

Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board – Applicant Questionnaire

The Alaska Department of Education is pleased that you are potentially willing to serve on the Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) Advisory Board. In an effort to assist current MEHS Advisory Board members, the Department of Education and the Governor’s Office in making the best selection possible for the vacant seats, we are encouraging you to complete the following questionnaire and return it with your letter of interest and detailed resume. Please attach additional sheets as needed.

Name Travis Vaughan **Position** Parent Advisory Or Sitka Community Advisory

Current community of residence Sitka, Alaska

Current employer & position Broker, Baranof Realty LLC

Previous employer & position (relevant to serving on the MEHS Advisory Board)
Senior Manager, Microsoft Corporation

1. What prompted you to consider applying for the vacant MEHS Advisory Board seat?

I am in the process of selling my business, Baranof Realty LLC, and looking forward to semi-retirement. As such, I would like to utilize my newfound free time and previous expertise in business, volunteerism, and youth sports activities to promote the greater good. I have two children at MEHS, Alexander and Samson Smith, and care greatly for the sustainability of MEHS and the education of our youth. I owe my success to the involvement of my parents who worked tirelessly for my well being and those of other children. In short, it is my duty to repay their efforts by contributing to the success of the next generation.

2. In your opinion, what special interest, perspectives, talents and/or capacities could you bring to the MEHS Advisory Board?

I have 25 years of business experience working in STEM fields for companies like Dell, L-3 Aerospace, and Microsoft. I also have a deep understanding of entrepreneurship as a small business owner in the Sitka community since 2014 and have an intimate understanding of local politics, real estate, and economic development activities throughout Alaska. I have served on numerous boards,

including the STA Enterprise Board (2015-2017), Sitka Youth Football (2014-2018) and Treasurer of Sitka Chamber of Commerce (2015-2017).

3. Are you, or have you ever been, directly associated with MEHS? If so, in what capacity?

Other than having two children presently attending MEHS, I have had no affiliation with the school.

4. What is your vision of the role of MEHS and how a public support residential high school fits in the larger educational scheme for the State of Alaska?

The trend in education for the last couple of decades has been the recognition that one size does not fit all. Wealthy parents have understood this for many generations and provided their children with opportunities at private schools, preparatory academies, and the like. However, talent is not only found at the top, but in even more abundance throughout the social and economic strata. Our society benefits immeasurably by harnessing the potential of as many youths as possible and investment in education is the critical success factor for our state to become less reliant on imported human capital.

However, this investment should not be limited to traditional public education systems - which are fantastic and must be sustained - but also expanding the scope and breadth of educational opportunities to fit the needs of the unique student population throughout the state. My vision for MEHS is to highlight this best in class institution and propagate it not just throughout Alaska but the nation as a whole, focusing in areas and regions that could benefit from this unique model.

Imagine the benefits to our society if we implemented a MEHS model focused on inner city youths throughout the country? The impacts on crime, poverty, health, and economic output would be tremendous and truly invaluable.

I understand this goal may seem overly ambitious for an organization that has to compete for funding among a myriad of legislative priorities for the state. Consider though, that legislatures like to fund things that are sources of pride for their constituents.

Do you think the Alabama football team has a hard time with funding? No, they most certainly do not. And the reasons are plainly obvious: they are successful and a source of pride for the entire state.

The good news for us is that we don't need a trophy case full of national championships to find a source of pride. I really believe that MEHS is a best in class education model that Alaskans can be immensely proud of. We are not a backwards state sitting in a deepfreeze surrounded by trays of ice cubes. We are, infact, proactive and forward thinking. We are unconstrained by convention, strengthened by a toughness and resilience rarely found in the lower 48 these days, and most of all we are unafraid to create and implement unique, outside the box solutions for our students.

By focusing some national attention on MEHS we can become a source of great pride for Alaskans. Logically, this makes legislatures a little easier to work with and allows MEHS to shine as a model school where conventional public educational approaches need adaptation based on unique student populations and environments. One size does not fit all, but MEHS fits us! And perhaps other communities as well...

5. To what other boards, commissions, etc., have you been appointed? Are you currently active on any boards, commissions, etc.?

I have been involved in multiple boards in the Sitka community. I was the Treasurer for the Sitka Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau from 2015-2017. During that same period I was also invited to serve on the STA Enterprise Board and help them guide economic and business initiatives. I was the founder of the Sitka Flag Football League in 2014 and served as the President of that organization until 2018. Each year we had over 100 kids participate.

6. In your opinion, what makes you uniquely qualified for the vacant seat for which you are making application?

In regards to the Community Advisory position: Although I have lived in Sitka for the past decade, owned a small business in the community, been heavily involved in local volunteerism, and raised two children here, my most unique skill is that I am not from Sitka originally. I was born in Texas and traveled all over the US during my corporate career. This experience gave me the opportunity to observe communities that are prospering and others that are not. I have been exposed to a diversity of people, places, and ideas. In short, I've been in Sitka long enough to be a local, but moved around enough to learn first hand what other communities have tried and why they were successful or conversely, failed.

In regards to the Parent Advisory position: I think it is important to choose a candidate that has sympathy and understanding for how difficult the task of educating children is. Far too often, well-meaning but misguided parents bring their own personal and political views into play when evaluating school decisions. This is of course a perfectly natural thing for people and parents to want to do. After all, nothing provokes a more visceral reaction than the parent/child relationship.

However, it is of paramount importance that parents make a conscious effort to remain objective. For reasons stated above, this is easier said than done. Nevertheless, I believe I have demonstrated this ability in my time as the head coach and founder of the Sitka Flag Football program. Nothing teaches you to be a parent like the experience of actually being one. I would say the same wisdom holds true for coaching children and dealing with the parents of those children. You really don't get it until you've been there. But once you do get it, you sure do appreciate parents who just want to help and leave the drama aside. I hope to be a parent of the helpful variety and let the educators do their jobs.

7. If interested, please provide any additional information that you believe might be helpful to reviewers of your application.

As I stated previously, I benefited from parents who were very involved in my education and the community we lived in. Now it's my turn to pass that on. But it wasn't just my parents. I also had the benefit of attending two wonderful public school systems growing up. My mother, a retired public school teacher of 30 years, had an observation reflecting upon her time as a teacher, "The state is going to have to get into the business of raising children. Whether the government likes it or not, Johnny is not going to learn to read coming from a home environment he didn't ask for and through no fault of his own, is totally stuck in. What we are doing in Public schools just isn't going to work for those kids."

I would like to see a MEHS model for those kids my mother was referring to. And kids like my own, who certainly come from a strong and supportive home environment. Yet their dreams and ambitions align better with the opportunities at MEHS. And still other children who are perfectly happy and flourishing at Public schools like SHS. Ones like my wife and I attended and found a successful path in life to follow.

It's going to take a mix of ideas and strategies to maximize the potential of future generations. I believe that MEHS is one of those strategies and I would like to help in any way I can.

Signature Travis Vaughan 4/4/2022

Travis Vaughan

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EXPERIENCE

Baranof Realty LLC, Sitka, AK — Owner/Broker

March 2013 - Present

Left corporate America to move to Sitka and be with my wife, Dr. Mandie Smith, her two children Alexander and Samson, and enjoy the unique lifestyle of living in Sitka, AK. Not only have I been successful at running Baranof Realty, but ensuring that we are active participants in the local community. Baranof Realty has taken the lead on supporting projects such as the Community Land Trust that focuses on affordable housing for local working families. Other notable projects include: Aspen Hotel, Sitka Hotel, STA purchase of new headquarters at 204 Siginaka Way. We are most proud of these projects because they help move our community forward and grow the local economy. Having now sold Baranof Realty, I will also step down as Broker in October of this year.

Microsoft, Redmond, Wa — Senior Manager, Office 365

June 2011 - March 2013

As Senior Manager for Office 365 Dedicated Cloud I was in charge of technical teams focused on fortune 500 account migration to Microsoft Cloud based services.

L3 Aerospace, Corpus Christi, TX — Program Manager

November 2006 - May 2011

L-3 is one of the most prolific defense contractors in the US with operations spread throughout the world. I was in charge of business operations for the largest personal services contract awarded by Congress (~\$500m contract/>1,200 employees) in the US at that time, supporting depot-level, rotary wing aircraft maintenance and modernization.

Dell Inc., Austin, TX — Program Executive, Air Combat Command, USAF.

November 2000 - November 2006

At the time, Dell was the largest computer manufacturer in the world. I began my career with Dell answering phones in the technical support department. I quickly advanced into the OCONUS logistics support team and eventually became the youngest Program Executive at the company in charge of developing combat information transportation systems supporting the global war on terror.

VOLUNTEERISM

Board Member, Sitka Tribes of Alaska, Enterprise Board (2015-2017)

Treasurer, Sitka Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau (2015-2017)

Founder & Head Coach - Sitka Flag Football League (2014-2018)

Campaign Manager - Larry Olivarez for County Judge (2005-2006)

AWARDS

Business of the Year - 2016, Sitka Chamber of Commerce

Student Athlete Dean's List UNM 1997

All State Football Team, Texas 1996

SPECIAL SKILLS

ASA Certified Sailor

PADI Certified SCUBA Diver

PMP Certification, Villanova University

Licensed Real Estate Broker, Alaska

EDUCATION

Texas State University, San Marcos, TX — *BBA*

September 1997 - May 2003

I attended Texas State University on a full athletic scholarship.

Mary Carrol High School, Corpus Christi, TX — *High School Diploma with Honors*

September 1992 - May 1996

Captain of the Football Team