

King County Democrats 2023 Endorsement Questionnaire

Name

Christie Robertson

Email address

xiebob@gmail.com

Phone number

(206) 919-9043

Candidate name

Christie Robertson

Candidate pronouns

she/her

Candidate name pronunciation

as written

Campaign Filer_Name

Committee to elect Christie Robertson for school board

Campaign email

christieforkids@gmail.com

Campaign phone

(206) 919-9043

Campaign website

<https://christieforkids.com>

Link to candidate headshot

https://lh4.googleusercontent.com/A0WDBFpjhiCIURfRTYf2gAkYoQwc-IMGoYF5IPEEeB39mVduRFyJ4ZvM4mVmVP9CIRP85RiMI3dOBrzZ0Zf56xSX019zcbzhRnYnTpjEN_L88OfdS1nWorKbg-BQe4s2VA=w1280

What type of position are you running for?

School

What position are you running for?

Seattle School District No. 1

Are you a Democrat?

Yes

Have you ever been a member of another political party?

No

Have you ever been found in violation of a Public Disclosure Commission, Federal Election Commission, or Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission regulation?

No

Do you have a code of conduct for campaign staff and volunteers?

No

If you have campaign staff, do you support them joining a labor union?

Yes

Do you support employees of your jurisdiction (e.g. your city's employees, the Port's employees, etc.) exercising their collective bargaining rights without fear of retaliation, including the right to bargain and strike for better working conditions and pay?

Yes

Are you willing to have yourself, your staff, and your peers undergo training to understand and combat institutional racism, implicit bias, and sexual harassment?

Yes

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate fossil fuel PACs?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate pharmaceutical PACs or corporate health insurance PACs?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from corporate building industry PACs, including the Building Industry Association of Washington (BIAW) and the National Association of Home Builders?

No

Will your campaign accept contributions from law enforcement or sheriffs' organizations?

No

Will you return contributions from companies or PACs who are aligned with the organizations listed above and others that conflict with Democratic Party values?

Yes

Have you made any donations to Republican candidates or Republican Party organizations in the last 5 years?

No

Have you previously participated, or will you be participating, in a candidate training program like Institute for a Democratic Future or Emerge?

Yes

Please describe your background (education, employment, community and civic activity, union affiliation, and political activity).

I hold a PhD in Neuroscience from the University of Washington, and my professional background includes working in the technology sector, where I gained experience in team management and project development.

In terms of community and civic engagement, I have been actively involved with the Seattle Special Education PTSA (SSEPTSA) for the past two years. Within SSEPTSA, I have organized and facilitated educational events, provided support and resources to families, and passionately advocated for the rights and needs of children with disabilities. Additionally, I have served on various committees, including the Restraint and Isolation (R&I) Committee and the Advocacy Committee, where I work to address the unique challenges faced by marginalized students.

While I do not have a formal union affiliation, I believe in collaboration and working closely with all stakeholders, including teachers and education professionals, to foster a comprehensive and inclusive education system.

This is my first experience running for office. My motivation arises from a genuine desire to bring about positive change in our educational system and to champion the success of every child. With my background in neuroscience, experience in the technology sector, and active engagement in SSEPTSA, I bring a diverse perspective and a commitment to promoting inclusive education to this crucial role.

What motivated you to run for this position and how would you evaluate your success?

I am motivated to run for this position by my personal experiences as a parent navigating the special education system for my child with a disability. Through that journey, I witnessed the challenges faced by families and the need for advocacy and change within our educational system. I want to be a voice for community, ensuring that every child has access to quality education and opportunities to thrive.

If I succeed in my goals, students with disabilities will spend more time in the general education classroom, be moved away from their communities less often, and the disproportionality of discipline and restraint will decrease. School climates should improve, teacher turnover should decrease, and students should report improved mental health.

Additionally, I would expect an increased level of engagement and satisfaction among students, parents, and educators when they feel that their voices are heard and valued in decision-making processes. I would strive to establish a means to measure our relationship with the community, regularly seeking feedback and addressing concerns effectively.

What are the top three issues of urgency that you will address if elected?

If elected, I will prioritize three urgent issues within our educational system:

1) Well-Resourced, Inclusive Schools: I will ensure that inclusion takes center stage in the district's plans for "A System of Well-Resourced Schools." Rather than designing schools for the "average" student and adding resources as an afterthought, we must consider the entire spectrum of student needs from the start. This includes addressing the needs of students with disabilities, advanced learners, and all combinations thereof, to create truly inclusive and supportive learning environments.

2) Communication and Transparency: It is crucial for the community to understand the actions of both the district and the

board. I will collaborate with fellow board members to explore effective communication models used by other districts. By enhancing transparency, we can foster trust, engagement, and a stronger partnership between schools, families, and the community.

3) Special Education Focus: Special education has been neglected for too long. I will prioritize understanding and improving the allocation of resources in this area. This includes examining our special education spending, which currently far exceeds legislative allocations. I am particularly concerned about the overuse of practices such as restraint and isolation, disproportionately affecting disabled students, as well as black and brown students. We must closely monitor segregated classrooms, assess the placement of students in specialized schools, and work towards ending practices that cause trauma to our students.

How will you involve all residents and engage all communities in the decision-making process?

1) Partnerships with Community Leaders: In communities that are traditionally left out of decision-making, collaborative partnerships with community organizations, advocacy groups, and local leaders are essential. We have a rich availability of such groups in Seattle.

2) Monitor District Engagement. I would like the board to learn more about the school district's current level of community engagement and monitor a plan to improve interaction with community.

3) Task forces. Explore areas where community task forces can help guide district and board decision-making. Those most impacted by decisions should always have a voice in those decisions.

4) Transparent Communication. All meetings, including committees, should be recorded and easily accessible. I would like to explore a board newsletter or other means of sharing with community what the board is working on.

How have you promoted an enduring environment of inclusivity, diversity, and equity?

One of my major efforts over the last two years on the Special Education PTSA board was to improve our outreach to a broader audience of special education families. Our family guide to special education, which was finally printed last October, was professionally translated into the top 10 languages spoken by families of students with disabilities in Seattle Public Schools (information I got from a public records request)
<https://seattlespecialeducationptsa.org/special-education-guide>.

In addition, for the first time this year, I was able to arrange to add 3 additional languages to all of our monthly general meetings (in addition to ASL, which we were already providing) - Spanish, Somali, and Vietnamese. We worked with a local Somali-immigrant-owned interpretation service, and interacting with our interpreters has also helped us to add some cultural references of meaning to our immigrant communities.

On the school PTAs at my children's schools, I have also worked to promote inclusion of disabled kids. Working with another parent at Thornton Creek, we rekindled a meetup for families with disabilities, which has been very successful. I'm especially proud that we have been able to raise awareness in the parenting groups of how important it is to assure that all kids can participate in our school events. With some difficulty, we were able to persuade the school to provide a special education teacher for a movie event so that some of our more highly-impacted disabled kids were able to attend. This has greatly elevated parents' awareness of this issue, and now there is inclusive language in all event descriptions.

If elected, how will you address inequalities experienced among BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, or other marginalized communities and advance an agenda of equality?

This is the most important and the hardest question. We are so far from equity in education. It is something that is on my mind every moment I am thinking about education. The current School Board is fortunate to have exceptional voices with profound wisdom, and I know that I will learn from them. Most critically, we need to listen to the voices of the most impacted. Relying on guesswork often leads to misguided solutions that waste time and money and ultimately fail to solve problems.

I've spent the last three years reading and listening and thinking about these issues. My commitment is to continue this process even as I take on the responsibilities of the board. By maintaining a genuine dedication to learning and engaging with diverse perspectives, we can make progress toward educational equity.

Do you support charter schools and/or vouchers for private/religious school education?

No

Do you support supplemental funding for International Baccalaureate & Advanced Placement testing for low-income students?

Yes

Do you support salary increases for teachers and paraprofessionals?

Yes

Do you support continuing and expanding art, music, physical education, and library classes?

Yes

Do you support enhancing awareness of the option for parents to 'opt out' their students from military recruitment activities?

Yes

What policies or changes will you seek to ensure that all students receive an education that enables them to reach their fullest potential?

Inclusive Education: creating a more inclusive educational environment where every student, regardless of their background or ability, feels valued and supported. This includes implementing universal design for learning principles, which promote diverse teaching strategies and accessible materials to meet the individual needs of students. This also includes collaboration and co-teaching between general and special education teachers.

Equity in Resource Allocation: Resource allocation should take into account the disparities that exist among schools, including prioritizing schools serving students from low-income backgrounds, and students of color furthest from educational justice.

Student Supports: Counseling, mental health resources, food, and health care are critical to students' well-being, and student well-being is critical to education.

Family and Community Engagement: By involving families and the community, we can better understand and address the unique needs of students and ensure that their education is a shared responsibility.

How will you address equity in discipline, particularly regarding school resource officers?

A punitive approach to children is unhelpful and can even be traumatic, especially when law enforcement is involved. We need to work with teachers and leadership to change the framing around behavior issues. Behavior is communication, and usually it is communicating that a child is having difficulty meeting an expectation. Instead of focusing on punishment for difficult behaviors, we should take these behaviors as signals to strengthen relationships and work with children. Restorative Practices is one approach that is gaining some traction, as is Collaborative and Proactive Solutions. Our leadership and educator training needs to shift as quickly as possible to stop putting kids on pipelines to prison, homelessness, and related results.

What will you do to advocate for ample and equitable funding for K-12 education including special education, school nurses, counselors, mental health professionals, and paraeducators?

In the 2023 legislative session, I communicated with legislators regularly to advocate for removing the arbitrary cap on special education funding and increasing the multiplier to meet the needs of schools. I also emphasized that we need to continue to fund the Inclusionary Practices Project out of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The legislature did increase special education funding, but not to the degree needed. There also remains a gap between the basic level of special education funding and the level at which the safety net kicks in. I am concerned that this is encouraging districts to send children to specialized private schools that do not serve kids well. Children should be served in their neighborhood schools. This is possible for nearly all children with proper teacher training and support. I will continue to urge the legislature to study special education funding and determine ways to use funding to encourage inclusion.

Nation-wide, we have seen examples of parents objecting to books in school libraries with subjects that include racial injustice, the experience of BIPOC communities, and LGBTQIA+ perspectives. How will you address the concerns of these parents and uphold your district's policies?

We need a culturally responsive and diverse curriculum that reflects the experiences and identities of all students. If parent object, we can stand firm and explain the district's policies for selecting books and curricula, backing up the policies with research citations.

Environmental concerns impact students differently depending on the location of their homes and the maintenance of their school buildings. Provide examples of your climate justice actions to date and your specific plans for school-related environmental equity for all enrolled students.

While environmental concerns may not have been a specific focus for me in the past, I recognize the importance of addressing climate justice in our schools. I would welcome guidance in this area from more experienced members.

CERTIFICATION: I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the provided information is true and accurate.

Yes

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