

Public Charter School Governing Board Member Information Sheet

Name of Public Charter School ___Ecology Learning Center_____

Name of Board Member ___Joshua Abram Kerksmar_____

Email Address _____jkerksmar@gmail.com_____

Occupation ___Professor_____

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Why do you wish to serve on the governing board?

I'd appreciate the opportunity to serve on the ELC Board for a few reasons. I was invited to apply on the basis of my work in environmental education, so I think my background would be a good fit. In addition, as a parent of two homeschooled children (ages 9 and 11) who is considering a range of high school options, I view board service as an ideal opportunity to learn more about the ELC as an institution. Most of all, I believe the ELC's mission is imperative in a world where people are increasingly disconnected from each other and the communities in which they live. To serve alongside others engaged in that work would be an honor.

In the process, I hope to gain a greater understanding of the nature of ELC's work, as well as any challenges in effecting it on the ground.

2. What is your understanding of the educational needs of students in the catchment area?

While I haven't made a study of schooling needs in Waldo County, I've taught enough first-year writing classes to know that traditional public education often fails students. It teaches them that "intelligence" means the ability to perform well on a test, or write a beautiful essay, and has no room for the idea that genius might lay outside those narrow bounds. The rubrics that I used never measured a student's facility with art, music, dancing, or any number of technical skills that,

perhaps, best captured their unique contributions to the world.

With this in mind, I believe we need to meet students where they are. What do their special gifts and abilities look like? What are they interested in? Then, on the principle that all things are connected, how might we teach them the ways that writing, or math, or anything else is connected to the things they already love?

This is hard work, and it's not always obvious how to make those connections. Nor do students always live in home environments that foster openness to academic inquiry. Nevertheless, I believe this work is essential if we're going to address the question of educational needs.

3. Please list any previous or present educational involvement; such as board member, budget committee, citizens committees, etc. List school(s) or district(s).

Board Membership

- Vice President, Preserve Rural Maine (2023 - Present)

Citizens' Committees

- Chair, Unity Transmission Line Committee, Town of Unity (2023 - Present)

Educational Involvement (Selected)

- Faculty Representative, Senior Staff, Unity College (2018 - 2023)
- Faculty Representative, TERRAIN Curriculum Design Team, Unity College (2019)
- Faculty Lead Designer, "History of Wildlife and Place" expedition, Unity College (2019)
- Co-Chair, Curriculum Assessment and Planning Committee, Unity College (2018 - 2020)
- Faculty Representative, Strategic Academic Leadership Team, Unity College (2018 - 2020)
- Faculty Representative, Academic Regulations Committee, Unity College (2017 - 2018)
- Chair, Sustainability Studies Faculty Search, Unity College (2017)
- Co-Organizer, Unity College Colloquium Series ((2017 - 2018)
- Faculty Advisor, Diversity Club (student club), Unity College (2020)
- Faculty Advisor, Guiding Eyes for the Blind Club (student club) (2016 - 2020)
- Committee Member, Lilly Fellows Program Book Award, Valparaiso University (2014-2016)
- Editorial Board Member, Fresh Writing, vol. 14, University of Notre Dame (2013 - 2014)

4. What special qualifications do you have that will help you to be a board member?

As an educator and faculty member, I have practiced listening to others' ideas, thinking through thorny issues, and collaborating on solutions.

As a researcher into things that happened in other cultures long ago, I've found that my initial ideas are wrong, and that a deeper understanding of culture and context is necessary to decipher any given past event. Doing history, then, has reminded me of the importance of asking good questions, listening to multiple perspectives, and being humble.

No piece of writing is ever perfect. But as a writer (and teacher of writing), I've practiced the art of communicating complex problems to a range of audiences.

As an amateur philosopher (and teacher of environmental ethics), I've challenged myself -- and my students -- with the idea that the purpose of debate isn't to "win" but to collectively move toward a more nuanced grasp of a complicated issue.

Finally, as someone who, over a five-year span after college, worked on a farm in New Hampshire, then took gigs as a commercial fisherman, a carpenter, a lawn care professional, and a dissatisfied office worker, I've acquired the habit of finding something fascinating and beautiful in everybody and (for the most part) everything.

5. What is your understanding of the role you will play as a public charter school board member?

My understanding is that I'll attend monthly meetings, participate in the summer retreat, and serve on a subcommittee that fits my background or skill set.

Sign  _____ Date March 20, 2024

For your convenience this sheet is located on our website under Resources for Authorized Schools (<http://www.maine.gov/csc/>).

Please see the Maine Charter School Commission's Policy on Public Records.