

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.

Our county has struggled to implement the Blueprint and, like a lot of counties in the state we're having trouble funding the plan locally. I believe in prioritizing investment each year of the implementation. For example, one year we may focus heavily on college and career readiness and improving resources for students with disabilities. The next year, we may focus heavily on Pre-K expansion and recruiting and retaining teachers. Prioritizing aspects of the Blueprint over time will help the board make smart budget decisions. When it comes to state funding, I would look at trying to increase enrollment in our county to get more funding from the state.

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?

I believe every candidate running for school board should have an actual plan on how to recruit and retain teachers for SMCPS. On the issue of recruitment, SMCPS needs to increase their search efforts, we can't just focus on the tri-county area. This means attending job fairs, campus events, and advertising extensively in areas like the northern neck of Virginia, lower Anne-Arundel County, and central Maryland. SMCPS has several highlights to include when recruiting such as: competitive pay compared to other counties in the region, lower class sizes for many of our schools, and strong benefits for our employees. On the issue of retention, we need to ensure that our school administrators are supporting teachers when they have a concern. When I was a substitute for SMCPS, I noticed that several behavioral referrals written by teachers were not followed up by the administrators. Having a responsive administration, especially when it involves student behavioral issues, goes a long way in helping keep teachers in our schools.

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:

(No response)

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

Oppose

Additional Comments:

Any changes to public funding to private schools must be made at the state or federal level. I do believe the BOOST voucher program is a benefit to students in the state.

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

Support

Additional Comments:

(No response)

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:

(No response)

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?

The negotiated agreement is a deal between the board of education and EASMC, and as a board member I would work hard to honor it. There are areas of the budget I would look to try to save money, such as plant operational costs, however I would not renege on the agreement.

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

Each student should have access to all available school resources, including transportation and counselors, regardless of where they live. SMCPS has worked to increase the number of counselors and support staff in our schools, and I see that continuing as the Blueprint is implemented.

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:

I chose to oppose this question. I do agree that teachers should teach accurately, however, they should follow state and local guidelines on the subject matter.

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?

Every student in our county should have access to a quality education. It would be wise to get our younger student population interested in STEM, as I believe it would help prepare them for jobs available at Patuxent River Naval Air Station. I would also like to see more in classroom support, i.e. paraeducators, for our students with disabilities.

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?

Parents are critical to our success. I would support having regular meetings with our Parent-Teacher Associations, so the board can hear directly from parents. I'd also like to see letters sent home to parents during each quarter listing the volunteer opportunities available at each school. For example, a letter from our high schools may include: band boosters, athletic boosters, school trips, school dances, and other volunteer opportunities. When it comes to public support, I believe it is in our best interest to get information out to parents in a timely manner and provide the public with updates on school events.

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 member, I would highlight the importance of local education as it relates to workforce skills development. Ultimately, when students graduate from SMCPS, I want them to be able to stay local and contribute to the local economy. My goal would be to work with the commissioners to try and come to an agreement that benefits St. Mary's County Public Schools.
