



**LAURA R. NUGENT**  
**Director of Student Support Services**  
**Burlington School District**  
**Burlington, VT USA**



**REMEMBER TO VOTE!**  
**Oct. 11 -26, 2021**

**Learn what inspired Laura to apply for the Board of Directors.**

[Watch the video.](#) [Read the transcript.](#)

### **Biographical Information:**

Laura Nugent believes in education and opportunity for people with disabilities that leads to independence. She values the needs of families and develops programs with innovative ideas. She intuitively sees the threads of opportunity that wind through an organization, brings them together into a coherent whole, and helps others extend their thinking. Respected as a credible voice in decision making, finding strategic community partners, and adherence to governance boundaries, Laura earns a seat at the table wherever she serves.

Currently, as Director of Student Support Services, in Burlington (VT) School District, Laura oversees special education, nursing and drug prevention in 13 public school settings, for students ranging in age from 3 to 21. She manages a \$19M budget, successfully doubling revenue through Medicaid Reimbursement. These funds support the mental health needs of more than 3,500 students districtwide. Laura has led important research in school transiency and suspension of students with disabilities, resulting in policy and practice change. She participated in the Youth Planet World for prevention of drug use in Reykjavik, Iceland in 2019.

Laura holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from University of Vermont and was awarded the Office of Special Education Fellowship in 2015, a Jean Garvin Fellowship in 2018, and the Herman W. Meyers Excellence in Doctoral Policy Research Award in 2021.

### **Candidate Statements:**

**Describe how your leadership experiences, professional or volunteer, have had an impact on fostering change.**

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 co-chaired an annual event, Reading for Inclusion. This event series included prepared lessons for classroom teachers to present to students facilitating their understanding and enhancing their appreciation of people with disabilities. Currently, I am Director of Student Support Services in the Burlington School District, Vermont. In this role, I coordinate education and social opportunities for more than 900 students with disabilities identified under IDEA and ADA, with a staff of approximately 250 professionals and

paraprofessionals with a budget of approximately \$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; development of independent living skills; and job training. As a member of the District Equity and Access Leadership Committee, I collaboratively work to provide direction in development of a vision of equity and access mean as well as events to publicize the important of our core values. Additionally, I have served on the CEC Finance and Audit Committee for two years and have participated in the Planet Youth Summit in Iceland to learn and develop strategies to prevent substance abuse.

**People who apply to a Board of Directors usually stress their communication and collaboration skills. Describe up to three additional skills you would bring to the board and how you believe they would be beneficial.**

- I am a strong advocate of organizational ambidexterity as described by the authors of Lead and Disrupt (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2015). At Harvard University, 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 skill in facilitating systems thinking and developing processes to make change. I believe this lens would be useful to CEC as the organization continues to develop resources, increase membership and enhance revenue.
- My strong moral compass has assisted me in leading fairly, checking my bias, and applying organizational rules consistently but with intention and flexibility based on the current reality. These are important 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 difficult conditions, persuade opposition and move forward with integrity. CEC will benefit from my ability to hear many voices, to accurately perceive and assess informal influences that impact decision making.

**Describe up to three major achievements and/or experiences that will help you be successful on the board and why.**

I graduated from Vermont Police Academy. In this male dominated field, I learned how to speak up for myself and those who were unrepresented. This experience taught me that I was an advocate. In my journey to become trained as a teacher, and later earning a doctorate in Educational Leadership, I became the most educated person known in my family. I started as a paraeducator progressing to the Director of Student Support Services in 8 years. I am persistent and focused. I have strong core values that include the belief that all people, including those with disabilities, should have a voice in choices made about them. I have spent a great deal of time educating myself to better serve the families and students I represent in my district. This includes workshops for leaders at Harvard University and the 2019 Planet Youth conference in Iceland to better understand substance abuse prevention. The combination of these experiences has given me a broad and unique perspective that will make me a valuable member of the CEC Board.

#### **Professional Position and Education:**

**Primary Professional Position:** Director of Student Support Services

**Highest Degree:** Ed.D., University of Vermont, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, 2020

**CEC Membership Information:**

Years of CEC Membership: 12 years

Division Membership(s): Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)

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