

**CANDIDATE FOR MEMBER-AT-LARGE****Laura Nugent****Director of Student Support Services
Burlington School District****Starksboro, VT, USA****REMEMBER TO VOTE!
Sept. 23 – Oct. 21, 2020****Candidate Statements:****What inspired you to apply to the BOD? (Limit 150 words.)**

The Council for Exceptional Children is an international leader in the support and advocacy of young people with exceptionalities. The mission statement speaks with clarity about the value of addressing the needs of children and youth holistically, including quality of life and parent engagement, critical to success in education. I value this mission and wish to enhance my role in the organization's growth and development.

As Director of Student Support Services, it is my privilege to provide educational and socioemotional resources for more than 900 students and their families. I am responsible for the training and oversight of teachers, case managers, and related services staff. The CEC has assisted my team in maintaining alignment to our purpose in public education. I have had the pleasure of serving on the CEC Finance and Audit Committee for two years. This service has allowed me a greater understanding of the organization and enhanced my already strong commitment to the vision and outstanding services provided to its members.

Describe how your leadership experiences, professional or volunteer, have had an impact on fostering change. (Limit 250 words.)

My leadership experience began many years ago as Vermont Chapter President of Hadassah International. This role allowed me to serve woman, young children, and their caregivers by providing culturally significant educational and social experiences. With the support of my committee, we revitalized and developed many programs that continue today. While in a teaching role, I began and co-chaired an annual event, Reading for Inclusion. This event series included prepared lessons for classroom teachers to present to students with the goal of facilitating their understanding and enhancing their appreciation of people with disabilities.

As Director of Student Support Services in the Burlington (VT) School District, I coordinate education and social opportunities for more than 900 students with disabilities identified under IDEA and ADA. I do this with the support of approximately 250 professionals and paraprofessionals and a budget of \$19M. The Student Support Services Department is working toward improved outcomes for students at all grade levels from PreK through secondary, including early intervention, academic and social skill development, family outreach and collaboration, independent living skills, post-secondary goals, and job training. As a member of the District Equity and Access Leadership Committee, I collaboratively work to provide direction in the development of a vision of equity and access as well as events to publicize the importance of our core values.

Additionally, I have served on the CEC Finance and Audit Committee for more than two years, which has greatly enhanced my understanding and appreciation of CEC. I participated in the Planet Youth Summit in Iceland to learn and develop strategies to prevent substance abuse for my community and support work in my school district with Substance Abuse Prevention.

What are your three major achievements and/or experiences that will help you be successful on the board and why? (Limit 150 words.)

Financial and Compliance Management: As director, I have increased Medicaid Reimbursement dollars from \$425,000 to over \$1M, which then greatly enhanced social services provided to students across the district. I was able to accomplish this goal through increased staff buy-in and training. This demonstrates ability to influence membership and accomplish goals.

Distributive Leadership: I have worked toward distribution of leadership roles in teaching staff, administrators, and paraprofessionals. The development of the Paraeducator Advisory Committee (PAC) has allowed self-determination to enhance skills and working conditions, which benefits students with disabilities. This demonstrates leadership in adherence to purpose.

Education: I am a doctoral candidate at UVM, where I expect to defend my dissertation in September 2020. My research will provide teachers with strategies for best practices in supporting students and families experiencing school transiency. This demonstrates ability to apply learning productively.

These experiences have enhanced my leadership skills, which will directly benefit the board as they demonstrate broad systems thinking with clearly positive outcomes for the organization.

People who apply to a Board of Directors usually stress their communication and collaboration skills. What three additional skills would you bring to the board and how do you believe they would be beneficial? (Limit 150 words)

I am an advocate of organizational ambidexterity, as described by the authors of Lead and Disrupt (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2015). From this text, I learned that organizations must always have an eye on innovation while continuing to do the things that work well. In my current leadership roles, I have demonstrated skills in facilitating systems thinking and developing processes to make change. This lens would be useful to the CEC as the organization continues to grow resources, increase membership, and enhance revenue.

A strong moral compass has assisted me in checking my bias and applying organizational rules consistently but with intention and flexibility based on the current reality. These are essential skills in systems leadership that would benefit CEC by adherence to the mission while promoting balance and trust.

I have developed a strong sense of political acumen that allows me to lead under challenging conditions, persuade opposition, and move forward with integrity. The CEC will benefit from my ability to hear many voices, to perceive and assess influences accurately that impact decision making.

Other than time, what would the biggest challenges be for serving on the board and how would you address this/these challenge(s)? (Limit 150 words.)

There are no significant challenges for serving on the board, as it is evident the member search committee is addressing any concerns regarding such difficulties as assuring diversity and complementarity skills of board members.

Many boards suffer from lack of role clarity, differentiation of expectation, and activities between members and the executive committee. The board can address these challenges by clear policies governing processes and duties. Boards that rarely meet face to face are often challenged by a lack of contact and understanding of one another as individuals. If chosen, I will make an effort to develop a relationship with other members to understand how we might enhance one another's performance on the board and provide the organization with the highest value.

Professional Position(s) and Education:

Primary Professional Position:

Director of Student Support Services
Burlington School District
Burlington, Vermont USA

Secondary Professional Position (if applicable):

Adjunct Faculty - Teacher Education
Champlain College
Burlington, Vermont USA

Highest Degree:

Ed.D near completion - graduation expected in October 2020. University of Vermont, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies with Focus on Special Education and Econometrics. 2015- 2020

CEC Membership Information:

Years of CEC Membership: 6 years

Division Membership(s):

Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)

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