other vital needs are addressed. This has not fully been done in any DPS school, so the prospects of adopting this model in some of our schools is very promising. I am excited about working on this program in a small few schools and scaling it up from lessons learned as it proves to be successful. I do not feel this model is a fit for all DPS schools, however there are some schools that will immediately benefit from this effort.*
18. The community school model referenced above only works if DPS commits to funding a full-time community school coordinator at each school following the community schools model, as well as a district-wide community school director/coordinator. Do you commit to fighting for and voting for a



2018-19 DPS budget that includes funding for at least four full time community school positions. Provide a yes / no answer, then a written explanation for your answer. Be honest and candid about any concerns you may have.

- a. *I commit to fight for the success of the community school model to be implemented within the DPS district. Although I support the program, I don't know if voting for four full time positions for the model in next school year's budget. As I have stated before, I am for starting with a smaller implementation of the model in a few selected schools, and then scale out from those successes. In a time where our budget is constrained by many different forces, committing to four full time roles is hard to consider. I am very supportive of the district supporting any sort of grant opportunities to fund these roles and eventually including the roles into the regular budget, however at this time, I can't support the entire four roles. Maybe one or two roles.*

19. How should DPS relate to charter schools?

- a. *Charter schools are here, and those who have chosen them have their reasons. We need to focus our efforts on creating an environment to supersede any other choices a parent might have and make DPS the number one choice for their children. We currently have just under 34,000 students in DPS, charters have just over 8,000, we must focus on our students.*

20. Recognizing that it is difficult to be an expert in all things, please let us know who your two or three most trusted advisers or policy experts are when it comes to education policy. What is it about these individuals that leads you to value their judgment?

- a. *I have a circle of people I speak to on a regular basis. In order to keep the conversation honest and open, I have vowed to never reveal who they are. This circle consists of 4 principles, 9 teachers, 2 APs, 4 PTA presidents, and 7 students. When things come before our board, I typically reach out to them to understand the effects of that decision on them. Sometimes they reach out to me, sometimes I reach out to them, but I will not give names.*

21. How should DPS best handle the custodial contract negotiations to arrive at a fair and just solution that works for all? In general, how should we approach opportunities for leadership growth and financial stability for Classified Staff in a climate of under-funding from the State level?

- a. *I think transparency is key to this conversation. I've met with many custodians to understand the stakes of this decision. I have heard from all sides and have concluded there seems to be information left out. I think the custodians should have a high percentage of weight in this discussion, however I think all of the information and consequences need to provide to the custodial staff to be clear about what the choices are. As an example, there is a difference of the term "living wage" as it relates to with benefits and without. With benefits, the custodians will be making less per hour, however they will have full benefits. This needs to be put forth and allowed for them to choose how to proceed. Some may want to keep the higher hourly rate, while some would gladly take the lower rate, but with benefits. This is the sort of conversation that will need to be happy in order to come to a solution.*
- b. *As for my personal thoughts on this subject, I am honestly conflicted. My heart says there is no question we should bring all of our custodial staff in house. Custodians are just as important the education and safety of our students as anyone else in the school building, therefore, they should*



*be afforded the same benefits and job satisfaction as everyone else in the building. My business mind conflicts with my heart. Financially, the obvious choice is the outsource the work. With budget belts tightening, outsourcing is an obvious choice, but the only benefit there is financial, and we can't solely govern on one side of decision making. I am fully conflicted here, however, I will be fighting to bring the custodial staff inhouse and work out the details later in the budget cycle.*

22. Which components of DAE's "In This Together" program feel most exciting to you? Which feel most possible to achieve, and why? Which feel like the biggest challenges, and why? If unfamiliar with the "In this Together" program, [read this document before responding.](#)
- a. *In This Together Components: My biggest concern are things that directly impact the budget. We all want more teachers, more councilors, more support for all of our buildings and staff, however in this budget climate, we just can't. It would be great to fund roles at the levels DAE speaks about in the In This Together program, however right now much of it is unobtainable. We obviously can fight for grants, fight for better school funding from the state, and ask for more from our county commissioners, however, we have to balance each item with the availability of funds provided to us from other governing bodies.*
- i. *Components we can Achieve*
- 1. All students receive the resources they need to be fluent readers by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade – This is our primary focus in DPS from grades K-3, above all else this should be everything we work for and everything we pay for in programs. If this can't increase, we have failed.*
  - 2. All students have the opportunity to work with educators of color. – HR must put into place goals to recruit teachers, administrators, and staff of color. If this means we must travel to all 50 states to find them, we should.*
  - 3. Community partners are regularly informed about the great things going on in our schools. – Marketing efforts has greatly increased over the last few years, this will continue to grow, and a fully marketing strategy will be introduced very soon to cover this exact sort of communication.*
  - 4. Community School Model– I think this program can work if rolled out correctly. As long as we don't try to do every targeted school at once, we can make it happen. I would like to see one or two schools fully incorporate the program to show its success, and start to scale the program up to the identified schools for this program. If we are able to do it slow like this, I believe it can be fully funded as we see the results and impacts.*
- ii. *Biggest Challenges*
- 1. Each school has more counselors. – Although should be, and is a goal, the cost of increasing this is hard to overlook. I think working with local entities as well as other governmental boards, we may be able to make this happen.*
  - 2. Exceptional Children's program staff have manageable caseloads and paperwork. – Again, this is a cost issue. I absolutely believe if funds were unlimited, we would provide the EC team all of the resources they need to handle their caseloads better, however EC services are paid from local funds, and this would have to be address by eliminating other programs or roles.*
  - 3. Class sizes are small. – Unless we can get capital help for expansion of our buildings, this cannot happen. We all saw the effect of the K-3 class size bill had on our district without funding. Until we are able to gather the funds to expand out buildings or build more schools, I can't see how this can be done in our current state.*



23. DPS is currently 30+% Latinx. Though many of these students are U.S.-born, many are not, and most have immigrant parents. How can DPS do a better job to meet the unique needs of these students and their families?

- a. *As the board did two years ago, we must continue to compel the district to support, protect, and lead on educating all of our students no matter their status. Every student in DPS deserves to feel safe to learn and grow. We, as a district, need to enhance our new comer program to help those who are working to integrate into the school system. The program is currently underutilized and should be marketed and communicated to all new comer families.*

*We will also need to focus our recruitment efforts to find teachers with a Latinx background and understanding of culture. As with any of our students, seeing teachers, administration and staff that look like them is important. We are severely lacking staff with their shared heritage, so we as a district must put a focus on that recruitment effort.*

24. Despite the fact that they are the group with the highest number of students enrolled, African-American students are struggling significantly with respect to their white counterparts. Why do you think that this is the case, and what do you think DPS can do to change this trend?

- a. *The persistence of the performance gap has been consistent for many years now. There have been efforts for decades to change this. In order for us to change something we haven't been able to change, we need to do something we've never done before. This is why the idea of community schools is so attractive to me. We've never fully implemented a wraparound program like community school in DPS previously. There are many reasons for a child or even a demographic to underperform. The sheer number of reasons is daunting and insurmountable; however, we can change this by providing services and support at the school level that may make up for some of the toxic stress some of our students are experiencing. If we are able to eliminate one area of concern for a student, we are that much closer to helping to solve a distraction.*

*As a district, we must focus on equitable distribution of our resources to support schools and students that need more help. Our district is well funded, however not every school needs the same level of funding. Some schools are at a baseline level of need, while other schools are at a much higher level of need. This need to be balanced to provide more resources to some of our school.*

*Another concern is a culturally appropriate curriculum. We need to provide information and curriculum surrounding those of black history. It is very important for students to learn about their histories as well as learning about other cultures. When history is relegated to a small segment of our population, leaving out the important contributions of African American's this can cause disinterest and disconnection from the subject matter. We must connect on a different level with our students. We have to teach them they are achievers and successful. We must give them exposure to the successes they can and will have. Along with culturally appropriate curriculums, we need to make sure we are challenging our African American students at the same levels of their peers. Letting our opinions of who can do the advanced curriculums are holding our students back. We can no longer allow our staff to do this.*