

## **Democratic Nominees for Board of Ed: Incumbent Michael Burke and CDSP Co-President Sara Parent**

**Author :** David Gurliacci

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The Democratic Town Committee announced Thursday that Michael Burke and Sara Parent have been nominated as candidates for Darien's Board of Education.

— *an announcement from the Darien Democratic Town Committee*

"Michael brings a wealth of experience and a steady hand, and Sara brings her experience as a highly involved parent and a former educator to the Board of Education," DTC Chair David Bayne said.

"At a time when the COVID-19 crisis is testing the very foundations of how education is being delivered to our children, Michael and Sara represent the kind of thoughtful and innovative leadership that is precisely what Darien needs in order to continue providing unsurpassed educational opportunities to all of our children," Bayne said.

"Together they represent the best that Darien has to offer and our town is particularly fortunate that they have chosen to run for the Board of Education during this unprecedented time."

Michael Burke is seeking his third term on the Board of Education and Sara Parent her first. From within and without, both have been intimately involved in the Board of Education's work; Michael as a Board member and Sara in her role with Council of Darien School Parents, of which she is currently co-chair.

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Darien's education system is facing unprecedented challenges from simultaneous public health and economic emergencies that have stopped traditional learning in its tracks and caused unprecedented cuts to the Board of Education's budget.

- ***For more information, you can visit [Burke and Parent's campaign website](https://darienite.com).***  
***[MikeAndSara4DarienSchools.com](https://darienite.com)***

Now, more than ever, independent leadership is required to guide the Board of Education through this two-fold crisis. Michael and Sara will provide that leadership. Michael Burke has served on the Board of Education since 2014.

In addition to his general board duties, Michael is the Chair of the Board's Policy Committee. He has also served on the Negotiations Committee which successfully reached agreement with Darien teachers during the last two negotiation cycles.

Michael said of his time on the Board of Education:

- I believe that our work on the Policy Committee in the near term will be even more critical as we continue to adapt our educational environment to the challenges posed by the pandemic and its aftermath.
- Our work on the Negotiations Committee has been especially gratifying as we were able to reach two agreements that honor the important work of our teachers and are mindful of taxpayer dollars.

Michael is a graduate of Skidmore College and Fordham University School of Law.

He is senior trial counsel for the law firm of Traub Liberman Straus and Shrewsberry where he litigates matters in the federal and state courts of Connecticut and New York.

"As a litigator, I listen, assess and advocate. I think those skills have brought value to the Board over the course of the last six years," he said.

Michael and his wife Kathleen have two sons, Matthew and Nolan, who are rising seniors at Darien High School.

Of his nomination, Michael said:

- Our sons have been so fortunate to have been educated in this wonderful school district. Their teachers and coaches through their years at Holmes, MMS and DHS have been enthusiastic, highly skilled and kind.
- This has been especially so over the last three months as teachers have adapted to our new, and hopefully temporary, E-Learning environment.
- If I am fortunate enough to be elected to serve another term, I will work with my fellow Board members to continue to create school environments that allow all of our learners to prosper academically and learn the value of community and kindness.

Sara Parent is well known for her advocacy for Darien's children. She has held many leadership roles in Darien and is currently the co-chair of the Council of Darien School Parents and sits on the District's Strategic Planning Committee.

Sara has also been the Chair of the Holmes School PTO and Chair of the Parent-Teacher Committee at Saint Luke's Parish School.

She has served on the Representative Town Meeting since 2017, and is clerk of the Public Health and Safety committee. Sara received a Master of Arts degree in curriculum and teaching from Teachers' College at Columbia University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology and elementary education from Middlebury College.

Prior to moving to Darien in 2009, Sara taught elementary school in both Connecticut and New York City. She and her husband, Greg, have two daughters, Elizabeth and Catherine, both in the Darien Public Schools.

Sara said of her nomination:

- We chose to move to Darien primarily for its schools, as is true of most families in town.
- We have been impressed by the curriculum and the quality of the teaching throughout the district. However, the Board of Education faces significant challenges in the months and years to come.
- If elected, I will work hard to keep our children at the forefront of every conversation and help move the Board forward in an efficient and transparent manner. I look forward to continuing my work in helping to ensure that Darien's schools continue their tradition of excellence and are the best they can be for all learners. We are currently in very uncertain times.
- Change is inevitable and difficult decisions will have to be made. My professional background, educational expertise and established relationships with other community leaders,

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members of the Board of Education and District Administration will be invaluable.