

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Dr. Caitlin Montague and I would like to formally express interest in the open Utqiagvik School Board seat.

I moved to Utqiagvik in 2012 to work as the Curriculum Coordinator for North Slope Borough School District. I will never forget my first visit here, before I had accepted the position, in the spring of 2012. As I entered the Ipalook gymnasium Superintendent Peggy Cowan started inservice by reading aloud the mission and vision of the school district. The level of engagement from teachers as well as the community, the work being done to provide relevant, and high level learning for all students is what brought me to the district and I felt privileged to be a part of the process of developing and implementing the Iñupiaq Learning Framework, and be a part of a team that provided a high level of support to teachers and administrators. Years ago, the district provided funding for full-time teacher support coaches in Math, Reading, ELL, Technology, Librarian, a curriculum coordinator, and an assessment coordinator, as well as hiring multiple consultants to work specifically with teachers at our village sites to increase their access to support. I enjoyed being a part of that support team, working with the core content area teams to do curricular work, and really ensure that teachers had the support they needed to meet student needs.

Throughout my years at the district, I filled several roles, including Coordinator of Assessment and Accountability, until my department was cut by Superintendent Stewart McDonald in 2019. I no longer work for the school district, but am still working in a policy-focused public service related role within the community. In addition, I occasionally do consulting work for rural districts within the state who need help with their strategic planning and school improvement process.

I am interested in this position because I see it as a way to use my experience to give back to the community. I have a deep and first hand knowledge of Alaska state statute and School Regulations, NSBSD board policy, and the role of the school board within the organization. I have had extensive experience in strategic planning, developing action plans, managing initiatives, and tracking implementation.

My goals, if selected, would be first, to help re-focus the conversation to curricular matters, and what the actual teaching practices and materials look like in the district, how those meet the needs of our student body, and how teachers and administrators are being supported. I believe that the teachers in this district have the capacity to be innovative and visionary, and I will support that. This is especially important as the state and district manage changes required by COVID-19 safety.

An important part of that is ongoing program evaluation, looking at the definition of academic success for students, and then working with teachers and administrators to see that students are meeting those goals. My process would be to take a close hard look at the mission and vision of the district, the strategic plan as it stands, the resources at hand in terms of existing materials, infrastructure, and staffing, and ask hard questions about how our resources are meeting and implementing that vision and those goals.

My second goal is to bring my educational policy expertise to the table, to help ensure that state and federal guidelines are being met across the board, in order not only to build compliance, but to analyze and leverage external systems to work in favor of our students and staff.

Thank you for your consideration,

Caitlin Montague, PhD