

Please provide your general and specific thoughts on how the county can address the unmet needs facing our schools. Detail how you would prioritize aid for education in your budget deliberations.

This is a difficult situation, and I say this because no one wants to raise taxes because we all feel the effects of paying more. I honestly think that the majority of people living in our county would not object to increasing taxes if our school system was providing a top-notch education and if our students were consistently meeting target goals/scores on state tests. Who would argue with paying more taxes if the results of spending more on our schools revealed a clear positive impact? As a teacher, annually, I had to submit an SLO for each of my self-contained English classes. I had to submit how I was going to test my students in specific areas and the goal that I had for the class. By Spring, I had ample time to teach and target those specific learning outcomes and had collected and assessed the data to present to my Principal. Much like this, example, the citizens of our county need to see the progress or lack of progress that students are making. This data can be used to show that funding the budget should be a priority. In order to address the unmet needs facing our schools, we have got to fully-staff schools. This will help with overcrowded classrooms, and help provide students with more small group instruction. It will also help with adequate staffing of counselors and special educators.

There is considerable room for improvement in addressing educator recruitment and retention. Class sizes have increased because of cost-cutting measures and/or due to hiring freezes, layoffs, and retirements. Many support personnel positions have been eliminated. And Maryland is always challenged with filling educator jobs because we import nearly half of all certificated teachers from prep programs in other states. The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated these shortages. At the same time, the Blueprint calls for the hiring of 15,000 additional educators to provide more individualized attention to students. How will you address critical concerns with educator recruitment and retention?

We have been experiencing a nationwide teacher shortage for years. It really is at the core of why our schools are failing. When I was 5, my mother, who was a preschool teacher, took me to school with her while I was on summer break. She was a teacher of twelve 2-year olds. Even at 5, I read to them, helped unpack their lunches for them and played with them. It was then that I knew that I wanted to be a teacher. Teaching used to be a very respected and sought after profession; not so uncommon that I knew many students who also dreamed of someday teaching. To recruit and retain teachers we, first, have to offer them a competitive salary. One in which they can raise a family on. I, personally, have plenty of friends that are teachers, and they are single parents, who have to work two or more jobs to make ends meet. Other colleagues of mine complained about their pay but kept teaching because they were not the breadwinner of their family, so their salaries were supplemental income for the household. I began as a paraeducator in our county at Margaret Brent. I made \$12.50 an hour and was only allowed to work 34 hours per week, without benefits and without pay on days off/holidays/summer break. After taxes, I didn't contribute much to our household, but it allowed me to be home for my children to get them on and off of the bus. Ultimately, I obtained my Master's degree and was recruited by Charles County Public Schools. To be honest, I wanted to teach in St. Mary's because we live here, but the pay was so much higher in Charles. Teachers should not have to look for employment out of their counties to find competitive pay. Even after leaving CCPS, I looked into teaching in St. Mary's, but even as a certified Special Educator, I would have moved backward on the teacher salary scale to take a loss of about \$10,000. I understand, that the Blueprint addresses this shortage and mandates increases, but it has been a long time coming. I would also propose that the county offer more Conditional Teaching Certificates to current SMCPS employees who meet the educational requirements to be a teacher and who have earned at least an "Effective" rating on their yearly review. Allowing them to teach on a conditional teaching certificate, while providing them with a teacher mentor and departmental support allows vacancies to be filled by qualified, current employees who have proven to be quality educators. This will curtail some of the teacher recruitment currently taking place outside of our county and our state. Another strategy to recruit is to include information about the TAM Program at the Tech Center in each of our school's weekly newsletters to parents/guardians. We oftentimes hear a lot about the STEM program, but never about the TAM program, so most parents/guardians are unaware that there is a program for students thinking that they want to become teachers. My son's friend is in the TAM program, but only found out about it by visiting the Tech Center during it's Open House. We've got to make the profession attractive starting with students.

Another huge step toward recruiting and retaining educators is through boosting the respectability of the institution. This entails openness and continued support for our current educators, with the end result of teacher retention in the county. Through boosted status as a respected institution, our positions would become more appealing to those aspiring to teach, as well as veteran educators. Most of my veteran teacher friends do not complain about their salary and are very happy with the health benefits. Their concerns are that they are burnt out; worn out; sometimes performing the duties of two and three teachers. It seems as if the days of working a 40 hour work week have turned into a 50+ hour work week and with little support from Administration. This is often the result of an understaffed school, so I will make it a priority to fully staff schools to help reduce teacher burnout. I support the Blueprint's "ladders for teachers and school leaders with standards for advancement and compensation."

Do you support or oppose Maryland's updated maintenance of effort law that requires local jurisdictions to fund the local share of all wealth-equalized formulas, instead of only the foundation formula?

Support

Additional Comments:

Please see my attached explanation to this question

As a Board member, are you in favor of allocating public funding to home and privately schooled students?

Support

Additional Comments:

Please see my attached explanation to this question

Do you support or oppose local autonomy to develop evaluation systems in compliance with statute and regulation?

Support

Additional Comments:

Please see my attached explanation to this question

Do you support or oppose efforts to overturn school districts mutually agreed upon, statutorily compliant evaluation models in pursuit of one-size-fits-all models developed by federal and state agencies, rather than local education agencies?

Oppose

Additional Comments:

Please see my attached explanation to this question

Do you support or oppose efforts to provide educators with sufficient professional development to ensure that they can deliver high-quality instruction aligned with College and Career Readiness?

Support

Additional Comments:

(No response)

Do you support or oppose public education employees' rights to bargain collectively?

Support

Additional Comments:

(No response)

How familiar are you with the EASMC contract?

Familiar

Additional Comments:

(No response)

What changes, if any, would you like to see? And how would you honor the negotiated agreement, especially in tight fiscal times?

(No response)

How will you address the impact that the housing crisis has on our students, including the need for mental health supports?

My previous employment as a certified Special Educator allowed me to be a part of many meetings, specifically IEP meetings. In most of the meetings, I was the student's Case Manager. For the other meetings, I was the chosen General Education (English) Teacher assigned to report progress in my class. Typically, an IEP Team, which are those assigned to be present at IEP meetings, were the Case Manager, the IEP Facilitator, one of the student's subject teachers, the student's assigned counselor and, in some instances, the school psychologist. It was during these meetings that we were privy to information that there was a student/family need or needs for resources available within our community that would help the student and their family, but the family was unaware that the resource existed or they did not know how to access the resources. The counselor being in attendance for these meetings was crucial and a gamechanger for these families, because they had a list of resources (i.e., groups, organizations, etc.), with their contact information for the parents/guardians. This included such resources as affordable housing options, information on local food pantries, mentoring, tutoring, mental health services, and other critical resources. As a Board member, I would continuously advocate to fully-staff our schools with school counselors and school psychologists to ensure that they are available for students to access when needed and to be present for these critical meetings because I have seen parents walk into many meetings feeling hopeless and leaving strengthened and optimistic that they have the tools to totally change their child's and their lives, just based on the information that the counselor was able to provide to them.

EASMC supports honesty in education. To encourage critical thinking, we believe educators should have professional autonomy and should be afforded the deference to teach the truth in their classrooms, schools, and districts. Do you support or oppose this position?

Oppose

Additional Comments:

Please see my attached explanation to this question

How will you support diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students throughout the county? What specific policies do you support whose goals are focused on providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports?

As a certified Special Educator, I can tell you that it is critical for students to “receive what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential” (National University, 2024). It was my job to administer academic testing to specific “identified” students to see if there were academic areas of deficiency. If areas were identified, the IEP was written to provide the student with accommodations, such as supplementary aids and support services, to better ensure that the student had the best opportunity to be successful in their classes. This is an example of equity. Diversity in the classroom refers to recognizing that there are differences. My thoughts on diversity in the classroom are that there is no need to point out our differences because I believe it is obvious to just about everyone that we look different from one another. I believe it is obvious to just about everyone that we all come from different backgrounds. I believe it is obvious to just about everyone that we all have different life experiences and that those different experiences mold us and shape us into who we are at our core. My time as a Special Educator was spent at a school which was comprised of 90+% of students who did not look like me. I excelled there. More importantly, my students, in every grade, for which I taught 4 different curricula, 9th-12th grade, also excelled. I was observed annually and each year I scored the highest rating by my Administration, which was “Highly Effective.” Although I was aware of differences, I never brought to my students’ attention our differences. As a matter of fact, I strove to accentuate our similarities. We are humans. All of us want to be treated with dignity and respect and I humbly and honestly can say that every single one of my students received that from me. I instilled confidence in them. They knew that no matter what, I took my job as seriously as one could and they loved me for it. Although I was never “friends” with my students, as I do not believe that that is an appropriate role that a teacher should fill, my students knew that I was going to make them better readers and writers or that I would die trying. In a perfect world, diversity among us would not cause strife, but we are currently experiencing an upsurge in racism and discrimination that is troublesome. I believe that the more we draw attention to our differences, the more divided we become. Let’s embrace all being humans and let us treat everyone with the respect that we would want them to treat us with. Inclusion can be a wonderful thing, but we must make sure that we do not use it for ill-will. I am not against diversity, equity, or inclusion. What I am against is using any of them to further divide us, as in many instances, it is.

Do you support or oppose local efforts to create and support community schools in areas of concentrated poverty?

Support

Additional Comments:

(No response)

As a Board member, what would you do to increase parental involvement and public support for our public schools and educators?

This may be an unconventional response, but I found that, as a teacher, simply emailing home was not enough. I made it a practice to call my student’s parents, and not only with concerns, but with praise too. I don’t believe that parents truly don’t want to be involved. The key to more involvement lies with educators initiating and fostering open lines of communication with parents. As a Board member, I would speak to the importance of communicating with parents via teachers taking the initiative. I would also propose that schools offer ways for students and their families to come together, to their home schools, for various events, such as offering a movie night, a parent/teacher dodgeball game, Field Days, and other fun events. This gets parents involved and can begin to open-up and even repair the lines of communication between schools and parents. Each school should have a Facebook page, where not just information about upcoming activities are posted, but where students, teachers, Administration, support staff, and extra-curricular teams and groups are recognized and praised for their accomplishments. Most adults use Facebook and we should use it as a tool to engage and entice parents to become more involved because they will be more informed. Weekly school newsletters should be sent via email to parents, as well as that newsletter being posted on the school website and its Facebook page.

As a Board member, are you in favor of contracting out custodial, cafeteria, and maintenance services rather than have those services provided by Board of Education employees?

Oppose

Additional Comments:

(No response)

As a board of education member, how will you advocate with our county commissioners for meeting the school systems needs?

As a Board of Education member, I would help to foster and nurture a great working relationship with our county commissioners for many reasons, but first and foremost because of our shared goals. One of our shared goals is to improve the quality of life in our county for each and every citizen. Another goal is effectively managing a large municipal budget. When you have a great working relationship centered on mutual respect, with common goals, I believe it creates a wonderful climate for making the best decisions for our county. This level of respect for one another will, inevitably, foster open lines of communication between the BOE and Commissioners, which will prove to be important and beneficial when difficult decisions need to be made.

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live here, but the pay was so much higher in Charles. Teachers should not have to look for employment out of their counties to find competitive pay. Even after leaving CCPS, I looked into teaching in St. Mary's, but even as a certified Special Educator, I would have moved backward on the teacher salary scale to take a loss of about \$10,000. I understand, that the Blueprint addresses this shortage and mandates increases, but it has been a long time coming.

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As a Board member, are you in favor of allocating public funding to home and privately schooled students?

I think that before I can answer this question, we should really look to see why parents feel as though public school is not sufficient enough for their children. Why is there such an increase of homeschooling occurring in our country and in our county? When I was growing up, it was so rare for someone to be homeschooled and let's just be honest, those that were homeschooled tended to be so socially awkward. As a mother of 6 children, I stayed home with my children until they were old enough to go to kindergarten, and I couldn't wait for them to get on that bus on their first day. I mean this in a humorous way. So, I've often thought, for parents who stay at home and raise their children until they are old enough to attend public school, wouldn't these parents be so excited to finally be able to go to work, attend college, or do something that they've put on hold for years now that their child/children are at school? I would like to say that I believe in school choice, but I also want to be a voice for the community and what they want. Ultimately, as a Board member, I have to keep the best interest of the public school system at the forefront. It can be detrimental to our allotted funds that SMCPS receives to run our schools to take away some of those funds to allow for school choice.

Do you support or oppose local autonomy to develop evaluation systems in compliance with statute and regulation?

I spent extensive time considering exactly what this question meant. I believe it is asking if I support or oppose our local government (our local school Board, representatives from our local schools, our superintendent, local elected officials, etc.) having the autonomy to develop a way to evaluate/test our students, as long as these tests are within statute and regulation. As elected officials, Board members are to represent members of the community and to act in the best interest of SMCPS and our youth. As with submitting our SLO's (Student Learning Outcomes) to our principal, we as educators, are given a degree of autonomy to design a way to evaluate our student's learning. Once evaluated and approved by the principal, teachers proceed with curriculum instruction and evaluation of their students learning outcomes according to the approved SLO and collect and analyze those outcomes. Sometimes the results will show that students did grasp and retain the information, resulting in meeting the SLO goal. Other times, this type of evaluation may indicate that further instruction is needed. Allowing teachers the autonomy to develop and administer an approved evaluation system proved to be an effective means for my students. I support local autonomy to develop evaluation systems in compliance with statutes and regulation.

Do you support or oppose efforts to overturn school districts mutually agreed upon, statutorily compliant evaluation models in pursuit of one-size-fits-all models developed by federal and state agencies, rather than local education agencies?

I oppose efforts to overturn school districts mutually agreed upon, statutorily compliant evaluation models in pursuit of one-size-fits-all models developed by federal and state agencies, rather than local education agencies. I believe that children are not one-size-fits all, meaning that we all learn differently and what works for some may not work for all.

How will you address the impact that the housing crisis has on our students, including the need for mental health supports?

My previous employment as a certified Special Educator allowed me to be a part of many meetings, specifically IEP meetings. In most of the meetings, I was the student's Case Manager. For the other meetings, I was the chosen General Education (English) Teacher assigned to report progress in my class. Typically, an IEP Team, which are those assigned to be present at IEP meetings, were the Case Manager, the IEP Facilitator, one of the student's subject teachers, the student's assigned counselor and, in some instances, the school psychologist. It was during these meetings that we were privy to information that there was a student/family need or needs for resources available within our community that would help the student and their family, but the family was unaware that the resource existed or they did not know how to access the resources. The counselor being in attendance for these meetings was crucial and a gamechanger for these families, because they had a list of resources (i.e., groups, organizations, etc.), with their contact information for the parents/guardians. This included such resources as affordable housing options, information on local food pantries, mentoring, tutoring, mental health services, and other critical resources. As a Board member, I would continuously advocate to fully-staff our schools with school counselors and school psychologists to ensure that they are available for students to access when needed and to be present for these critical meetings because I have seen parents walk into many meetings feeling hopeless and leaving strengthened and optimistic that they have the tools to totally change their child's and their lives, just based on the information that the counselor was able to provide to them.

EASMC supports honesty in education. To encourage critical thinking, we believe educators should have professional autonomy and should be afforded the deference to teach the truth in their classrooms, schools, and districts. Do you support or oppose this position?

I would love to say that teachers should be given professional autonomy because that autonomy can prove to be the difference between a student being able to fully grasp curriculum or not. As an educator, I too support honesty in education and strive to encourage critical thinking. As an educator, I can see both sides of the coin on this topic, however, ultimately I would oppose the position that educators should have professional autonomy and should be afforded the deference to teach the truth in their classrooms, schools, and districts. I say this, because what someone's "truth" is, is not necessarily someone else's "truth."

How will you support diversity, equity, and inclusion for all students throughout the county? What specific policies do you support whose goals are focused on providing equitable access, opportunities, resources, and supports?

As a certified Special Educator, I can tell you that it is critical for students to “receive what they need to develop to their full academic and social potential” (National University, 2024). It was my job to administer academic testing to specific “identified” students to see if there were academic areas of deficiency. If areas were identified, the IEP was written to provide the student with accommodations, such as supplementary aids and support services, to better ensure that the student had the best opportunity to be successful in their classes. This is an example of equity. Diversity in the classroom refers to recognizing that there are differences. My thoughts on diversity in the classroom are that there is no need to point out our differences because I believe it is obvious to just about everyone that we look different from one another. I believe it is obvious to just about everyone that we all come from different backgrounds. I believe it is obvious to just about everyone that we all have different life experiences and that those different experiences mold us and shape us into who we are at our core. My time as a Special Educator was spent at a school which was comprised of 90+% of students who did not look like me. I excelled there. More importantly, my students, in every grade, for which I taught 4 different curricula, 9th-12th grade, also excelled. I was observed annually and each year I scored the highest rating by my Administration, which was “Highly Effective.” Although I was aware of differences, I never brought to my students’ attention our differences. As a matter of fact, I strove to accentuate our similarities. We are humans. All of us want to be treated with dignity and respect and I humbly and honestly can say that every single one of my students received that from me. I instilled confidence in them. They knew that no matter what, I took my job as seriously as one could and they loved me for it. Although I was never “friends” with my students, as I do not believe that that is an appropriate role that a teacher should fill, my students knew that I was going to make them better readers and writers or that I would die trying. In a perfect world, diversity among us would not cause strife, but we are currently experiencing an upsurge in racism and discrimination that is troublesome. I believe that the more we draw attention to our differences, the more divided we become. Let’s embrace all being humans and let us treat everyone with the respect that we would want them to treat us with. Inclusion can be a wonderful thing, but we must make sure that we do not use it for ill-will. I am not against diversity, equity, or inclusion. What I am against is using any of them to further divide us, as in many instances, it is.

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